

A BOND OF

Life

MA'AMED

BY: RABBI MENDEL VOGEL



לזכות
מרת חיה מושקא תחי'
לרגל יום הולדתה י"ט מנחם-אב

נדפס ע"י ולזכות בעלה
הרה"ת הרב שלום דוב בער וילדיהם שיחיו
שוחאט

WHAT IS MA'AMED?

A¹ mainstay of *darkei haChassidus*—the origins of which go far back and are firmly rooted in Chassidic tradition, as well as in the many letters and *sichos* of the Rebbeim—is the giving of “דמי מעמד” (“*ma'amed* money”) to the Rebbe. From time to time, Chassidim would send a sum of money to the Rebbe for the Rebbe to use as he sees fit.

GOING BACK GENERATIONS

The custom amongst Chassidim to periodically send sums of money or gifts to the Rebbe has existed throughout the generations. It was an expression of the love they had for the Rebbe, and of their strong desire to be connected to him. So precious and important was this custom by Chassidim, that the Frierdiker Rebbe once referred to it as a “יסוד ההתקשרות של אנ”ש,” a foundation for the *hiskashrus* of a Chossid to his Rebbe.

Over time, this practice acquired the name “מעמד,” and the money was referred to as “דמי מעמד,” lit. the “money of *ma'amed*.” (It eventually acquired the additional codename of “*nifneh*,” as will be discussed further on in the article.)

SOURCE OF CUSTOM

The practice of presenting one’s teacher with gifts is found in the Gemara, where a fascinating comparison is drawn between the above-mentioned practice and the *mitzva* of *bikurim*: “One who brings a gift to a *talmid chacham* is considered to have brought *bikurim* to the *Beis Hamikdash*.”

During a Shavuos farbrengen in 5717*, the Rebbe explained the above statement based on the Rambam’s words in Mishneh Torah regarding the status of a Levi. The Rambam provides an explanation for why the Levi’im did not take part in the conquest—and therefore did not receive their own portion—of Eretz Yisroel: Since their sole occupation is to be servants of Hashem and to devote their lives to teaching the Yidden the ways of Hashem, they were not burdened with any other responsibilities and concerns. He goes on to state that all of this applies not just to *Shevet Levi*, but to anyone who removes themselves from worldly matters and devotes their lives completely to the service of Hashem. After we take into account, continues the Rebbe, that the *mitzvah* of *bikurim* is one of the 24 gifts the Torah designates for the Kohen (who is from *Shevet Levi*), we can now understand the

above-mentioned statement in the Gemara: One who brings a gift to a *talmid chacham* is in essence doing the same thing as someone who brings gifts of *bikurim* to the Kohen!

It is worth noting that notwithstanding the ruling in Shulchan Aruch that “It is pious behavior to not accept gifts, but rather to trust in Hashem that He will provide you with all your needs; as it says in the *posuk*: ‘He who despises gifts will live’”—the Rebbeim still accepted money of *ma'amed*, relying on the above-quoted Gemara (as the Rebbe explains in a letter dated Gimmel Tammuz 5726*).

SOURCE OF THE NAME

As mentioned, the name given to this contribution is “מעמד.” It is not clear when the name was given, but we find use of this word already in letters and talks of the Mittlerer Rebbe, making it safe to assume that it was around then that the term *ma'amed* was coined and added to the Chassidic lexicon.

PUTS ONE ON THEIR FEET

The word מעמד is derived from the word “מעמיד”—to stand something up. In a *sicha* on Shabbos Parshas Shemini 5728*, the Rebbe gave the following explanation: The concept of giving *ma'amed* is standing oneself up on their feet. For when a person takes money that can be a source of life-giving sustenance and instead gives it to the Rebbe, this causes his bond with the Rebbe to permeate all the areas of his life.

Additionally, there is another connotation as well, as the Rebbe discusses in a *sicha* on Shabbos Parshas Shemini 5725*: The act of giving *ma'amed* should be done with a *bittul* and *kabbalas ol*, a sense of self-dedication to the Rebbe and his instructions; much like the feet which carry the whole body, symbolizing humility and dedication.

