

a **CALL** *to*
ACTION

MA'OS CHITIM

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE
5748-5752

A PROJECT OF
HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar

Maos Chitim

Pesach Fund

INTRODUCTION

In his *Shulchan Aruch*,¹ the Alter Rebbe states: “It is a universal Jewish practice for each community to arrange a levy on its people for the sake of providing wheat for Pesach; i.e., to purchase and distribute it among the needy, [thus enabling them to bake matzos for the Seder nights].”

Nowadays, this practice has been expanded, and *Maos Chitim* (lit., “money for wheat”) now includes all other Pesach requirements as well. The Rebbe devoted an extraordinary amount of attention to this annual pre-Pesach drive.

PURIM TO PESACH

- We should begin organizing and publicizing *Maos Chitim* well in advance; i.e., immediately following Purim.² Our donations towards [providing] the Pesach requirements should steadily increase, adding more and more the closer we get to Pesach.³

ALL PESACH NECESSITIES

- *Maos Chitim* includes supplying *all* Pesach requirements for all seven days of Pesach (within the Land of Israel; and eight days in the Diaspora).² It includes the needs for the Seder nights –

1. Beg. of *Hilchos Pesach*, *Orach Chayim* 429:5.

2. *Motzo'ei Shushan Purim*, 5749; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 464.

Couple learning with action

It is a *mitzvah* for each individual to study the laws of the upcoming festival [thirty days in advance], so that he will be fluent in them and know what he must do [to properly observe the festival]. Moreover, “Great is study since it leads to action” ... It is customary to begin donating well ahead of Pesach, beginning [this, too,] thirty days beforehand; i.e., from Purim (*Taanis Esther and Purim*, 5748; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 411).

3. *Erev Pesach*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 51.

matzos, four cups of wine, and so on – as well as general *yom tov* requirements, such as [new] festive clothing, meals, and the like.⁴

WITH HIDDURIM

- After providing an individual with all his Pesach requirements, we should strive to raise the person to a higher standard of Torah observance. Then, due to his new and enhanced level of observance, we will need to furnish additional Pesach supplies appropriate to his new level.⁵

TURN RECIPIENTS INTO DONORS

- We should put immense effort into ensuring that every single Jew – including even the very “smallest” in either a physical or spiritual sense⁶ – has all that he or she needs for Pesach.
- We should supply not only all they need for themselves, but enough to allow them, in turn, to announce [at the start of the Seder]: “*Kol Dichfin... All who are hungry come in and eat! All who are needy come in and make the Pesach [Seder]!*”⁷

LIKE YOUR OWN PESACH SUPPLIES

- In keeping with the Torah’s commandment to “Love your fellow Jew as yourself,” we should make sure that our fellow Jews have all their Pesach needs prepared and set out before them, just as we do.
- Furthermore, we should supply the Pesach requirements for our fellow Jews even before we arrange our own.⁸

4. *Parshas Tzav*, 5751; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 443.

5. *Parshas Shemini*, 5749, fn. 116; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 512.

The same applies to the one who brought about this rise in another’s spiritual standing: he should first raise his own spiritual standing to an incomparably higher level than the elevation he wishes to cause in the recipient... (*ibid.*, subnote).

6. 16 Adar, 5750, during a *yechidus*, fn. 80; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 399.

7. **A free invitation**

... so that others who are needy can come and have their Pesach meal, the meal of freedom, at his table (*ibid.*, p. 399). See also *Parshas Ki Sisa*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 417.

8. To the extent that *Maos Chitim*, which includes all Pesach needs, begins thirty days before Pesach (*Erev Pesach*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 51).

BEST QUALITY

- We should supply “from the best and sweetest foods on our table, since the Torah commands us to give from the best we have to Hashem.”⁹ This requirement is reflected in the traditional name for the pre-Pesach drive, *Maos Chitim*, “money for *wheat*”: wheat being the choicest of the five species of grain acceptable for baking matzos...¹⁰

PROACTIVE DONATING

- We should not wait until the official *tzedakah* collector comes to [you], requesting donations to help provide Pesach needs [for others]. Rather, we should be proactively running and seeking any possible way to donate *Maos Chitim*.
- Then, when the *tzedakah* collector comes around, we will give him a donation in addition to those contributions we gave without having to be asked.¹¹

DO EVEN BETTER THAN THAT

- Even if we have actively concerned ourselves with *Maos Chitim* for some time, we should never consider our obligation complete. Rather, each of us should take time to consider and determine – with an honest self-accounting – whether we have truly given *Maos Chitim* in a manner that befits our particular position. Quite possibly, there may be room (and a need) to add yet further in this regard...¹²

REVISE YOUR BALANCE REPEATEDLY

- Further, even after having provided *Maos Chitim* in a manner

9. Rambam, end of “*Hilchos Isurei Mizbeiach*”; *Vayikra* 3:16.

10. **Only the best will do**

... although one could technically fulfill his obligation to eat matzah made from any of the five grains (*Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei*, 5748; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 444).

11. *Parshas Ki Sisa*, 5750; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 417.

