

The Weekly Farbrengens



MERKAZ ANASH
מרכז אנאש

546 • מחקך תש"פ • לחמן ישמעו
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

ACQUIRING SEFORIM

BAYIS MALEH SEFORIM

Even as an eight-year-old child, the Rebbe Maharash would buy *seforim* with the coins he received as prizes for his tests and as a weekly allowance. In the month of Elul תר"ה (1845), Reb Noach Baruch Moicher *Seforim* visited the village of Lubavitch. He generally came for Shavuot and Chanuka, and this time, too, as always, he brought a list of the new *seforim* for the *Tzemach Tzedek* to choose from. Eager to buy some himself, the Rebbe Maharash asked his father for thirty rubles from the money that was being held for him.

"First become familiar with the *seforim* you already have," his father said, "then you can buy more."

At that point, Reb Chaim Dov the *meshares* joined them and notified the *Tzemach Tzedek* that they had set up the new *seforim* in the new bookcase that had just been brought by Yosef Dovid the carpenter. The *Tzemach Tzedek* already had five bookcases of *seforim*, two locked bookcases of *kisvei yad* (manuscripts) in his room, and another six bookcases in the entrance room.

Accompanying his father to see the new *seforim* in the newly-built bookcase and the additional *seforim* on the side, waiting to be bound, the Rebbe Maharash was bothered. He turned to his father and asked: "You just told me that one should first know the *seforim* that one has before buying more. Are you knowledgeable in all the *seforim* you have?"

The *Tzemach Tzedek* responded, "I am generally fluent in the *seforim* that I have. Here, take out a *sefer* and we'll see."

Without much thought, the Rebbe Maharash ran towards one of the bookshelves and took out the first *sefer* that he chanced upon. It was a *sefer* on *dikduk*, and the *Tzemach Tzedek* freely quoted passages from the introduction and then from the body of the *sefer*, word for word. The Rebbe Maharash chose another *sefer*, also on *dikduk*, then a *sefer* of Kabbala, and finally some scholar's account of his travels. The *Tzemach Tzedek* was able to cite them all verbatim. The Rebbe Maharash was truly amazed by his father's knowledge, especially in the area of *dikduk*.

Seeing this, the *Tzemach Tzedek* explained that although generally *chassidim* are not particular about following the exact rules of *dikduk* while *davening*, the words of *Shema* and *Kerias HaTorah* must be pronounced precisely. He then gave his son the amount he had requested and added another ten rubles as a gift, enabling him to satisfy his thirst for even more *seforim*.

(ס' התולדות מוהר"ש ע"י 14 בשילוב סה"ש תרצ"ו ע' 52)

CONSIDER

Should one purchase *seforim* if he hasn't yet mastered the ones that he already owns?

What is the benefit of having a 'home full of *seforim*'?

At the beginning of תשל"ג (1972) the Rebbe urged his listeners to make *seforim* more available, and encouraged them to open new libraries wherever possible, thus enabling *Yidden* to study Torah there and also to take *seforim* home. Two months later, on *Yud-Tes Kislev*, the Rebbe further encouraged everyone to have numerous *seforim* in their own home, to make the learning of Torah even more accessible. The Rebbe added that this would not replace the need for libraries, as not everyone would own every single *sefer*.

In particular, the Rebbe entrusted this mission to the womenfolk, who oversee the furnishings of the home, to make sure there are *seforim* on hand that direct the life of the home.

"Just as a pleasantly furnished home 'broadens the mind,' " the Rebbe advised, "so too *mitzvos* should be tastefully decorated. The *seforim* should be given a central location, so that whoever enters can immediately sense the pleasant tone of a home that houses holy *seforim*. This planning should be thought out carefully, and not merely to fulfill an

obligation. However, unlike the care commonly devoted to keeping furniture in its best condition, the family's *seforim* should be used so much until they are worn out, faded, and torn, to the point that they have to be replaced!"

(שיח"ק תשל"ג ח"א ע' 26, 119, 200)

Two years later, on *Simchas Torah* תשל"ה (1974), the Rebbe connected this *mitvza* to the concept of *Yavneh veChachomeha*, a central gathering of *tannaim* that had existed in *Yavneh*, and encouraged people to establish *yeshivos* wherever *Yidden* live. From then on, the *mitvza* was known as *Bayis Maleh Seforim - Yavneh veChachomeha*.

The Rebbe explained that both of these aspects were an extension of *mitvza* Torah, the earlier campaign to utilize every means possible to increase the study of Torah.

(מענה באגרות מלך ע' 90)

LEARNING FROM THE SEFORIM

In connection with the victory of the *seforim* on *Hei Teves*, תשמ"ז (1987), the Rebbe said that we must ask the *seforim* themselves how to celebrate their victory - and the *seforim* declare that we should use them until they wear out... This is contrary to the worldly perception according to which precious items should be put away in a safe place and left untouched.

On another occasion the Rebbe emphasized: The victory of the *seforim* has a purpose - that it should prompt people to increase their study of Torah. Even a child understands that his parents buy him a *sefer* in order that he should learn from it, not only to show it respect. Those who would like to celebrate in other ways should do so not during study time, but during the times of eating and sleeping.

(תר"מ תשמ"ח ח"ב ע' 172, ח"א ע' 558)

The Rebbe also said that the way to expedite the return of the other *seforim* of the Rebbeim still held in captivity is to buy additional *seforim*, something which is very easy in our times.

