

The Weekly *Farbrengens*


MERKAZ ANASH
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HELPING WITH DIGNITY (I)

FULFILLING A RESPONSIBILITY

The Roman emperor Tornos Rufus asked Rebbi Akiva, "If HaShem truly loves the poor, why does He not provide them with *parnasa*?" "To save us from *gehinnom*," replied Rebbi Akiva. The emperor countered, "On the contrary, giving *tzedaka* should send you there! Suppose a king imprisons his servant and commands that he not be served food or drink. If someone would disregard the king's bidding and give the prisoner food, wouldn't he get angry?!"

Rebbi Akiva explained, "Imagine a king imprisons his own son and commands that no food or drink be given to him, but despite his command someone brings the prince some sustenance. When the king hears about this, wouldn't he send this man a gift? Similarly, we are HaShem's children..."

(בבא בתרא י"א)

The Rambam writes:

"We are obligated to be more careful with the *mitzva* of *tzedaka* than with all the other *mitzvos*, for it is a distinguishing mark of Avraham Avinu's descendants. The whole of *Yiddishkeit* is dependent on *tzedaka*. Indeed, the Yidden will be released from *galus* only because of their acts of *tzedaka*.

"Whoever has mercy on others, HaShem has mercy on him. If someone is mean and does not have mercy, there is reason to suspect his ancestry, for such a trait is only found among gentiles.. All Yidden are like brothers, as the Torah says, and if one brother will not have pity on another, then who will? Should needy Yidden turn to the *goyim*, who hate us and persecute us, as their source of help?!"

"Whoever avoids giving *tzedaka* is called 'lawless,' like a worshiper of *avoda zara*, and he is also called a *rasha* and sinner. HaShem listens closely to the outcry of the poor, so one must be careful not to cause them anguish."

(רמב"ם הל' מתנות עניים פ"ג הל' א-ג)

Once, at a *farbrengens*, the Rebbe Rashab discussed the negativity of giving *tzedaka* in a manner that makes the receiver feel that he is being given *tzedaka*. Indeed, the giver should feel his friend's need and this should cause him heartache. Yet, the satisfaction that his friend was helped through

him, and the coarse contentment from his being the provider, are inappropriate. This is completely contrary to the ideal effect of *tzedaka*, since, as the Alter Rebbe says, *tzedaka* refines one's mind and heart a thousandfold.

(סה"ש תש"ג ע' 10)

The Rebbe clarified that the common English translation for *tzedaka*, "charity," is misleading, for it implies that giving is a kindness. Truthfully, *tzedaka* is simply the proper thing to do – from the word *tzedek*, which means plain justice, because part of the money that is now in one's hands was originally intended for the pauper.

(לקו"ש ח"ב ע' 410)

in such a way that only the giver himself knows to whom he is giving; giving to the poor before being asked; giving after being asked; giving less than one is able to, yet with a smile; and giving in a cheerless manner.

(רמב"ם הל' מתנות עניים פ"ג הל' ה-ח-יד)

The Frierdiker Rebbe relates:

In the winter of תרנ"ח (1898), my father (the Rebbe Rashab) received a letter from a chossid in Borisov about his woeful state of affairs. The chossid's home and shop had been destroyed by fire, and he was living in a rented apartment with no source of income. Concerned for his *parnasa*, and not knowing how he would repay his debts, he was unable to focus on his learning.

My father instructed me to write a letter to a chossid in Minsk, asking him to lend this unfortunate man 300 rubles, and in addition, to offer that he come to Minsk where he would help him find *parnasa*.

About a month later, those two chassidim arrived in Lubavitch. The chossid from Minsk told me how immediately upon receiving the letter, he had sent a messenger to bring the chossid from Borisov to Minsk. He had helped the chossid in opening a store, and was currently offering him partnership in a forest business he owned. He also advised the Borisover's daughters to take over management of the store.

