

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

### On The House

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR  
 ALTER RAUBVOGEL

The story's told of an "out of town" community that was looking for a rabbi to head up a *yeshiva gedola*, for students of college age and older. A candidate was flown in for an interview, and the committee assembled at one member's house to meet him. At one point, someone asked the rabbi what role he felt a *ba'al habayis* (a layman) had in running a *yeshiva*. The rabbi's answer went something like, "He should make sure there's enough money to pay the bills, and leave the decision-making to the *rosh yeshiva* (the dean)." This caused quite a stir, but the host reassured them. The candidate was a relatively young man, and he'd know better once he had some experience. (If this story's true, the rabbi never changed his mind. But that's beyond the scope of this *parasha* sheet.)

I don't know if Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (who was not the rabbi in our story) ever made that kind of remark to his *yeshiva's* supporters, but in *Darash Moshe* he posits that a donor with the right attitude won't ask too many questions.

Speak to the Children of Israel—they should take, for me, an offering; from every man who gives it wholeheartedly, take My offering. They will make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among them. (28:2, 8)

How could Hashem ask the Jews to build Hashem a sanctuary? Was it in their power to imbue their work with

sanctity? Hashem, when He decided to dwell there, would make it holy—not them! Also, why did Hashem ask first for the people to contribute money, and then to build the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle)? Shouldn't He have first asked them to build the *Mishkan*, and then commanded them to fund it? Reb Moshe's explanation is predicated on the way he answers a different question: Why did Hashem tell them to take an offering, instead to give an offering? That, he says, is because everything a person "has" belongs, in truth, to Hashem. When a person "gives" charity, he's really just distributing Hashem's wealth—assigning it to Hashem's beneficiaries. If you were a teller at a bank, and a customer came in to make a withdrawal, would you insist that he tell you why he needs the money? Of course not—it's his, to do with as he pleases! As far as the *Mishkan* was concerned, the most effective way to attract Hashem's presence was to build the *Mishkan* with the understanding that Hashem Himself was funding the project! What better way to make Someone at home, than to make it clear that the lodgings were His? 🕊

### A RIDDLE FOR YOU

What are two things you do not own but nevertheless are held responsible for as if you did? 🕊

See reverse side for the answer

## A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

This week's *parasha* discusses how the Jews were asked to contribute and donate towards the building of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). In less than two weeks, we will all be obligated to perform the *mitzvah* of *Matanos L'evyonim* (gifts to the poor). Since the easiest way to fulfill the *mitzvah* is by taking action or making arrangements prior to Purim, let us go through some of the *halochos* of this beautiful once-a-year *mitzvah*.

(The following *halochos* are based on the rulings of R' Shmuel Kammenetzky in *Kovetz Halochos*.)

The minimum requirement of the *mitzvah* of *Matanos L'evyonim* is to give two monetary presents to two poor people (men women or children of all ages), one present each. It is fine to send money anonymously.

Giving to one family that consists of multiple people is considered to have given to only one poor person.

In order to fulfill this *mitzvah*, it is not necessary to give money to an "evyon" (destitute person), rather one's obligation can be fulfilled with any poor person who struggles to make ends meet

Women are required to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Matanos L'evyonim*. A woman can fulfill her obligation together with her husband since a couple is considered one. However, it is proper for the husband to notify her that he is giving the *Matanos L'evyonim* on her behalf.

*Ma'aser* funds may not be used to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Matanos L'evyonim*. Once one has given two poor people, any additional *Matanos L'evyonim* may be funded through *ma'aser* monies.

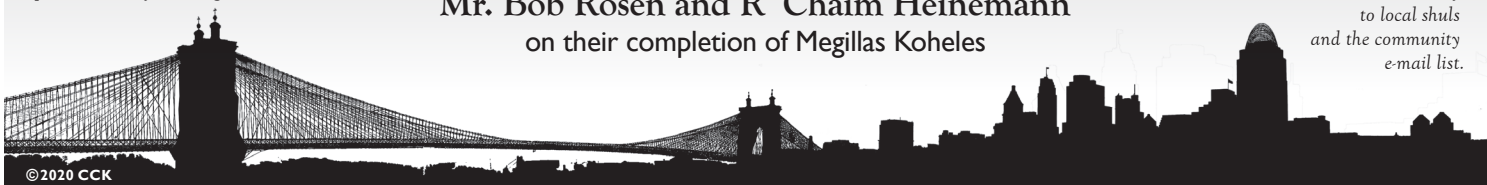
Once can fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Matanos L'evyonim* by giving a check to the poor person. Even if the check is postdated or the banks are closed, the money can still be enjoyed since a friend or store owner would give him cash for it.