MA'AMED – NIFNEH

Many years had passed since the practice of giving *ma'amed* was established, when the Communist regime came to power in the then Soviet Union. The Russian secret police—the N.K.V.D.—closely monitored every move of the Frierdiker Rebbe in an attempt to find any reason—however weak—to cast suspicion on him, and enable them to create libelous accusations against him. It was obvious, then, that the Frierdiker Rebbe’s financial activity had to remain as inconspicuous as possible, so as not to give the Russians any reasons for suspicion.

Therefore, the name for *ma'amed* was changed to “נפנה”: Each letter of the word “מעמד” is replaced by the letter following it in the order of the Alef Beis—the “*mem*” being replaced with “*nun*,” the “*ayin*” with a “*pei*,” and so on.

This specific form of code is called “*ksav mezuzah*,” since the idea for this cipher is taken from the mezuzah: It is customary—*al pi Kabbalah*—to inscribe on the backside of the mezuzah the letters כוזו במוכסז כוזו, while in the same spot, just on the other side of the parchment, is written the words “ה' אלוקינו ה'”. If you replace each letter of these three words with the letter which follows it in the Alef Beis, you end up with the “code” written on the other side.

Whenever one needed to write about *ma'amed* in a letter, for example, the word *nifneh* was used in its stead. This form of encryption was also employed when writing any amount of money being sent for *ma'amed*, in order to disguise the subject of the letter. So instead of writing the word “שקל” (or in plural “שקלים”) when writing out any amount of money, the word “תרם” (pl. “תרמכן”) would be used in its place. All of this was done just in order to conceal the existence of “*ma'amed*” from the prying eyes of the N.K.V.D.

The term “*nifneh*” eventually became synonymous with “*ma'amed*,”—to the point that even in places where there were no concerns about using the word “*ma'amed*” freely, Chassidim kept the term “*nifneh*.” One even finds the usage of this word in many letters of the Rebbe, where he confirms receipt of *ma'amed* money (“נפנה נמטר”).

Interestingly, one finds already in the times of the Tzemach Tzedek an attempt to disguise correspondence about *ma'amed* by using coded terms. For example, in a will that the Tzemach Tzedek wrote and left for his sons he refers to money of *ma'amed* (as well as money contributions designated for Eretz Yisroel) as the “tallis business” (this code eventually evolved into “esrogim business”).

A YESOD IN HISKASHRUS

EXPRESSION OF HISKASHRUS

The connection between a Chossid and his Rebbe can be expressed in various ways, but the quality of the *hiskashrus* that is formed through giving *ma'amed* stands out.

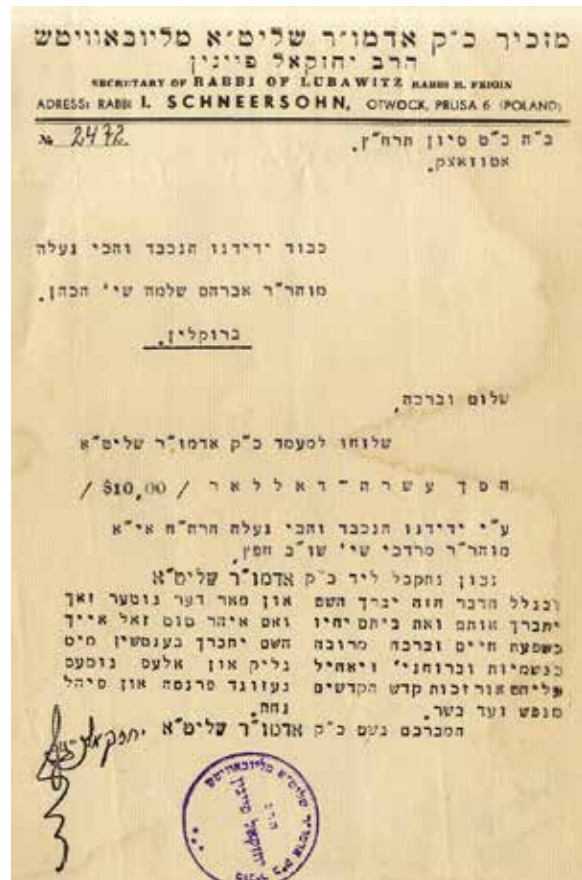
There is the intellectual form of *hiskashrus*, whereby the Chossid learns and comprehends a *sicha* or *maamar* from the Rebbe in which, as we know, the Rebbe invests

his whole being. This is comparable to the relationship and bond which is forged between a student and his teacher.²

Then there is the emotional element of *hiskashrus*, when the Chossid arouses within himself a love for his Rebbe.³

But then there is the bond that is created by giving *ma'amed*: The Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya (*perek* 37) that when one gives tzedakah, he is not merely handing someone some coins—he is parting with a piece of his *chayus*! As was mentioned earlier, since a person invests all his energy into earning that money, and with it he is able to acquire sustenance for himself, giving that money to tzedakah essentially means giving away a part of one’s very being.