The chossid from Borisov related to me how that chossid had lent him 400 rubles and had helped him open a store, and how he was *Boruch HaShem* beginning to see solid *parnasa*. He expressed his amazement that the chossid from Minsk had come to his rescue with such a generous spirit, for they were only slightly acquainted, having seen each other a few times in Lubavitch. The chossid concluded, "My own relative from Vitebsk was unwilling to lend me money to begin a new business, and this man showed me such wonderful kindness!"

My father agreed to their new partnership and gave them his *bracha*.

Later my father told me, "The natural *middos tovos* of a Yid are a necessary preface to understanding the explanations of *Chassidus* about the *neshamas*."

(אג"ק מוהרי"צ ח"ח ע' ק"ט)

CONSIDER

Is any credit due to the giver for his kindness?
 What is the connection between having natural *middos tovos* and understanding the explanations of *Chassidus*?

TRUE KINDNESS

The Rambam writes:

We are obligated to fill the needs of every poor person according to his previous state. If he does not want to accept *tzedaka*, we need to find some other means, such as presenting it as a gift or a loan.

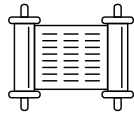
There are eight levels in giving *tzedaka*. In descending order, they are: Giving a man a job so that he is not reliant on others; giving without knowing who is the recipient and in such a way that the receiver does not know who is the giver; giving in such a way that only the receiver knows who the giver is; giving

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SEFORIM FROM MAASER

May I purchase *seforim* using *maaser* money?

Maaser money may be used for purposes of communal Torah benefit. Thus, purchasing *seforim* with *maaser* money to place them in a *shul* or *beis midrash*, for the masses to use, is of course permissible.¹

Purchasing *seforim* with *maaser* money to be kept in a personal library, with the purpose that they will be available for others to come use or borrow them, is permitted by some *poskim* pending three conditions:² (1) He wouldn't have bought these *seforim* if he couldn't use the *maaser* money to purchase them.³ (2) It should be written in the *seforim* that they were purchased with *maaser* money so that his heirs know that these *seforim* are not his personal property and must be made available for others to use.⁴ (3) They must be made available to the public.

Yet, many contemporary *poskim* are hesitant to apply this leniency nowadays. In previous times, the purchase of a *sefer* was an expensive ordeal and the community would come and borrow a *sefer* from one who had it. Nowadays, conversely, *seforim* are relatively inexpensive and it isn't much of a favor if it's not easily accessible to the public. Moreover, in modern-day society, most people are uncomfortable to visit a stranger's home to use his *seforim*. Lastly, these *seforim* often end up becoming part of the buyer's personal library.⁵ Therefore, one shouldn't rely on this allowance unless it is a great need.⁶

If the seller of the *sefer* needs income, one may purchase from him using *maaser* money in order to support him, provided that one wouldn't have otherwise purchased those *seforim*. In such a case, one needn't write on the *sefer* that it was purchased with *maaser* money, as the *maaser* purpose had already been achieved.⁷

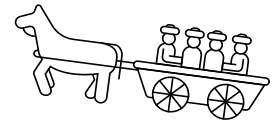
It is permissible to participate in the printing costs of a *sefer* with *maaser* money, whether it is one's own *sefer* or someone else's, as it is a valid *tzedaka* cause.⁸ Some suggest that this is an optimum form of *tzedaka* for it is not a one-time thing, rather a *sefer* that will remain for future generations.⁹ This applies both if the *sefer* is one that will benefit the public or if the author needs the income (though the author may not fund his salary with his own *maaser* money).¹⁰

1. נהר מצרים ע"ר י"ד אות ב'.
 2. ט"ז י"ד סי' רמ"ט סק"א וש"ך סק"ג בשם הרב מנחם. דבריו מובאים גם בדרישה.
 3. ש"ך שם.
 4. ט"ז שם.
 5. שו"ת שבה"ל ח"ז סי' קצ"ה.
 6. ראה ערוה"ש י"ד סי' רמ"ט סי' ע"כ ראוי להרחיק עצמו מהיתר זה. וכן משמע קצת.
 7. מאג"ק ח"ו ע"פ א".
 8. ראה ספר חסידים סי' תתל"ה, והביאו להלכה בס' באורה צדקה פ"א סק"א.
 9. שו"ת אמר שמואל ח"ד סי' ד'. שיחת ח"י אלול תשכ"ב. ת"מ ח"ד ע' 272. אבל ראה שם שהרבי העדיף שלא יסתמכו על זה.
 10. פלא יועץ ערך דפוס.
 11. פסקים ותשובות י"ד סי' רמ"ט סק"א.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה



