

ACQUIRING SEFORIM

75

לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שיי' בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

בית מלא ספרים

Even as an eight year old child, the Rebbe Maharash would buy seforim with the money that he received when being tested in learning and from his weekly allowance. In the month of Elul תר"ה, Reb Noach Baruch Moicher Sefarim, came to the town of Lubavitch. He generally came to Lubavitch for Shavuot and Chanukah, and always brought a list of the new seforim for the Tzemach Tzedek to choose from, and this time as well, he brought many new seforim. Wanting to buy some, the Rebbe Maharash asked his father for thirty rubles from the money which 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 entered and notified the Tzemach Tzedek that they had set up the new seforim in the new bookcase that had 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.

The Tzemach Tzedek went with his father to see the newly built bookcase filled with the new Seforim, and the Rebbe Maharash went along. Seeing the new bookcase of seforim and the additional seforim on the side, waiting to be bound, he was bothered. Turning to his father, he 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 (קלאר) in the seforim that I have; take out a sefer and we will see."

Without much thought, the Rebbe Maharash ran towards one of the bookshelves and took out the first sefer that he chanced upon, a sefer on dikduk, and the Tzemach Tzedek began quoting parts of the introduction and then from the sefer itself, word for word. The Rebbe Maharash chose another sefer, also on dikduk, then a sefer of קבלה and finally an account of travels, all of which the Tzemach Tzedek was able to cite verbatim. The Rebbe Maharash was truly amazed by his father's knowledge, especially in the area of dikduk. The Tzemach Tzedek explained that although generally Chassidim are not particular to daven with exact dikduk, however Shema and Krias Hatorah must be pronounced precisely. In the end, the Tzemach Tzedek gave

him the amount he had requested and added another ten rubles as a gift, enabling the Rebbe Maharash to buy many seforim.

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

In the beginning of תשל"ג, the Rebbe began speaking about the necessity of making seforim more available, and encouraged opening new libraries wherever possible, enabling Yidden to learn Torah there and also take seforim home. Later on in the year (Yud Tes Kislev), the Rebbe further encouraged every individual to have seforim in their own home, making the learning of Torah even more accessible. The Rebbe explained that this does not replace the need for a library, as not everyone will have every single sefer...

The Rebbe especially gave this mission to the Yiddishe women, who oversee the furnishings of the home, to make sure there are seforim which direct the life of the home. "Just like a pleasantly furnished home 'broadens the mind', so too mitzvos should be decorated nicely. They should be set up in a central place in the home, so that upon entering the home, it is immediately recognizable that this is a pleasant home with holy seforim. This should be done with

much attention, and not merely to fulfill an obligation. However, unlike the care given for keeping furniture in best condition, the seforim should be used so much until they are worn out, faded, and torn, to the point that it is necessary to replace them."

(שיח"ק תשל"ג ח"א)

Two years later (Simchas Torah תשל"ה), the Rebbe connected this mitvza to the concept of "יבנה וחכמי", establishing Yeshivos in all places where Yidden live. From then on the mitvza was titled "בית מלא ספרים - יבנה וחכמי". The Rebbe explained that both of these aspects were an extension of mitvza Torah, increasing the learning of Torah in all possible ways.

(מענה באגרות מלך ע' 90)

The Rebbe noted that additionally having seforim in the home protects the home and its dwellers.

The chossid Reb Foleh Kahn related: In the year תרע"ו, when the Rebbe Rashab left the town of Lubavitch, he left behind a full crate of valuable and important Kisvei Yad (manuscripts) from many Rabbeim and Gedolei Yisroel in the chossid Reb Zelka Parsitz's home, in Moscow. When I was at Reb Zelka's home

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with another few temimim, we opened the box and saw what it contained. Reb Zelka told us that his home had been searched numerous times, yet the officials had never opened the box, and he added, "This box saved me a number of times." When he was asked to send it back to the Rebbe, he was saddened, "Who will now protect me at home?"

(לקו"ש חי"ג ע' 213, שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 116)

The Rebbe explains that according to many Rishonim when buying seforim, one fulfils the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah. In fact seforim are preferable to a Sefer Torah, as they will be used more regularly, at home and in the Beis Medrash.

(לקו"ש חכ"ג ע' 24, ספר חסידים אות 404)

SHARING SEFORIM

The Gemoro explains the possuk "וצדקתו עומדת לעד" (his righteousness is everlasting) as referring to someone who acquires seforim and lends them others.

(כתובת נ' ע"א)

Once a Yid who owned a vast library of Seforim passed away and his children, inheriting all his seforim, decided to sell them all. Some people were disturbed by what the inheritors had done, so one chochom explained, "I will tell you what aveira caused that the seforim not remain in their possession. The Yid who owned them did not lend out his seforim to anyone, worried that too much usage would cause the words to fade and then he would not be able to use them. Truthfully, it is preferable that a person let his seforim become used and faded, then keep them stashed away and unused."

(ספר חסידים תתס"ט)

Another Yid who owned many seforim would lend them out to others, enabling them to learn from them. He commanded his children, "Make sure to lend the seforim to everyone, even those with whom you are in an argument. If you are worried that they will not return the seforim, take a collateral from them. Also, it is preferable to lend to those who learn לשמה, and to lend to the poor before the rich."

(ספר חסידים תתע"א)

The great talmid of the Baal Shem Tov, the Toldos Yaakov Yosef, traveled from town to town selling a new sefer. Arriving in a certain town, he was greatly disappointed when no one wanted to purchase his sefer. The maggid of the town tried to comfort him and told him, "Even the first author went around selling his sefer unable to find an interested customer." "Who was that?" asked the Toldos. "Hashem!" answered the maggid.

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LEARNING FROM THE SEFORIM

In connection with the victory of the seforim on טבת ה', the Rebbe said that we must ask the seforim themselves how to celebrate their victory. The Rebbe explained that the seforim 'announce' that we should use them until they wear out... This is contrary to the worldly perception (הנחות העולם) that precious items be put away in a safe place and left untouched.

On another occasion the Rebbe emphasized: The purpose of the victory of the seforim is that it should increase in learning Torah. This is obvious even to a child, that when his parents buy him a sefer, it is so that he learn from it, not only to show the sefer respect. Those that would like to celebrate in other ways, should do so during the times of eating and sleeping.

(תו"מ תשמ"ה ח"ב ע' 172, ח"א ע' 558)

The Rebbe also said that the way to expedite the returning of the other seforim of the Rebbeim held in captivity, is by buying additional seforim, something which is very easy in our times.

(סה"ש תשנ"ב ח"א ע' 226)

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