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חסידים הראשונים

Stories of the Early Chassidim

DO YOU KNOW ALL YOUR SEFARIM?

In Connection with Hei Teves, and the Rebbe's instructions to buy Sefarim in connection with this day, we are printing this story about the Rebbe MaHaRaSH buying sefarim.

In the olden days, they did not have Seforim stores. How would people be able to buy Seforim? There were people who were Seforim sellers. They would travel around from city to city and bring seforim with them to sell.

When he was a boy, the Rebbe Maharash would save up his money and buy Seforim. In the month of Elul 5605, when the Rebbe Maharash was 11 years old, A *seforim*-seller came to Lubavitch. The Maharash wanted to buy Seforim. Since his father held most of his money for him, he went to his Tati, the Tzemach Tzedek, and asked him for 30 silver rubles of his money.

"Why do you need so much money?" asked the Tzemach Tzedek. "To buy Seforim" answered the Rebbe Maharash. "Before you buy new Seforim, you should first know clearly the Seforim that you already have," answered the Tzemach Tzedek.

The Maharash answered his father: "And what about you? Do you know very well all the Seforim that *you* have? Nevertheless, you buy new ones every year. Even when you recently returned from the Rabbinical Assembly in Petersburg you brought *seforim* back with you." (From this the Rebbe Maharash understood that it's good to buy more sefarim even if you have not yet learned all the Seforim that you have already, so he did not understand why his Tati did not want to give him money).

The *Tzemach Tzedek* said: "If you want, you can test me. Take any *sefer* of the bookshelf, and test me."

The Maharash went and took the first *sefer* that came to his hand, which was called *Sefer HaMaslul*. His father said that it is a book on *dikduk*, organized in excellent fashion. He read to him by heart a few parts from the sefer.

The Maharash replaced that *sefer* and took the next *sefer* which was *Masores HaMasoros*. His father told him that this was also a *dikduk sefer*, and recited the text by heart. The Maharash then put down that *sefer* and took the *sefer* standing next to it, *Mesilos Chochmah*. His father said that it was a *sefer* of the principles of *Kabbalah*, and he recited by heart the passages that he was requested. The Maharash then took the next *sefer* in order, *Mesilas Yesharim*. His father told him that this was a *mussar sefer*, and recited by heart the requested passages. The Maharash then took the next *sefer*, *Mas'os R. Binyamin*. He questioned his father about several passages, and he recited the required text exactly, including the names of cities in that sefer, etc.

In the end, his father gave the Maharash the money that he asked for, and added another ten silver rubles besides, as a gift. He then purchased many *seforim*.