Our Heroes



REB NOACH ALTSHULER

Reb Noach Altshuler was a famous *talmid* and *mekushar* of Reb Mendel Horodoker. He was a decendent of Reb Yechiel Hilel Altshuler, the compiler of the *pirushim Metzudas Dovid* and *Metzudas Tziyon* on Nach. Some say he was married to the sister of the Mezritcher Magid. His son Reb Sholom Shachna married Rebbetzin Devorah Leah, daughter of the Alter Rebbe, and he was thus the Tzemach Tzedek's grandfather.

A few years after Reb Mendel Horodoker moved to Eretz Yisroel, Reb Noach boarded a ship en-route there. On the boat he fell gravely ill. Knowing the law to throw any deceased passengers overboard, Reb Noach requested from the captain that after he passes away, but before throwing him into the sea, he should be tied to a board while wearing his *talis* and *tefilin* with a note in his hand stating his name.

On one *motzaei Shabbos* Reb Mendel sent his *talmidim* to the shore commanding them to wait there and greet an esteemed guest — one of their colleagues who would arrive from abroad. After a few days of waiting they

heard a great commotion that a man wearing a *talis* and *tefilin* could be seen floating on a board near the shore. The chassidim recognized Reb Noach and brought him for burial in the nearby city of Chaifa.

(עדן ציון ע' קסא)

When Reb Noach came to *Beis Din Shel Maalah*, they found one thing that he didn't fix during his lifetime. He was given two choices: half an hour in *Gehinom* or to return to this world. Reb Noach said, "My entire life I never did anything without asking my Rebbe. Now too, I want to ask my Rebbe." The *Beis Din Shel Maalah* found his words to be true and gave him permission. Reb Mendel Horodoker was sitting with his chassidim and said, "Reb Noach is here now and asked me what to choose. I say better half an hour in *Gehinom*. What do you say, chassidim?" All the chassidim of course repeated their Rebbe's choice, "*Gehinom*." At that moment they heard a cry, "Oy Rebbe!" and a mark of a burnt hand was seen on the window frame.

(אוצר סיפורי חב"ד ח"ז ע' 294, רשימות דברים ע' 207)

A Moment with The Rebbe



SUPPORTING A STRUGGLING BOCHUR

"As a *bochur* at the Kiryat-Gat Chabad Yeshiva," Reb Efraim Karasik relates, "I was having a hard time. Eventually, I joined the army and my *Yiddishkeit* observance declined."

"One day, my father told me that the Rebbe's *mazkirus* called, and instructed me to celebrate my birthday with my family. I didn't believe it. I had been a Lubavitcher, my father is a *shliach*, so I knew that this sort of thing doesn't happen. But I cooperated.

"The next thing I knew, the Rebbe

ordered a pair of *tefilin* for me. When the *sofer* Reb Avrohom Krishevsky came to give it to the Rebbe, the Rebbe handed them back, to make him a *shliach* to present them to me, not before reminding him to pick up his payment from *mazkirus*. This is all available on video tape, 9 Teves 5750 (1990).

"I don't know why I merited this. But *boruch Hashem*, these *tefilin* have helped me come a long way. Back home."

(Tchayeinu 4, page 78)

ברכת מזל טוב לידידי מרכז אנ"ש הרה"ת ר' תום וזוגתו בתיה שי' יהל
 לרגל האפשרוניש של בנם מנחם מענדל שי'
 ויה"ר שיגדלוהו לתורה ולחופה ולמעש"ט מתוך הרחבה