



# Smicha

*More than just a certificate*



## *Familiar in all of Torah*

In this sicha, the Rebbe charges all bochurim wishing to become rabbis with numerous requirements, in addition to the rudimentary knowledge needed to pass the test.

I will give practical advice to the bochurim who will soon receive smicha. Firstly, they must **know** the **dinim well**—not just suffice with merely receiving a diploma. Also, they must realize that one who receives smicha becomes a *baal habos* (master) over the world.

In order to bring this about in a practical manner:

1. They must study Chassidus, which will affect that “Fear of Heaven is his treasure.” They will come to the recognition that the entire world’s existence is nothing more than the **G-dly** life-force that

animates and creates it. Thus, they will be able to ascend the natural boundaries of this world and reach the level of *Shem Havaye*, which is beyond nature.

2. Being that the goal of *smicha* is for the individual to be able to make halachic rulings in day-to-day matters, it is not enough to study the material necessary for the *smicha* test. Rather, they must also possess a general familiarity with Torah, so that no matter the question, the subject matter will be familiar to them.

A young man once came to the Rogatchover Gaon to receive *smicha*. Instead of giving him the typical test in *Yoreh Deah*, the Rogatchover surprised him by instructing him to study the laws of *krias haTorah*, and only afterwards would he give him

*smicha*. The Rogatchover explained, “I see that overall, you’re a G-d-fearing individual, and therefore, if you’re asked a question in *Yoreh Deah* to which you do not know the answer, you will certainly tell the questioner to wait until you have looked into it, or you will ask someone else (or you’ll write to a more knowledgeable rav).”

“However, should a question arise in middle of *krias haTorah*, for example, with the *gabbai* and the entire congregation present, you might end up **answering without knowing the true depth of the halacha**, since leaving the Torah on the *bima* until you can finish looking it up would be disrespectful (and you certainly wouldn’t be able to write to *rabbanim* and wait for their answer...). In addition, it is embarrassing to you—the rav. The solution,” concluded the Rogatchover, “is to first study *hilchos krias haTorah*.”

## THEY SHOULD STUDY - IN DEPTH - AT LEAST FIVE TO TEN SUGYOS IN SHAS. THEY SHOULD ALSO STUDY LEGIRSA THREE TO FIVE MASECHTOS IN SHAS.

This also applies to already ordained rabbis; they should endeavor to acquire a general knowledge of the entire Torah.

At the very least, they should study—in depth—five to ten *sugyos* (topics) in *Shas* (ideally *sugyos* from all over *Shas*—“פאנאנדער געווארפענע” “סוגיות”—so that their knowledge will be more encompassing.) They should also study *legirsa* three to five *masechtos* in *Shas* (Gemara, Rashi, and some Tosafos). Obviously I don’t mean the small *masechtos*, such as *Maseches Gerim*, or the like.

It should be added—and emphasized—that this applies to the ones ordaining *smicha*. For if the

*smicha* isn’t done properly, it is the responsibility of the ones ordaining, and “if a student is exiled, his teacher is exiled as well.” So it should be ensured that the *smicha* is proper, and that the one ordaining can say “see the produce that I have grown.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Sedorim in Halacha*

In this letter to Reb Nissan Nemenov, the mashpia of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Brunoy, France, the Rebbe explains when, and to what extent, bochurim should study advanced halacha.

Regarding what you wrote about the study of *Yoreh Deah* in yeshiva, it seems from your letter that this subject

is mandatory for all students. They study, as you write, primarily *Yoreh Deah*, with only two hours a day spent studying Gemara.

Were all the students intending to become rabbis, and were they all in possession of a fundamental knowledge of Gemara, such a *seder* would perhaps be appropriate. However, if one of the two conditions is missing, the time spent learning Gemara should perhaps be increased, and they should study the *masechtos* that contain more practical *halacha*. Though obviously they must be familiar with the *masechtos* being studied in the other yeshivos.

...Regarding your question about learning *Yoreh Deah*, I answered in general above, and I would add that in order to receive *smicha* one must know a minimum of several *sugyos* in *Shas* as well as several *inyonim* in *Shas*. Regarding the study of *Yoreh Deah* itself, you are no doubt aware that with



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the decreased time available for study these days, less time is spent learning the commentary Pri Megadim and others.<sup>2</sup>

### Prerequisite

In this sicha, on 24 Teves 5712, the Rebbe explains his public directive that every man should receive smicha before marriage.

Now is a good time to discuss the subject of *talmidim* who still need to receive *smicha*.

To the *bochurim* that were spoken to regarding studying for *smicha*, this is not a theoretical speech, rather my intentions are practical.

And even the *bochurim* who were not spoken to about this, if they are capable of it, they too should take this upon themselves. Beginning tonight or tomorrow, they should get to work (“צוטרעטן צו דער ארבעט”)—in keeping to the regular *sedarim*, in *nigleh* and Chassidus, which they must attend—and complete the *smicha*

before Pesach, or at least no later than Shavuot.

The same applies to the laymen who are capable of this. It is very appropriate that they too become proficient in applied *halacha*, and may this bring them blessings.

This *minhag* is a **public directive** (הוראה לרבים)—one must get *smicha* before marriage.

The reason for this is because quite often, various uncertainties in *halacha* arise at home, and you can’t go every few minutes to ask a *rav* (“מ’קען דאך ניט” “לויפן יעדער פאר מינוט צו א רב”). Therefore there needs to be a *rav* in the house.