The same applies when a Chossid gives *ma'amed* to his Rebbe; he connects to the Rebbe in the most literal and physical way. Indeed, he has connected his very *life* to that of the Rebbe.



A LETTER BY REB CHATCHE FEIGIN ACKNOWLEDGING RECEIPT OF MAAMED FUNDS FROM AMERICA TO THE FRIERDIKER REBBE IN POLAND

ACHDUS

In addition to the unique bond forged between Chossid and Rebbe, giving *ma'amed* accomplishes other things as well. When Chassidim give *ma'amed* to the Rebbe, it unifies and strengthens the *achdus* among Chassidim. As the Rebbe writes in a letter (Zos Chanukah, 5712*), “the *primius* of *ma'amed* is to connect Chassidim with each other through true *achdus*.”

We find another remarkable aspect about giving *ma'amed* in a letter which the Rebbe wrote to Reb Bentzion Shemtov (who, as part of his role as a *shadar*, collected money for the Rebbe's affairs). The Rebbe emphasizes the importance of *ma'amed* from a different angle: When someone gives *ma'amed* to the Rebbe, he is actively taking part in the work which the Rebbe wants to accomplish. In truth, every Yid has the duty to take part in the Rebbe's work. Since that is not always possible, by giving *ma'amed* (the Rebbe uses here the word “*nifneh*”) one accomplishes two things: 1. He removes some of the financial burden from the Rebbe so that he can do whatever he needs to do. 2. The main thing: He thereby takes part in doing the Rebbe's holy work.

The Rebbe writes further that when one becomes aware of this, he will give differently as well.

DETAILS OF MA'AMED

HOW OFTEN?

Initially, there were no fixed times defined in which each Chossid was required to give. Rather, it was treated as a personal matter and left to the giver's discretion to give when he saw fit. However, one does see that over time some type of order evolved in this area. In a letter from the Mittlerer Rebbe in which he encourages the practice of giving *ma'amed*, he refers to the contribution as something to be given weekly, at least for those with more means.

Much later, during the *nesius* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, efforts were made to regulate fixed times for giving *ma'amed*. In many letters, the Frierdiker Rebbe asks Chassidim to work within their respective communities on getting others to commit to giving monthly, or, at least once every three months.

HOW MUCH?

As with the times for giving, the same was with the amount. There was no fixed amount of how much to give, rather each person gave their own amount. This is clearly

seen in the following story as heard from Reb Velvel Konikov: “When my father, Reb Chaim Tzvi Hirsh, would present his *ma'amed* money to the [Frierdiker] Rebbe, he would place it on a white handkerchief. While others brought with them banknotes which were worth much more, my father's coins would glisten on his handkerchief. The Frierdiker Rebbe said about him: ‘Reb Chaim Tzvi Konikov's fifty cents are more precious to me than the large amount of money of the others.’”

FOR EACH – A FIXED AMOUNT

Eventually, the Frierdiker Rebbe worked to establish fixed guidelines for amounts to be given—but he did not make one equal amount for everyone. The point was that each person should have their own personal but *fixed* amount to give. The Frierdiker Rebbe left this up for each person to decide for themselves, but asked that he be notified what that amount will be.

In the beginning of 5688*, the Frierdiker Rebbe—in an out-of-the-ordinary occurrence—spoke publicly about giving *ma'amed*. His secretary, Reb Yechezkel Feigin, who was present at the time, committed the talk to writing, and amongst other things he writes what the Frierdiker Rebbe said about each person setting for themselves a fixed amount to give: “...And from my part, [all] I need to know is who is giving, and how much; I need to know who they are, along with their household and children...”

The Frierdiker Rebbe explained why he needs to know the exact amount each individual is committing to give monthly: “...When I know how much each person committed to giving each month—if he adds to that amount, then he will receive more from Above. If there is a decrease in the monthly giving—which is an indication of decreased blessings from Above for livelihood—I need to know about it.”