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## A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

*Matanos L'evyonim* should be given on Purim day, not before Purim, since the money might get spent before Purim and the *mitzvah* is to give this money to be enjoyed on Purim itself. However, one may give the money to a messenger before Purim, who will deliver the money on Purim to the poor person.

There is no set amount for these gifts, but, as with any monetary *mitzvah* each gift must be worth at least a “*shave pruta*” (enough money to buy something small).

R' Shmuel Kammenetzky, *Shlit”a*, suggests that a donation of \$1 is already considered a *matanah chashuva* (distinguished/significant gift).

R' Moshe Feinstein, *zt”l*, maintained that the *mitzvah* is best fulfilled by giving enough money to buy a roll or danish and a cup of coffee.

It is worthwhile to keep in mind the words of the *Rambam* and *MB*: One should spend more on this *mitzvah* than on *Mishloach Manos* (gifts of food to friends) and the *Purim seuda* (meal).

*Chazal* tell us that on Purim we do not look into whether people claiming to be needy are indeed needy. Rather, we take their word for it. This applies to a poor person himself, and not if one is collecting for someone else. 🕊️

## IT HAD TO BE HASHEM

*The refugees from Lithuania have joined others from Germany and Austria in Shanghai and are beginning to make do with their conditions...*

The Nazis, hearing of the sizable refugee community in Shanghai, could not rest with so many Jews living in relative safety under their ally's control. In the summer of 1942, the pressure that was brought to bear on to the Japanese leadership, combined with increased propaganda against the Jews, convinced them to comply in getting rid of their Jews. Although the Nazis encouraged death

camp, the Japanese did not have an inborn hate of Jewish people and were not ready to go that route. An idea was hatched to do away with the Jews without it looking as obvious that the Japanese had purposefully killed them. The Jews were to be told that they needed to be relocated to an island off the Chinese coast and the boat carrying them was to be sunk by torpedoes and bombs so that it would look like just another sad case of civilians being caught in the crossfire of war. A Japanese political figure named Mitsugi Shibata, who had already made friends with the Jewish community at great risk to himself, leaked the plot to Jewish leaders in Shanghai. In fact, the government later learned that Shibata was the source of the leak and he was fired, imprisoned, and excommunicated for his action. The community raised \$500,000 to bribe the military commander of Shanghai. The community leaders who went to meet the commander were interrogated and beaten to reveal who had told them such a thing. At that point the Japanese were still afraid of the negative press on such an action and, seeing that

it was no longer secret, abandoned the plan. The Japanese instead informed the refugees that all Jews that had entered the city after the year 1937 would be moved into a ghetto. This did make life immeasurably harder for the refugees. By the fall of 1944 the Japanese were ready to begin building gas chambers in Shanghai and they were actually finished that winter. They were constructed by Gestapo officials, but the Japanese were left to run their operation. However, every time the Japanese began to move towards implementing the plan to eliminate the Jews, a defeat on the battlefield would pull their attention away for long enough to delay carrying out their grisly plan until their eventual defeat. Not one Jew was brought to a gas chamber, but with the United States pulling closer to Japan, the city of Shanghai was caught in the crossfire.

To be continued... 🕊️

## GLIMPSSES OF THE KOLLEL



## RIDDLES ANSWER

A tip one in a public domain and charts no research. 🕊️

## BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

### THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

In 1858, Jacob da Silva Solis-Cohen, credited as the “father” of Laryngology, (the branch of medicine that deals with the larynx and its diseases), wrote an interesting obituary about his cousin Benjamin Hays. What makes it interesting is that, although laxity in Jewish observance was common during the generations after the early Jewish settlers, Benjamin Hays seems to have been different. Hays was the great-grandson of Michael Jechiel Hays, who came from a Spanish family that took refuge in Holland and emigrated from there in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In his obituary, Hays was described by his cousin as “strictly orthodox in his religious belief” and he “adhered closely to all the forms and ceremonies observed by the most pious and devout of his race.” He was trained in *shechita* in order to eat kosher meat. As a farmer in Westchester county, the obituary recounts, Hays would leave over the “gifts of the poor” (*matnos aniyim*) mandated by the Torah. (This *mitzvah* is actually only required in the land of Israel.) His father served in the Revolutionary War, and their family home was burned by vengeful British troops. The broader Hays family were prominent members of the Congregation Shearith Israel, the oldest congregation in America. Other notable descendants of Michael Jechiel included Arthur Hays Sulzberger (publisher of the New York Times from 1935 to 1961) and the philanthropist Judah Touro. 🕊️

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchak. *The Hays family of Westchester County*. 2012. | Tourosynagogue.org, *Early American Jews*.

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