12. *Parshas Vayikra*, 5751; *Hisvaadyos*, pp. 414-415.

... Therefore, even after having resolved to give *Maos Chitim* in the proper measure, we should once again consider to give even more... (*Parshas Ki Sisa*, 5750; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 421).

that truly befits our particular position – donating a tenth or even a fifth of our earnings¹³ – we should calculate the additional wealth gained as a result of G-d's blessings in the interim.

- Based on this new calculation, we will realize that our earnings have increased, [and with it, the “tenth” or “fifth” that we had previously calculated]. Naturally, we will then need to provide an additional contribution to *Maos Chitim*.¹⁴

BECOME WEALTHY FROM GIVING TZEDAKAH

- According to the principle: “Tithe [your earnings] so that you will become wealthy, [via an increase in G-d's reciprocal blessings,]” we are able, and therefore should, increase our donations towards *Maos Chitim*; doing so even before G-d increases our blessings.

- The more we increase our donations, the greater will be G-d's blessings; even bestowing enormous wealth upon us [in “return” for our substantial donations].³

TENTH, FIFTH OR MORE

- From Rosh Chodesh Nissan – two weeks¹⁵ before Pesach – we

13. Giving a fifth is considered “*Mitzvah min hamuvchar*,” the best way of fulfilling the *mitzvah* (*Parshas Vayikra*, 5751; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 415).

14. *Parshas Vayikra*, 5751; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 415.

15. **From Purim and Rosh Chodesh**

[As explained earlier, there are two opinions as to when we are obliged to begin studying the laws of Pesach and teaching them to the public. According to one view, we begin thirty days in advance; according to the second view, we begin from Rosh Chodesh Nissan, just two weeks before Pesach.

The Rebbe explained that although the law follows the first viewpoint, we should nevertheless take the second opinion into account as well and greatly increase the quantity and quality of our study upon reaching Rosh Chodesh.]

Just as there are two opinions expressed concerning [the time to begin] studying the laws of Pesach, [and in practice, we should follow both of them.] so should we apply both views to our providing *Maos Chitim* and all the other requirements for Pesach to the needy: We should a) begin to provide these requirements thirty days in advance; and b) greatly increase our donations and activities two weeks before Pesach (*ibid.*, p. 414).

No needy Jews in Nissan

... In addition to our *Maos Chitim* activities that began thirty days before Pesach,

should step up [our efforts] in supplying *Maos Chitim*. Moreover, in keeping with the ability granted on Rosh Chodesh Nissan for miraculous conduct (i.e., to go beyond our natural or habitual efforts), we should even give more than a tenth of our earnings, or even more than a fifth during this time, giving to an unlimited extent (*bli gevul*).¹⁶

CREATE A LAST MINUTE RUSH

- The concept of alacrity is emphasized throughout the themes of Pesach, starting with the rushed baking of *shemurah matzos*.

we should make proper preparations in the latter days of Adar, particularly during the week before Rosh Chodesh, so that we will be able to amplify our efforts from Rosh Chodesh Nissan and onward. Ideally, though, by the time Rosh Chodesh Nissan arrives, every Jew should already have everything they need for Pesach (*Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei*, 5751; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 386).

16. Super-donations

... All of this applies to the days prior to Rosh Chodesh Nissan as well. Certainly, then, it applies following Rosh Chodesh, when the innovation (*chidush*) of miraculous conduct enters our Divine service (*Parshas Vayikra*, 5751; *Hisvaaduyos*, pp. 416-415).

An elevated service

It is now thirty days before Pesach ... we should fulfill our obligation to provide our fellow Jews with their Pesach needs in an “elevated” manner [reflecting the name of this week’s *Parshah*, “*Ki Sisa*”: “When you count (lit., “elevate”) the ‘head’ of [each of the Children of Israel]” ... in both quantity and quality:

For a start, we should donate in a generous manner (i.e., giving in an “elevated” manner), not only donating a tenth or a fifth [of our earnings], but even more than that.

Aren’t we told not to give more than a fifth?!

True, our Sages teach that “one should not give extravagantly; [i.e.,] more than a fifth [of his wealth on *tzedakah*].” Nevertheless, as the Alter Rebbe explains, nowadays “we should greatly increase our giving of *tzedakah*,” telling us, “Do not be concerned with [the teaching] ‘Do not give [extravagantly; i.e.,] more than a fifth.’” [Now, if the restriction no longer applied in the Alter Rebbe’s era,] then [we] certainly [should not be concerned with this restriction] in our own generation, many generations after that of the Alter Rebbe.

Give more, gladly

Moreover, [the Previous Rebbe,] the Leader of this Generation and a successor of the Alter Rebbe, bears the name [“Yosef Yitzchak”]: “Yosef,” meaning “addition,” which includes an addition in *tzedakah*, and “Yitzchak,” [“laughter” and “joy”], which indicates the giving of *tzedakah* joyfully, with a glad heart and a friendly attitude.