The Rebbe wrote a letter on 23 Elul 5707* (shortly after his visit to Paris that year to meet his mother, Rebbetzin Chana, where he passionately encouraged the *inyan* of *ma'amed*), in which he addressed the above question of how much to give: “The particulars of how to go about collecting *ma'amed* money depends on the conditions of each place. Surely, a decision will be reached amongst the members of the *ma'amed* committee according to the majority opinion, and in best interest of the matter at hand. Time will tell if the arrangement is working, or if something needs to be changed.”

In simple terms, there is no set amount one must give, rather everyone decides for themselves according to their means.

WHO GIVES MA'AMED?

IN THE BEGINNING— ONLY CHASSIDIM

On the one hand, the Rabbeim never made restrictions as to who should be included in giving *ma'amed*.

However, there was one restriction in previous generations: one needed to belong to the 'Community of Chassidim,' as it were. This was a necessary condition in order to be a part of those who gave *ma'amed*. The following story illustrates this point:

The Friediker Rebbe arrived on the shores of America for the first time on 12 Elul 5689*. A few days later, on Chai Elul, he hosted a gathering of rabbonim in his place of residence; his first step in strengthening Yiddishkeit in America. One of the rabbonim who came was Rabbi Eliezer Silver (a *baal mesiras nefesh* and an active partner with the Rabbeim in matters of Yiddishkeit) who had recently been appointed as the president of the Agudas HaRabbonim of the U.S. and Canada. His daughter later related that when her father met with the Friediker Rebbe on that occasion, he placed a very large sum of money on

the table for the Rebbe. But the Rebbe refused to take the money, saying, "Only Chassidim give *ma'amed*."

During a farbrengen on Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5710*, the Rebbe related a similar story (it is possible the Rebbe was actually referring to the same story): "It happened that there was an individual who wanted to give the [Friediker] Rebbe *ma'amed*, and the Rebbe refused to take it from him, saying, '*Ma'amed*—only Chassidim give.' The Yid answered and said that he will become a Chossid, to which the Rebbe replied, 'One does not begin with this [i.e. by giving *ma'amed*]...'"

THE REBBE'S APPROACH — EVERY YID!

Such was the accepted approach regarding who is eligible to give *ma'amed*. However, the Rebbe urged time and again for the circle of those giving *ma'amed* to expand and include even those who do not self-identify as Chassidim. In a letter to Reb Bentzion Shemtov dated 9 Cheshvan 5708*, the Rebbe explains the reason for this change: "In general, there is no need to be overly cautious before deciding to bring up the topic of *nifneh*. In particular, when bearing in mind that in recent years it has become most noticeable that he [i.e. the Friediker Rebbe] is the leader of *klal Yisroel*. The majority of his activities are



THE FRIEDIKER REBBE WALKS AT THE HEAD OF AN ENTOURAGE DURING HIS VISIT TO SPRINGFIELD, MA IN 5690. RABBI ELIEZER SILVER IS SEEN ON THE FRIEDIKER REBBE'S RIGHT, REB DOVID MEIR RABINOWITZ ON HIS LEFT

in matters that relate to everyone, and are sometimes focused on those far from Yiddishkeit...”

However, the Rebbe also set limits: “...but on the other hand, you should not talk about this [i.e. *ma'amed*] with everyone, and certainly to be careful of those who after [they give money] will say that ‘I have made Avraham wealthy...’⁴”

In addition, the Rebbe spells out the attitude with which one should approach such an individual. It should be viewed as a personal duty, not as a favor. In the Rebbe’s words: “[The giving of *ma'amed*] needs to be done with the proper attitude on the part of the giver; namely, that this is in no way comparable to making a contribution to a *meshulach*, *chas v’shalom*.”

