

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



פרשת ויקהל פקודי תשע"ה No. 24

The Kedusha of Seforim

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Honoring Seforim

Seforim are considered "the garments of HaShem," no less. Indeed, *Chazal* teach us that a person who treats them with respect will be respected by others; the reverse applies to a person who does not.

(אבות פ"ד מ"ו לפיה"מ, ס' חסידים ס' תתקטו)

Reb Shimon ben Tzemach, author of the **Tashbetz**, treated *seforim* with such loving care that he brushed the dust off them with a special silk cloth. In this merit, his reward was that the *seforim* which he authored would never be infested with bookworms.

In all the libraries that the **Rashab of Lubavitch** visited, he found that even when the *seforim* standing immediately near the *Tashbetz* were affected with bookworms, that *sefer* alone stood untouched.

(שנה בשנה תשכ"ג ע' 490)

Respect for *seforim* includes: placing them in a respectable bookcase, keeping them off the floor or a surface on which people are sitting, depositing torn pages in *sheimos*, setting them right side up, and keeping them at a distance from anything unclean.

(רש"י ור"י לאבות דו, ר"ח שער היראה פט"ו, א"ר ס' מ סק"ה, שוע"ר ס' מ"ה ס"ג, פסקי הסידור סוף הל' תפילין)

The **Maharil** – a *Rishon* who is a major source for many current *minhagim* – used to show his respect for *seforim* by telling anyone carrying a *sefer* to pass through a doorway ahead of him. Whenever a *sefer* fell, he would lift it up and kiss it.

(ליקטי מהרי"ל ס' צח, צט)

Reb Yehuda HeChassid, a contemporary of the **Rambam**, gives us numerous instructions on caring for *seforim*. For example: If a *sefer* and other valuables fall to the ground, one should lift the *sefer* first. Similarly, if liquid spills on a *sefer* and on other items, one should dry the *sefer* first. A *sefer* should not be placed near the edge of a table where it is likely to fall, and when handing

someone a *sefer*, one should do so with his right hand. Finally, a *sefer* should not be used for any mundane purpose.

(ס' חסידים ס' תתקכג, תתצז, תתקכב, קט)

Loving Reverence

Late at night, under cover of darkness, the *tzaddik*, **Reb Yechiel of Gostynin**, would steal into the *beis midrash* of Kotzk unnoticed and return every *sefer* to its proper place.

(היהודי הקדוש ע' יב)

A *sefer* should of course be positioned on the shelf right side up, not upside down.

It once happened that a certain fellow took a *Gemara* down from its shelf for reference and unknowingly replaced it upside down. Suddenly it crashed to the ground. He picked it up and replaced it – once again upside down, and the same thing happened. After this repeated itself again, he realized that something was amiss. He checked how he had placed it, and once the *sefer* was positioned correctly, it remained in its place.

(קב הישר פנ"ד)

"The Broken Luchos, too, were Kept in the Aron"

Anyone who sees *seforim* in a state of disrepair and dishonor is obligated to save them. There was once a man who was not careful to do so, and after his passing his body was dragged from his grave and beaten. He later told his son in a dream that the reason for his disgrace was his former disregard for the *kedusha* of *seforim*.

(ס' חסידים ס' צז)

After recovering from an illness, **Reb Elimelech of Lyzhensk** related what he had then seen in the higher realms:

"As I approached the entrance to the heavenly *yeshiva* of **Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg**, I met Mordechai, the late *seforim*-binder of our town. Knowing him to be a simple, unlearned individual, I asked him how he had merited reaching such a lofty sphere.

He told me how at his judgment, the *Beis Din shel Maalah* brought all the torn pages that he had collected over the years from the damaged *seforim* and placed them on the scale. This had earned him a direct entrance to *Gan Eden*. However, since he was so lacking in learning, he first had to be taught *Torah*, beginning with *nigleh*, the revealed dimension of the *Torah*, and now he was ready to study *nistar*, the *Torah's* hidden dimension – at the *yeshiva* of Reb Shmelke."

(אוצר הסיפורים ח"ה ע' כט)

Seforim as Protectors

In addition to their obvious benefits, *seforim* protect a home and those who live in it.

The elder *chossid*, Reb Foleh Kahn, related: In the year 1915 (תרע"ו), when the **Rashab** left the village of **Lubavitch**, he left behind a full crate of valuable *kisvei yad* (manuscripts) written by many Rebbes and *gedolei Yisroel*, in the Moscow home of a *chossid* by the name of Reb Zelka Parsitz. When I once visited Reb Zelka with another few *bochurim*, we opened the box and saw what it contained. Reb Zelka told us that his home had been searched by the dreaded Secret Police numerous times, yet its officers had never once opened the box.

He added, "This box saved me a number of times."

When he was eventually asked to return it to the Rebbe, he was saddened, and said, "Who will now protect me at home?"

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

Consider This

To whom is one showing esteem when according respect to a *sefer*?

Why is closing a *sefer* and returning it to its place an act of respect towards the *sefer*?

Sparks of Greatness

The Shoel Umeishiv - כ"ז אדר

The gaon **Reb Yosef Shaul Natanzohn** was of the great *rabonim* and *poskim* in the 19th 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 27th of *Adar*, 1875 (תרל"ה)

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 its time and place! Now you should be in your home, with a plate of money and distributing *tzedakah* to the poor!"