Thus we should donate in a manner that also elevates the spirits of recipient, i.e., through donating in a friendly manner. This, in fact, is the predominant aspect of giving *tzedakah* (*Parshas Ki Sisa*, 5750; *Hisvaaduyos*, p. 417).

So just before Pesach, we should again increase, and complete, our efforts at providing all the needs of Pesach [for others], and doing so with alacrity.¹⁷

MAKE EVERY JEW WEALTHY

- In the final hours before Pesach,¹⁸ we should promote the need to complete supplying [the funds] for *Maos Chitim*. Everyone can, and should, complete and perfect his or her efforts at eliminating poverty from among one's fellow Jews. Indeed, we should even strive to make each individual Jew literally wealthy.¹⁹

17. ... so that it should not become *chametz*, Heaven forbid (*Yud-Alef Nissan*, 5748; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 50).

Hurry

We will now conclude [this gathering] by distributing dollars for *tzedakah* to all who are present. Those who [are not here now, but] are listening [via live hookup,] should also give *tzedakah* in their respective locations now – each person making another into his agent [to give *tzedakah* on his own] towards a timely cause: *Maos Chitim*. The sooner this is done – and the quicker – the better! (*Ibid.*, p. 51.)

Like your own Pesach

We should utilize the remaining time before Pesach to increase in and complete the supplying of *Maos Chitim* and all other Pesach requirements to all who need them; not only providing “whatever he is lacking,” but also donating amply, even to the extent of “making him wealthy.” We should do this in the same way that we try to insure that our own affairs are arranged in an ample and affluent manner.

“All who are needy” – Who’s that?

We should continue this drive until not a single Jew remains in a state of hunger and need.

[Do not be concerned with rendering the opening passage of the *Haggadah* superfluous, for] even in such a situation; [i.e., that there would no longer be any poor Jews], we will nevertheless be able to continue reciting; “All who are hungry come in and eat! All who are needy come in and perform the *Seder*!” Rather [than referring to actual paupers, we will in effect be declaring, “Were it possible for such a prospect [of a Jew who is hungry or needy, then we would certainly invite him now to join us in the Pesach *Seder*]...!”] (*Parshas Tzav*, 5750; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 29, with fns. 139 and 140)

18. Grab the last minutes of a mitzvah

... In the final hours before Pesach – while it is still permissible to handle money, and indeed, when it is still a *mitzvah* to handle money for the sake of Torah and *mitvzos*... (*Erev Pesach*, 5750; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 52).

19. Attain perfection

Practically speaking, since action is the main thing: Undoubtedly, everyone has already fulfilled his obligation to provide Pesach requirements [for the needy], in addition to his general obligation to give *tzedakah*. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that some still need to

CLOTHES AND ADORNMENTS FOR WOMEN

- The needs of the festival include making sure that husbands are able to fulfill their obligation to make their wives joyful during the festivals, through purchasing clothes and adornments for them.²⁰

WOMEN'S DONATION – A HIGHER FORM OF TZEDAKAH

- We should emphasize the role of *women* in giving *tzedakah*, for, in fact, the *tzedakah* of a woman can often surpass that of a man.²¹

SUPPLY SHEMURAH MATZAH

- [When an announcement was made regarding the “Mitzvah Tanks” that would be circulating in various locations around New York in honor of *Yud-Alef* (the 11th of) Nissan (the Rebbe’s birthday), promoting Judaism in general and Pesach observance in particular, the Rebbe instructed that an additional announcement be made: to specifically distribute *shemurah matzah*.]²²

complete (“*lehashlim*,” as in “*mashlim*,” to make up for any lack in) their donations of *Maos Chitim*. Furthermore, everyone is able, and should, perfect (“*lehashlim*,” as in “*shleimus*,” reach a state of perfection in) their contributions ...

For that reason, we will now make everyone here an agent for *tzedakah* (as is customary), [but this time, the *tzedakah* should specifically be given] to funding *Maos Chitim*, in preparation for our announcement [at the opening of the *Seder*,] “All who are hungry ... needy ... come in and make the *Seder*” (*ibid.*).

20. *Parshas Tzav*, 5750, fn. 138; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 29.

21. **He can’t eat a coin**

As the *Talmud* states, “A woman is commonly found in her home. There, she gives a [ready-to-eat] piece of bread to a pauper [who goes from house to house]. Thus, his benefit [from her *tzedakah*] is immediate.” [This is not the case with the monetary *tzedakah* that a man usually donates; he is normally away from home during the day, and when he meets a pauper, he simply gives him a coin – which the hungry pauper must first convert into food in order to benefit from the donation.]

It was for this very reason that women and girls participated in the special gathering ... for *tzedakah*-donors, which was [recently] held [in 770] in order to promote and encourage additional donations and much greater energy in giving *tzedakah* (*Parshas Vayikra*, 5751; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 419).

22. *Parshas Tazria*, 5749; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 419.

... The preparations for Pesach include studying the laws of Pesach, providing *Maos Chitim*, distributing *shemurah matzah*, and so on (*Parshas Shemini*, 5749; *Hisvaadyos*, p. 512).