(סה"ש תשנ"ב ח"א ע' 226)



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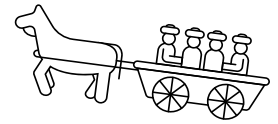
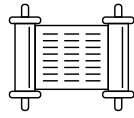
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FORCED MAASER

May a *mosad* stipulate that employees return *maaser* from their paychecks?

While there is a Torah obligation to give *tzedaka*, *poskim* dispute whether the obligation to give ten percent of one's earning (*maaser*) is from the Torah, *midrabanan*, or a commended practice dating back to Avraham Avinu.¹ On many occasions, the Rebbe strongly encouraged this practice.²

Maaser money, besides for being given to the poor, may also be used for some *mitzva* purposes. Personal obligatory *mitzvos*, such as buying personal tefillin, may not be paid with *maaser*.³ However, some allow it to be used for the extra margin to beautify the *mitzva* (e.g. a nicer esrog) and this is permitted if necessitated by one's finances.⁴ If someone is financially strained, he may stipulate that from now onwards he will use *maaser* money also for obligatory *mitzvos*,⁵ since *maaser* isn't a bona fide obligation, especially for someone in this situation (see details in issue 347).⁶

Prior *tzedaka* obligations may not be paid from *maaser*. One may, however, opt to create a *tzedaka* obligation (e.g. pledge money for an *aliya*) with the intention to pay for it from *maaser*, for this donation was initiated by the donor and it is he who chose the recipient of his donation.⁷

If one is employed by an organization that is worthy of receiving *maaser* donations, and they stipulate that he return ten percent of his paycheck, this constitutes an obligation created by his employer and according to many *poskim* it cannot be considered *maaser*.⁸ Employment that hinges on the employee making a particular donation is likewise considered doing "business" instead of a true *tzedaka* donation.⁹ (Though some *poskim* allow it, some of them are specifically discussing a situation when the employee has the ability to object.)¹⁰

If the organization doesn't obligate him, and only requests that *maaser* be donated back to them, it could be considered *maaser*, even if he commits to do so throughout the entire year. Certainly, a *mosad* may not obligate a financially strained employee who is halachically exempt from *maaser* to give them *maaser* from his paychecks.

1. ראה פסקים ותשובות י"ד סי' רמ"ט בהערות שם מה שאסף בזה.
2. ראה לדוגמא שלחן מנחם ח"ה סי' ק"ב מה שליקט בזה.
3. ראה ערוה"ש י"ד סי' רמ"ט ס"י.
4. פסקו"ת י"ד סי' רמ"ט סקל"א.
5. שו"ת מנח"י ח"ח סי' פ"ב. וראה תורת מנחם חל"ד ע' 273.
6. ראה תשובות והנהגות ח"א סי' תק"ס. וראה אג"ק חכ"ז ע' צא: "עד לכשירחיב פירוש בפועל מעשר מן המעשר והשאר ירושם בפנקסו שזוקף במלוה".
7. ראה ט"ז סי' רמ"ט סק"א. ויש להעיר מתורת מנחם חל"ד ע' 273 שאפשר לתת לחינוך ועוד דברים מדמי מעשר שכבר הופרשו.
8. באורח הצדקה פ"א סעי' ע"ד והע' קט"ז בשם הגריש"א, אבל ראה שם שהביא בשם הגר"ח פ"ו ושו"ת מש"ה שזה תופס וצ"ע.
9. שם בשם הגרש"א.
10. ראה תשו"ה ח"א סי' תקע"ד שדן בזה.

REB ZALMAN KURNITZER

Reb Zalmen Kurnitzer was a tremendous *gaon* in *nigleh* as well as an important business man in Vilna. He became a *chossid* of the Alter Rebbe and later of the Mittlerer Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek. He was from the *First Cheder* of the Alter Rebbe, reserved only for the greatest *geonim*. The Tzemach Tzedek's son, Reb Boruch Sholom, known as the *Rabash*, was his *mechutan*.

Reb Zalman was a dear friend of Reb Binyamin Kletzker. Once, Reb Zalman was heading to Prussia on business when Reb Binyamin asked him to lend him a large sum of money. Reb Zalman promised the loan upon his return from the business trip. Unfortunately, the business opportunity turned sour and

Reb Zalman lost all his invested money. When he returned home, he sold some valuables and promptly lent the money to Reb Binyamin as he promised.

Reb Gronem – the *Mashpia* in Lubavitch, related: After the *histalkus* of the Alter Rebbe, Reb Zalman became a *chossid* of the Mittlerer Rebbe. Once, the Mittlerer Rebbe visited Kurenitz where he said a *ma'amar*. When he finished the *ma'amar*, the Rebbe asked Reb Zalman, "Do you remember how the Rebbe (the Alter Rebbe) said the *ma'amar* and what I added myself?" Reb Zalman proceeded to *chazer* the *ma'amar* from the Alter Rebbe, pointing out what the Mittlerer Rebbe added. This was a *ma'amar* he heard from the Alter Rebbe thirty years earlier!

A Moment with The Rebbe



COMPENSATION

An elder *chossid* who served as a teacher in a Chabad school in Eretz Yisroel felt that he was losing control over his class. In a discussion with the administration, he agreed to leave his job and not demand his deserved compensations.

After reporting to the Rebbe, the administration received the following response (2 Adar 5717 (1957)):

"Of course it's difficult for an elderly person to manage a difficult class, since

it necessitates physical and emotional strength. Still, efforts should be made to find him an appropriate position, since our manpower is low."

The Rebbe then turned to deal with the compensation. "In any case, I don't understand what you gain by his pledge. You don't give compensation because one demands it, but because he deserves it!"

(Halperin Teshurah, Tammuz 5762)

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