Library Sparks

In the previous *Torah* portions of *Teruma* and *Tetzaveh*, G-d commanded Moses to build the *Mishkan* (Sanctuary) and make all its vessels. This week, in *Vayakel* and *Pekudei*, G-d's command is transmitted to the Jewish people and carried out in full.

Without exception, everyone participated in the building of the Sanctuary, Jews from all walks of life. Men and women, rich and poor, all contributed as much as they were able.

Their contributions, however, were not equal in value. As no specific amount was required, some donated less and some donated more, according to their individual inclination and financial ability. Thus there were contributions of gold and silver and contributions of oil and wood, if that was all a person was capable of donating.

Significantly, the type of contribution a Jew offered had nothing to do with his connection to the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary belonged to every Jew in equal measure: the rich man whose donation was extremely valuable, and the poor man whose donation was more humble. Every Jew was connected to the Sanctuary to the same degree.

"Both the one who gives more and the one who gives less; provided that he do so for the sake of heaven." Although the individual contributions may have varied, the intention behind the offering was always the same.

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 *rebbeztin*, 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*..."

All Jews wanted to build a House for G-d; all Jews therefore shared an equal portion in its construction.

Moses emphasized this equality among Jews, regardless of their donations, when he said, "See I have called by name *Betzalel* the son of *Uri*, the son of *Chur*, of the tribe of *Yehudah*... and *Oholiav* the son of *Achisamach*, of the tribe of *Dan*... He has filled them with wisdom of heart... of those who do any work, and of those who design artistic work." *Betzalel* and *Oholiav* were both in charge of all the artisans who worked on the Sanctuary.

Betzalel came from a very well-connected family. The grandson of *Miriam*, his tribe of *Judah* was one of the most prestigious.

Oholiav, by contrast, was not distinguished by his lineage. A grandson of one of the maidservants, his tribe of *Dan* occupied a much lower rung on the social ladder.

And yet, both men were appointed to oversee the holy work, as it states, "*Betzalel* and *Oholiav*, and all those filled with wisdom of heart... did all kinds of work for the service of the Sanctuary."

In building the Sanctuary all Jews are equal. It makes no difference whether one is rich or poor, a descendent of the most exalted parentage or a child of the simplest people. The only qualifier is that the Jew's heart be directed toward heaven!

Halacha Sparks

Toiveling Electronic Appliances

Rabbi Chaim Chazan

Must one *toivel* electronic appliances that prepare the food, such as a kettle, toaster, or George Forman grill?

The *Torah* requires all food utensils bought from *goyim* to be *toiveled* prior to use. Devices which do not come in direct contact with the food (i.e. a hotplate, or the bottom part of a two piece Crockpot) need not be *toiveled*.

Concerning an electric device which comes in direct contact with the food, we find a dispute amongst the *poskim*. Some say that since while used the device is attached to the outlet in the wall, it acquires the status of a *mechubar lekarka* ('attached to the ground'), it is not susceptible to become *tamei* and does not need *tevilah*.

The vast majority of *poskim* do not accept this leniency and require *tevilah* notwithstanding the concern of damage to the device, since: (1) The assumption that a utensil not susceptible to *tumah* is exempt from *tevilas keilim* is not agreed upon by all *poskim*. (2) Not necessarily does a plug constitute a sufficient affixation to be considered *mechubar lekarka*.

The normative practice follows the stringent view. Even the lenient opinion requires *tevilah* for those utensils that can be used for food without connection to electricity (i.e. an electric kettle), unlike a one-piece hand blender that serves no purpose without electricity.

Poskim are divided whether it is sufficient to *toivel* the non-electric side or is it considered one utensil requiring the entire device to be *toiveled*.

In order to protect the device from damage one can wet one's hand and hold it over the electric part while *toiveling* it (alternatively, one can place a wet cloth over the opening). After *toiveling* an electronic device it should be left to dry for a few days before use.

When *tevilah* is impossible, one can take the device to a Yiddishe electrician who can dismantle the device to the extent that it would require a professional to repair it, and then have him rebuild it. Then it is considered as if the Jewish electrician made the device and it does not require *tevilah*.

ראה שו"ת אג"מ יו"ד ח"א סי' נד - נח, ח"ג כד, מנח"י ח"ב עב, ח"ג עז, ח"ה קכ"ב, ח"ח ע"ב בסופו, ח"ט פג, קז, באר משה ח"ד ק, ח"ז ב, חלק"י יו"ד מא, מג, שבט הלוי ח"ב ו, משנה הלכות ח"ט קסב, קסו.

Come visit our library at 1709 Avenue J, Brooklyn NY. Call us at 718-677-9000. www.thebaalshemtovlibrary.com. tbstlibrary@gmail.com

Library hours: Sunday : 1:30 pm - 9:30 pm. Monday - Thursday: 2:00 pm - 10:30 pm. **Special Women's Hours: Sunday 1:30 pm - 5:30 pm.**

Our new exciting shiurim program will be operating soon! Shiurim will be taking place weekly at our state of the of the art library for men. Lectures will be taking place for women as well on a variety interesting & important topics.