On these same lines, I add that everyone who wishes to create a “*binyan adei ad*” (an everlasting home)—and this applies to married men as well—should receive *smicha*. This is certainly within the abilities of everyone, especially according to today’s standards.

In the past, in order to receive *smicha*, one had to be a great scholar, proficient in Tur as well as the entire

Shulchan Aruch, or at least two sections of it—*Yoreh Deah* and *Even Ha’ezer*.

Nowadays, the *seder* is that one begins by studying Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, followed by Ba’er Heitev, then Shulchan Aruch with the commentaries of Taz and Shach. And only afterwards, if one has time, he studies parts of Tur and Beis Yosef.

So, my intention is that everyone should receive at least this type of *smicha*, in order to be familiar with proper conduct [in day-to-day Jewish life], which requires proficiency in *Orach Chayim*, *Yoreh Deah*, as well as some knowledge of *Even Ha’ezer*. At the very least, [everyone should be proficient in] the two former sections, which are necessary in order to be familiar with [day-to-day Jewish] conduct, not to transgress the numerous *halachos*, for example in Hilchos Shabbos, (as the Alter Rebbe writes in Iggeres HaKodesh), and the like.



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It should be emphasized that [for married men] the actual signed diploma ("די פאפירל") attesting to the *smicha* of the recipient is not so important, as long as he is **capable** of receiving such a diploma. If one deserves the diploma, then the document itself is irrelevant. In the words of Chazal: "If it is capable of being kneaded, it doesn't need to actually be kneaded."<sup>3</sup>

However, *bochurim* must indeed receive their *smicha* diploma, for with it, it will be known that they have completed their obligation (to study all the applicable *halachos*). It would even be best for them to be tested by someone with strict *smicha* requirement, for that would demonstrate that they have appropriately completed (the study of the *halachos*).<sup>4</sup>

### Smicha for Kollel Yungeleit

On 16 Teves 5738, after mincha, the Naroler Rav, Reb Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapiro, paid a visit to the Rebbe. The study of *halacha* for *smicha* featured prominently in their discussion, excerpts of which are presented here.

The Rebbe: Is Shulchan Aruch studied in the *kollel*?

Rabbi Shapiro: I have instituted that each Shabbos night, the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch is studied.

The Rebbe: (smiling) This is "bribery" to me. My intent was to ask whether Shulchan Aruch is studied in the *kollel* that you founded, because according to the information I have, there is a lack of *rabbanim* in Eretz Yisrael.

Rabbi Shapiro: The *kollel* is based upon studying to become a *rav*. Many of the members have already received *smicha*.

The Rebbe: Did they receive both *yoreh-yoreh*<sup>5</sup> and *yadin-yadin*<sup>6</sup>?

Rabbi Shapiro: Yes, but the primary focus is *yoreh-yoreh*.

The Rebbe: Do they learn Pri Megadim?

Rabbi Shapiro: Pri Megadim as well as Chavos Da'as.

The Rebbe: It is said that the author of the Pri Megadim had a connection with the Baal Shem Tov.

Rabbi Shapiro: I heard that he had a connection with the Maggid of Mezritch and received a *bracha* from him...

The Rebbe: I am very happy to hear that *smicha* is being studied in your *kollel*.<sup>7</sup>

## THE FRIERDIKER REBBE ה"מ WANTED VERY MUCH THAT "WE SHOULD BE LEARNED". (מ'זאל) (קענען לערנען)

### מ'זאל קענען לערנען

Reb Yoel Kahan relates that he asked the Rebbe in *yechidus* (in 5710), "Since the Frierdiker Rebbe would instruct *bochurim* over the age of twenty to study *Yoreh Deah* in the afternoons, should I also do so?" The Rebbe responded that he should "speak in learning" with Reb Mordechai Mentlick, and after a few days - after the Rebbe will speak with Reb Mordechai - the Rebbe will tell him what to learn.

Reb Yoel did so, and in the following *yechidus*, the Rebbe instructed him not to study *Yoreh Deah* yet; rather, he should study Gemara in depth—meaning with the Rishonim up until Shulchan Aruch—

for at least another year or a year and-a-half. He should also study Gemara *legirsah* in the evenings, with the emphasis being on quantity—as much as possible.

The Rebbe added that the Frierdiker Rebbe very much wanted that "we should be learned" (מ'זאל) (קענען לערנען). The Rebbe encouraged Reb Yoel to be diligent, and also to learn Chassidus in depth. The Rebbe said that when it comes to Chassidus, learning in depth is important, but when it comes to davening, what's most important is to bring oneself to practical *avodah*. At the end of the *yechidus*, the Rebbe blessed Reb Yoel that the *brachos* of the Frierdiker Rebbe to him should be fulfilled, and that he should merit that the goals of the Frierdiker Rebbe should be achieved through him.<sup>8</sup> ①

1. Toras Menachem vol. 6 p. 70

2. Igros Kodesh vol. 7 p. 102

3. A *Mincha* offering is only acceptable if it contains less than 60 *esronim* of flour, rendering it able to be kneaded. However, once it is *theoretically* able to be kneaded, it's acceptable even if it isn't *actually* kneaded. Here, too, being *theoretically* capable of receiving *smicha*—by having the requisite knowledge—is sufficient.

4. Toras Menachem vol. 4 p. 259

5. Ordination to rule regarding *kashrus*, Shabbos, and the like.

6. Ordination to be a *dayan*, a judge in Beis Din.

7. Siach Sarfei Kodesh p. 477

8. Yemei Bereishis p. 158