



## REVERING THE TORAH (4)

### IN ALL TIMES

The Torah commands us to follow the instructions of the *rabbonim* in each generation. Chazal explain that no matter the greatness of the leading *chachomim*, we are obligated to heed their guidance. Though Yiftach was no comparison to Shmuel HaNavi in greatness, the people of his generation were nevertheless obligated to hold him in equal regard.

The Sefer HaChinuch writes that one who disregards their advice is forfeiting a *mitzvas asef* and deserves great punishment: "For this is a firm pillar upon which the Torah stands, as can be understood by anyone with understanding."

(ס' החינוך מצוה תצה)

Chazal say that one should regard the current *chachomim* just as those from the previous generation. One should not say, "If Rabbi Akiva would be with us, I would learn from him; if Rabbi Zeira and Rabbi Yochanan were alive, I would learn with them." Rather, he should consider the *chachomim* of his own generation with the full respect. This is the meaning of Shlomo Hamelech's words, "Do not justify yourself by saying that the earlier days were better than these."

(קה"ר פ"א, ר"ה כב סע"א)

### ALL RABONIM

Chazal say, "One who doubts his Rebbe (*hameharher achar rabo*) is regarded as if he doubted the *Shechinah*."

A chossid of the *Tzemach Tzedek* once went to hear Reb Yisroel of Vilednik. As the *tzaddik* spoke, he thought to himself, "I don't need to listen to *him*. He's not *my* Rebbe; I have a different Rebbe."

Reb Yisroel sensed his thoughts, and said, "*Hameharher acher rabo*... – Whoever frees himself from listening since this isn't *his* Rebbe, for he has a **different** Rebbe (*acher*), is regarded as if he doubted the *Shechinah*..."

The chossid, who was standing *behind* Reb Yisroel, assured himself, "Reb Yisroel is certainly not referring to *me*."

But Reb Yisroel added, "*Hameharher achar*

*rabo*... – Whoever has doubts when he is behind (*achar*) his Rebbe is regarded as if he doubted the *Shechinah*..."

(ר' מנחם מנדל ע"ה, ספורים חסידים ח"א ע' 49)

The Rebbe Rashab and the Chofetz Chayim held each other in high esteem. Reb Bentzion Maroz, a *tamim* in Lubavitch, once related that he personally witnessed how when the Chofetz Chayim came on a visit, the Rebbe Rashab went out to greet him with outstretched arms.

(גאון וחסיד ע"ה, ועיין שמו"ס ח"א ע' 145)

### DESPITE DIFFERENCES

The author of *Ketzos HaChoshen*, a staunch *minaged*, was the *rov* of Staria, the hometown of many chassidim of the eminent *tzaddik*, the Chozeh of Lublin. Feeling that the chassidim were defying the *Shulchan Aruch*, the *rov* reproved them, and when they ignored him, he pronounced upon them a *cherem* of 30 days. The townsmen adhered to his ruling and kept their distance from the chassidim, who after a while decided to go off and spend the rest of the 30 days with their Rebbe in Lublin.

However, to their surprise, the Rebbe told his *shammes* not to admit them for another two weeks and a few days – for as long as the *cherem* was still in effect.

When they were finally admitted to his presence, the Chozeh reprimanded them for not fully respecting their *rov*. He explained that the Torah requires one to respect a *talmid chacham* absolutely, despite his possible lack in some area of *avodas HaShem*.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 406)

After the Mezritcher Maggid passed away, each of his *talmidim* was allotted a region in which to spread the teachings of *Chassidus*. Russia was apportioned to the Alter Rebbe. Reb Shlomo Karliner, one of his colleagues, once considered moving his community of chassidim to a town in the Alter Rebbe's territory, and he asked the Alter Rebbe for permission.

The Alter Rebbe agreed on three conditions – that Reb Shlomo would not to speak disrespectfully of the non-chassidic *lomdim*, that he would not belittle the natural *yiras Shomayim* that Yidden have, and that his

chassidim would be encouraged to attain *kedusha* on their own and not rely solely on the *kedusha* of their Rebbe. Reb Shlomo agreed to the first two conditions but not to the third, and finally settled elsewhere.

(לקו"ד ח"א ע' 282)

Even when the *chassidim* suffered at the hands of the *misnagdim*, the Alter Rebbe urged his chassidim to treat their *rabbonim* and *talmidei chachomim* with respect, despite their sharp differences in *avodas HaShem*.

After the Alter Rebbe was imprisoned due to a libel perpetrated by several *misnagdim*, the *chassidim* were reasonably angry, and were once again tempted to voice their opinion against the *misnagdim*.

In a second letter to his *chassidim*, the Alter Rebbe warns them not to speak negatively about the *talmidei chachomim* "who are not of our group": "Even if these *talmidei chachomim* speak out against the Baal Shem Tov and his *talmidim*, it is the *listener* who must do *teshuvah*, since it is his own negative behavior which has caused them to speak like this... HaShem is my witness that the above is all true and not *ch"v* a pretense due to fear..."

The Alter Rebbe concludes: "I am sure that for the true *chassidim* these words will be enough. However, since there those who profess themselves as *chassidim*, who think they will impress other *chassidim* by speaking negatively about the *misnagdim*, I therefore demand that anyone who hears another speak disrespectfully, even in jest, report it to me, so that I will know to ban them from visiting me."

אג"ק אדרה"ז ח"א ע' ק)

## CONSIDER THIS!

- Are we really supposed to believe that the *rabbonim* today are of the same stature of the *rabbonim* of old? How then can we have a genuine feeling of respect?
- How can one respect a *talmid chochom* knowing that he is lacking in his *avodas HaShem*?

