

The Weekly Farbrengens



MERKAZ ANASH
מרכז אנאש

753 • חקץ תשפ"ד • למען ישמעו
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

HONORING SEFORIM

HOLY GARMENTS

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.

(אורחות יושר פ"ה, אבות)

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 Rebbe Rashab 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 סי' מ סק"ה, שווע"ר סי' מ"ה סי"ג, פסקי הסיידור 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 מהר"ל סי' צח, צט)

Reb Yehuda HaChossid, a contemporary of *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 סי' תתקכג, תתצו, תתקכב, קט)

LOVING REVERENCE

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)

CONSIDER

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*?

The Rebbe related: I was once in the presence of the Frierdiker Rebbe when another person present got up to leave without closing his *sefer*. Though the Frierdiker Rebbe was always careful not to trouble others, he called the man back and gently reminded him to close his *sefer*. After the man left I asked the Frierdiker Rebbe, “I know how careful you are not to trouble others. Perhaps you could have instead asked me to close the *sefer*?”

The Frierdiker Rebbe answered that aside from the importance of closing the *sefer*, it is preferable that the learner close the *sefer* himself.

(שיח"ק תשכ"ד ע' 246)

Reb Yechiel Meir of Gostynin was a student of Reb Menachem Mendel of Kotzk and later a chassidic leader himself. While studying in Kotzk he had a stealthy custom: Late at night, under cover of

darkness, he would steal into the *beis midrash* unnoticed and return every *sefer* to its proper place.

(היהודי הקדוש ע' יב)

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

The Rebbe taught that 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 תרע"ו (1915), when the Rebbe Rashab left the village of Lubavitch, he left behind a full crate of valuable *kisvei yad* (manuscripts) written by many Rebbeim 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 *temimim*, 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)

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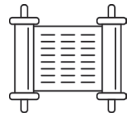
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EXCHANGING HOSTAGES FOR TERRORISTS

Is it permissible to free hostages by releasing terrorists?

Halacha highlights the importance of redeeming captives but, at the same time, prohibits paying "above their value" (see issue 750). How does this translate when discussing prisoner exchanges?

Some *acharonim* hold that the limit in these cases follows what other countries offer for such "transactions" based on historical precedents. Based on this, it would be permitted to perform a prisoner swap **after** the conclusion of a war when the accepted custom is to do so, even if the number of prisoners doesn't match. Other *poskim*, however, contend that the fair price tag remains one-for-one, and anything beyond that is against *halacha*.¹

Soldiers, some *poskim* claim, have a different status for this halacha, and their ransom isn't capped. Since the country sent them to war, they have complete responsibility for them, unlike a regular hostage scenario where the community doesn't have full responsibility for the captives.² Furthermore, just as one may redeem himself for any price, the same should apply if one commits in contract with someone else, as a country does with its soldiers.³

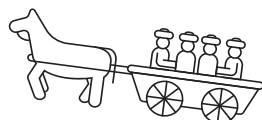
However, releasing terrorists or even carrying out such negotiations is problematic. It is proven historically that many of the freed terrorists return to terror. Moreover, it is perceived as a weakness, and it encourages terrorists to commit terror attacks, thinking that they will ultimately be freed.⁴

In 5739 (1979), the Rebbe strongly protested a prisoner swap when over 70 Arabs prisoners - including over 30 convicted terrorists - were exchanged for one Israeli soldier, when not long before, America and Russia had swapped five for two! Though a Jewish life has infinite worth, the Rebbe explained, they could have obtained the same soldier for many fewer Arabs. Furthermore, this crossed the red line of negotiating with terrorists who openly said they would continue their terrorism. The Rebbe called it a weakness and a diplomatic move to win favor in the eyes of the Americans and Arabs.⁵ Moreover, said the Rebbe, putting terrorists in prison to begin with, rather than executing them, was a big mistake, since it invited pressure to release them at some point.⁶

