



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' 41 בשילוב סה"ש תרצ"ו ע' 25)

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!"

(שיחיו"ק תשל"ג ח"א)

Two years later, on Simchas Torah תשל"ה

(1974), the Rebbe connected this *mitvza* to the concept of *Yavneh veChachomeha*, 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' 09)

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.

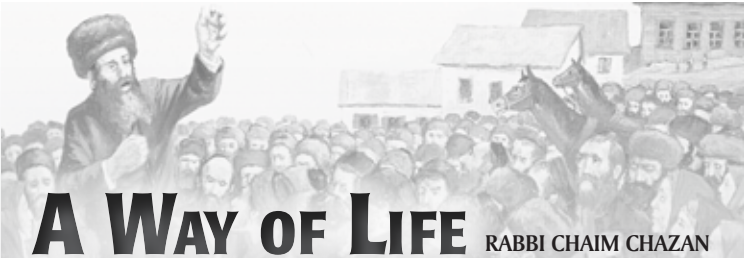
(תו"מ תשמ"ח ח"ב ע' 271, ח"א ע' 855)

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' 622)

CONSIDER THIS!

- 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*'?



A WAY OF LIFE

RABBI CHAIM CHAZAN

DAVENING IN A ROOM WITH A TZEILEM

May one daven in a room which has a tzeilem (cross) displayed in it (such as a room in a Christian hospital or a non-denominational prayer room in an airport)?

- To preface: Essentially, a tzeilem is usually only a symbol and not an actual *avoda zara* (like an idol). However, according to *Halacha*, our assumption is not sufficient regarding *avoda zara*. We must be sure that no one treated it in the past as an *avoda zara*, (such as having bowed to it). Since we can't be sure, we have no choice but to treat it as an *avoda zara*.
- Optimally, one should only daven in a city in where there is no *avoda zara*, as we see in the *Torah* that *Moshe Rabeinu* left the confines of the city to daven, because of the idols present in the city (*Rashi* to *Shemos* 12:1). However, since *Yidden* have been in *golus*, it has not been practical to daven in a city without *avoda zara*.
- Similarly, *poskim* permit davening in a room with *avoda zara* when there is a need. As in the abovementioned examples: in a hospital where all the rooms have *tzlomim* and it is not possible to leave the building, or in an airport where the rush of passengers doesn't allow for proper concentration. However, the *poskim* caution that one should face away from the tzeilem when davening.
- While this is all true in a situation where the tzeilem is to the side of the person; when it is above the person, there is an additional problem mentioned in *poskim*, that it blocks the *tefilos* from ascending.
- However, since we are talking about a case of *shas hadchak* (a situation of difficulty), there are two reasons to permit it: a) The prohibition of davening underneath *avoda zara* is not recorded in *Shulchan Aruch* as a consensus opinion. b) Some *poskim* limit the issue to a place set aside for davening on a long term basis, but not a temporary venue.
- In summary: If one is able to leave the room, one should. If not, one should turn away from the tzeilem and daven.

רמ"א יו"ד סי' קמ"א סעי' א, ש"ך שם סי' ק"ו, רמ"א סי' צ"ד וז"ל שם בשם תרומות הדשן סי' ו, ט"ז סוס"י קנ"א, מ"ב שם סי' ק"ב, שו"ת עצי חיים או"ח סי' א, שו"ת חלקת יעקב או"ח סי' לג, משיב בהלכה יו"ד ח"א סי' פה.

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CURRENT EVENTS

ז' טבת

REB TZVI BEN HABAAL SHEM TOV

Reb Tzvi, the son of the Baal Shem Tov, was a very holy but quiet and modest individual, and throughout his life, he lived in poverty. He was taught by his father and by Reb Gershon Kitover. After the passing of the Baal Shem Tov, Reb Tzvi took over the mantle of leadership, but on the first *yohrtzeit* of his father, he said that the Baal Shem Tov had revealed himself to him and said that the entire "*pamalya shel maalah*" (heavenly court) had accepted the Mezritcher. He then took off the *shtraimel* and white garment he was wearing, which had belonged to his father, and put it on the Mezritcher Maggid. He passed away in Pinsk on the 7th of Teves, תק"מ (1780).



Once, a young man came to Reb Tzvi and asked him how to attain the level of *avodas Hashem* that he, Reb Tzvi, has reached. Reb Tzvi answered him with a *mashal*:

"There was a man who owned 50 gold pieces, and he came to the wealthy man of town asking him how he can prosper from this money. The rich man answered that he cannot answer this question, for he had accumulated his wealth from an inheritance he had received from his father. He advised him to ask another rich man who had worked for his money."

"So too with me," concluded Reb Tzvi. "I have inherited much from my father. Better go to Reb Aharon of Karlin who has attained his levels by himself..."

(כתבי ר"י שו"ב ע' 61)



As mentioned, after one year of leadership Reb Tzvi gave over the mantle to the Mezritcher Maggid. The Rebbe Rashab commented on this, "One needs to have a lot of strength to do this. We find that many *Tanaaim* and *Amoraim* had no desire to accept leadership, but once they took on this position ..."

(תורת שלום ע' 48)

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

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

LOVE FOR SEFORIM

It is told that when the *seforim* finally returned in *Kislev* of 5748, the Rebbe, who would stay with the Rebbetzin at the library for Shabbosos, spent the entire Shabbos night looking through the *seforim* with obvious delight.

The Rebbe's appreciation for *seforim* also expressed itself in other ways:

Reb Ya'akov Horowitz was a *bochur* learning in 770, during the early 5730's. He writes in his diary in *Cheshvan* 5732: "The Rebbe *shlita* is very stringent with the appropriate respect for *seforim*. Quite often, as the Rebbe leaves the *Shul* and passes by a table, he removes a *sefer* which is lying atop a *Chumash*. Today, as the Rebbe was walking back from the *bima* after his *aliyah*, he removed a tiny piece of paper, the size of a coin, from on top of a *sefer*."

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