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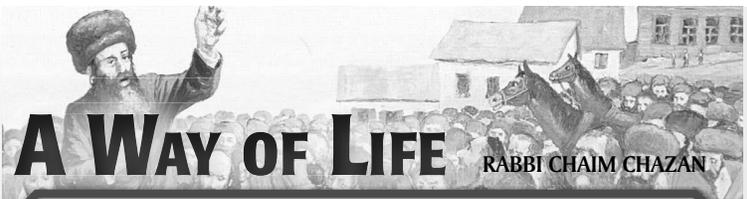
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# A WAY OF LIFE

RABBI CHAIM CHAZAN

## RIBBIS TO TZEDAKAH

Someone pledged a number of donations to a *shul* for *aliyos* he'd received and told the *gabbai* that he would pay them before *Rosh Hashono*. When the year came to a close, his financial situation was tight, so he assured the *gabbai* that he would pay up in a few months and add a compensation for the late payment. The *gabbai* agreed. Does adding money to the original amount due pose a concern regarding *ribbis*?

- Ordinarily, adding to a sum owed is an outright form of *ribbis* (*ribbis ketutzah*) which is prohibited *min haTorah*. However, in our situation, the *halacha* depends on how we view the nature of the obligation to fulfill a pledge to *tzedakah*.
- When someone promises to give a gift to a friend, no lien is placed on his property, for it is seen as a moral obligation to fulfill one's word, not a monetary obligation.
- Concerning a pledge to *tzedakah*, the *poskim* debate whether fulfilling one's word should be viewed as a **moral** obligation or as a more severe **monetary** obligation, comparable to **owing** someone money.
- If the pledge to *tzedakah* is considered a monetary obligation then the *issur* of *ribbis* would apply, but if it is a moral obligation then there is no *issur* of *ribbis*.
- This person is therefore in a quandary. According to the *poskim* who rule that *ribbis* does not apply, he is **obligated** to fulfill his pledge, including the added amount; but according to those who do apply the *issur* of *ribbis*, he is **prohibited** to give the added amount he had pledged.
- The solution therefore is the following: At first, he should only pay the amount of the original pledges. The following day, he should give the added amount he had pledged and stipulate: "If there is no *issur* of *ribbis* then I am paying to fulfill my word; however, if there is an *issur* of *ribbis*, I am now donating this money to *tzedakah*, unrelated to my previous statement." As such, he will be giving the money without any concern.
- One may ask: How is this different than giving a gift given after returning a loan, which is forbidden? The answer is: Usually we assume that the gift is being given for the loan, and is therefore a form of *ribbis*. Here, the money is being given due to a *sofek* that he may be obligated to give, and therefore it has no resemblance to *ribbis*.

סוד ובי" חו"מ סי' קכ"ה, סמ"ע שם ס"ק כ"ה, קצוה"ח סי' פז ס"ק כ"א, וסי' רצ ס"ק א, שו"ת חת"ס חו"מ סי' קי"ד, שו"ת משיב בהלכה יו"ד ח"א סי' צט.

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## CURRENT EVENTS

כ"ז אדר

### THE SHOEL UMEISHIV

The *gaon* Reb Yosef Shaul Natanzohn was of the great *rabanim* and *poskim* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was the Rov in Lvov (Lemberg) and people from far and wide would send him *shaalos* and ask for his *haskamos* for their *seforim*. Among the many *seforim* he has written, his most well-known series of *seforim* is a set of responsa titled "Shoel Umeishiv". He was also a great *askan* (activist) and did much for the Yidden at the time. He passed away on the 27<sup>th</sup> of Adar, תרל"ה (1875).



On one particular Purim, Reb Yosef Shaul saw an affluent man, who was also very learned, sitting and learning Torah in the *bais medrash*. The *gaon* went over and reprimanded him, "Everything has it's time and place! Now you should be in your home, with a plate of money and distributing *tzedakah* to the poor!"



While Reb Yosef Shaul was quite well off, he was not familiar with the various currencies, since his wife Odel managed all the money so that he could dedicate himself to Torah. One Erev Yom Kippur, his wife gave him a golden coin to give as a donation to the *shul* and a copper coin to pay the *shamash*. Mistakenly, the *gaon* gave the golden coin to the *shamash*, whose eyes lit up, as he heaped thanks and blessing on the Rov, and the copper coin he gave to the *gabbai* of the *shul*, who was not very happy with the small donation. When the *gabbai's* complaint reached the *rebbeztzin*, she asked her husband how he had divided the donations, but the *gaon* insisted that he had done the right thing, "I gave the larger coin to the *shul* and the smaller coin to the *shamash*."...

לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

## A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

### KIBBUD AV VA'EM

The Rebbe's *kibbud av va'em* was unparalleled. Rebbetzin Chana revealed to Reb Berish Rosenberg of Eretz Yisroel, during a visit he paid her in 5718, that the Rebbe never turned his back to his parents, since he was a child!



Even after the Rebbe accepted the yoke of the *nesius*, despite an extremely demanding schedule, he would visit his mother every day, and spend a significant amount of time with her.

On *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, it was beautiful to watch the Rebbe help his elderly mother down the stairs from shul, and walk her to her home on President Street.

When Reb Yair Steinmetz asked the Rebbe to speak out against smoking, the Rebbe answered that he could not. One of the reasons the Rebbe gave was that his father Reb Leivik smoked, it would therefore not be in the spirit of *kibbud av* to condemn it publicly.

לזכות ר' יוסף יהושע משה הלוי שי' בן שרה רייזל

In memory of Chaya Mindel Yenta bas Elya Moshe ha-Kohein Lasky