In conclusion, releasing prisoners in exchange for hostages introduces new angles that aren't dealt with in the Gemara's discussion on ransoming captives. These decisions must be weighed by experts on security and terrorism to determine which option will cause fewer Jews to be harmed and that is the correct route to take.⁷

1. ראה "פעולה צבאית להציל בני ערובה" באור המזרח חכ"ח ע' 44, תחומין ח"ד ע' 108, ומנגד תורת המדינה ע' 435.
2. תורת המלחמה 435/6.
3. ראה שו"ת חוות בנימין ח"א סי' ט"ז (בפשטות יש לדון על סברה זו וצ"ע).
4. ראה יביע אומר ח"י חר"מ סי' ו', ומנגד ראה פניני הלכה העם והארץ פ"ז ס"ח.
5. שיחת פ' במדבר תשל"ט - שידור"ק תשל"ט ע' 730 ואילך.
6. יחידות מר צבי כספי - כפר חב"ד גליון 635.
7. ראה תחומין ח"ל ע' 95 והלאה.

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



R. MICHOEL DER ALTER

R. Michael Beliner was known as R. Michael der Alter, since he was old enough to remember the Tzemach Tzedek when his beard was still blond. He was trained in the ways of *Chassidus* by R. Peretz Chein. For many years, he was the *mashpia* of the town of Nevel, but in his later years the Rebbe Rashab appointed him as a *mashpia* of *Tomchei Temimim* in Lubavitch. He was a great *oved* and his *ahavas Yisroel* was extraordinary. He passed away on the 28th of Cheshvan, תרע"ב (1911).

R. Michael would annually teach the *maamar* "Ani Ledodi" in *Likutei Torah*, where it discusses how a Yid should be bothered by the distance of his neshama and its source in Hashem as a result of wrongdoing. The *maamar* says that if it doesn't bother a person, it is a sign that he is, G-d forbid, totally disconnected, like a detached limb that cannot feel.

When R. Michael would reach this passage he would burst into tears. His students were deeply affected and would continue to recount it for years to come.

(זכרונותי (ששוקין) ע' 63)

R. Michael would say, "If there was only one *esrog* in the world, and only one Jew

could use it, and it was given to me, I would give it away to another Jew".

He explained that Hashem's will would be fulfilled no less through a different Jew doing the *mitzva*. He would not be that selfish to be the only one to fulfill the *mitzva*, in order to accumulate *olam haba* for himself.

Once, as R. Michael was in the midst of saying *Kerias Shema*, a youngster with torn shoes passed by him and R. Michael hinted to someone to take care of the child.

When asked why he couldn't have waited until after *Kerias Shema*, he replied that the whole point of *Kerias Shema* is to nullify oneself to Hashem and by extension to every Jew and be ready to sacrifice even one's spirituality for this aim.

(המשפיע ע' קל"ד)

When R. Michael was sick, the doctors recommended that he drink plenty of hot water. R. Michael would not bother himself with the nuisance of getting the water and heating it up. Only when his students came to visit would he go through the trouble as a gesture of *hachnasas orchim*, and as a secondary result he would drink some himself.

A Moment with The Rebbe



MECHAYE NEFOSHOS

After being trapped behind the iron curtain for decades, including serving in the Soviet army, Reb Dovid Okunov finally made his way to Eretz Yisroel in 5720's (1960's).

In a *yechidus* following Yom Kippur 5728, the Rebbe asked Reb Dovid to tell him of the lives of Yidden and chassidim in Soviet Russia.

Reb Dovid began to share in detail what life was like, with all its hardships. "However," Reb Dovid related, "even in Russia, we received the first four

volumes of *Likutei Sichos*, we copied them from each other, and learned from them."

"I assume that the *shaar blat* was removed." The Rebbe said, referring to the title page that had the Rebbe's name.

"Oh no!" Reb Dovid responded. "Because the *shaar blat* itself was *mechaye nefoshos* (gave us life)!"

At this, the Rebbe smiled broadly. (Teshura 5 Teves 5769)