

The Missing Source

WHY WAS THE TZEMACH TZEDEK LEFT OUT?

On Yud Tes Kislev, 5709, the Rebbe sent two letters to his Chossid, Reb Sholom Posner of Chicago, regarding a *sefer* published by a Rov in his city.

In the first letter, the Rebbe noted that it would have been appropriate for this Rov to mention particular points from the Tzemach Tzedek's *sifrei halacha* with regard to several of his *teshuvos*. The Rebbe added that he noticed that he republishes his *seforim* often, so he would have the opportunity to include these omissions.

“Nonetheless,” the Rebbe concluded, “I don’t wish to write him directly as I am not familiar with him and his approach. Therefore, I’m addressing another letter – also directed to you – as though it were a response to a question you posed. I rely on your wisdom to work out the matter in a fitting and appropriate manner.”

The following is an adaptation of the Rebbe’s second letter.

Regarding¹ the *seforim* of Rabbi A. B. Silverberg of your city, I have only seen one of them, his *sefer Shaalos U'Teshuvos Mishnas Binyomin*. While reviewing the *sefer*, I was pleasantly satisfied to see such a book published in such a time and place as ours. To borrow the wording used by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe *Shlita*, in his preface to *Kuntres Eitz HaChayim*² (in reference to another country, but the message is indeed the same):

“Young men who are described with the titles of

Geonim and intellectual giants, with trimmed beards and clipped *peiys*, enter into learned discussion regarding a deep *sugya* in *Gemara*, [with the intent of] arriving at a lenient *psak* regarding every matter that is a *Mitzvah*, leaving [the Torah] exposed and bare, like a *guf* without a *Neshoma*. [Furthermore,] they have the nerve and *chutzpah* to challenge the *shitos* of the *Geonim* and to knock the *issurim* [established] by the *Rishonim*.”

Instead, a *sefer* was printed here that reinforces the *minhagim* of our ancestors without giving extra support



RABBI SHOLOM POSNER, SECOND FROM LEFT, AT A GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY. CREDITS: LUBAVITCH ARCHIVES

to *kocha d'heteira* – the power of leniency (which can restrict straightforward *seichel*, and thus hampers the delivery of genuine *psak halacha*).

[See the original letter, where the Rebbe goes on to mention one specific example from the *sefer* where the *mechaber* was not as strongly opposed to a leniency, as he should have been. The Rebbe then continues:]

What amazed me, however, was that when looking at his *sefer*, I saw that the *mechaber* brings from *Acharonim* and yet later *Acharonim*, but he is very careful not to quote the Alter Rebbe or Tzemach Tzedek or their *p'sakim*.

Indeed, see the *Rema* (in *Orach Chaim*) and *Nesivos HaMishpat* (sec. 28) with regard to the strength of Torah works that have spread throughout *Yiddishe kehilos* all over. We know that an error with regard to the “*Nosei Keilim*” commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch’s page – is considered just as an error regarding a statement of the *Mishnah*; a “*to’eh b’dvar mishnah*”. This concept is also alluded to in the Alter Rebbe’s *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, in the beginning of the second *perek*.

At the outset, I judged the author *l’kaf zechus*, thinking that perhaps he didn’t see these *seforim* or know of them. (See the Shaloh’s *pirush* on the *posuk*, “I sinned because I did not know.”³) Then, however, I saw that he quotes the *S’dai Chemed*, which, indeed, cites the *p’sakim* of the Alter Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek in several places.

[The Rebbe proceeds to quote several examples where it would have been most appropriate for the *mechaber* to have referred to the Tzemach Tzedek’s *Teshuvos*. Then the Rebbe concludes his letter as follows:]

I conclude with *brochos* for the *Chag Hageulah* of *Yud Tes Kislev*, the day when, in 5559, the *avodah* of spreading the wellsprings of *Chassidus* began. From that time onward, it only increased. In these days, *Moshiach*’s promise to the Baal Shem Tov will certainly be fulfilled and *Moshiach* will actually come and redeem us in the most literal sense, in the *Geulah Ha’Amitis V’HaShleima*. ■

1. What follows isn’t a word-for-word translation of the Rebbe’s letter, but we have remained faithful to the structure and *toichen* of the original as much as possible. Additions in brackets, as well as some added translation, have been added for the reader’s benefit, as well as to keep the general flow of the letter. Both letters appear in *Igros Kodesh* Vol. 3, pg. 21 and on.

2. The actual *Kuntres* was written by the Rebbe Rashab, while its preface was written by the Frierdiker Rebbe.

3. The *Shaloh* there asks, “If Bilaam didn’t know that the *malach* was standing there, what then was his *aveirah*?” And he thus explains: “A person is held responsible for what he should have known.”