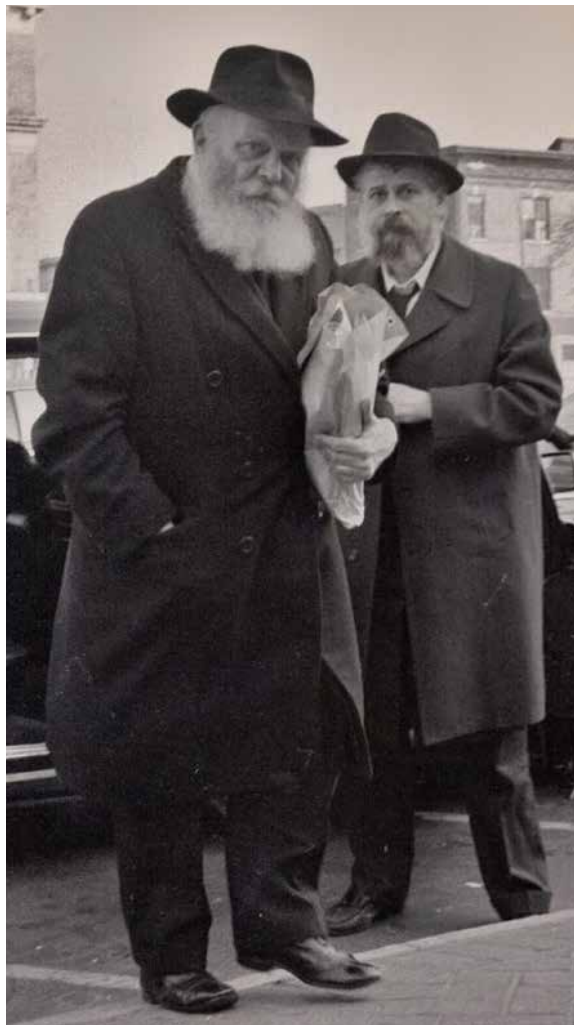
Later in the letter, the Rebbe emphasizes that one should not be satisfied with just taking money from the individual. Rather to “focus on being *mekarev* the giver and his family, if at all possible, to the general concept of a Rebbe and *manhig Yisroel*, whether it be by talking to him directly, or through him reading printed material on the subject (*zichronos* [=personal memoirs] of Chasidim), *sichos* etc.)”

ANSHEI MA’AMED — THE SHADAR

Historically, some of the Chassidim were able to give the *ma'amed* directly to the Rebbe. However, the Chassidim who lived in distant places and thus did not come to the Rebbe as often, were not able to do so. Therefore, the concept of a “*shadar*” was instituted. As the name *shadar* suggests—it is an acronym for “*shlucha d’rabonon*,” lit. emissary of a rabbinic authority—these were people whom the Rebbe would choose to travel from place to place to collect *ma'amed* from the Chassidim. Amongst the most famous ones in recent generations are Reb Yitzchok Horowitz, (known as Reb Itche der Masmid), Reb Nissen Nemanov, Reb Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, Reb Bentzion Shemtov, and Reb Shmuel Dovid Raichik, to name a few.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FUND

Beginning with the *nesius* of the Alter Rebbe until the *nesius* of the Rebbe Rashab, the Rabbeim were personally involved in overseeing *ma'amed*. This is understandable in light of the fact that during those years the main emphasis



of the fund was supplying the needs of *beis harav*. However, during the *nesius* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, *ma'amed* turned into an institution for itself and its management was done mainly through the *mazkirus*.

THE SUPERVISORS

On 11 Iyar 5688*, the Frierdiker Rebbe appointed Reb Yechezkel (“Chatche”) Feigin—his secretary at the time—to both oversee the *ma'amed* collection and to manage the funds. Reb Chatche wrote many letters to *anash* around the world promoting the importance of the fund, especially to the members of Aguch in America, from where most of the financial support came.

MA’AMED IN AMERICA

The general responsibility for the management of *ma'amed* overseas, i.e. Canada and the U.S., was placed upon the shoulders of Agudas Chasidei Chabad. In

5695*, the Frieddiker Rebbe addressed a special letter to the ‘Management Committee of Aguch in the USA and Canada,’ in which he clarifies what the main roles of Aguch are, and amongst them is the collection of *ma’amed*. Two years later, he sent them a prepared Document of Regulations of Aguch, in which he details the nature of their work in this area.

Indeed, amongst their varied activities, they printed special *takanos* for the members of “Chevras Machzikei Beis Chayenu,” an association whose members took part in providing financial support for the Rebbe’s household.

The Frieddiker Rebbe was very concerned that there should be an orderly system in place with regards to the collection of *ma’amed* and that the appropriate people should be appointed for the job. A lack thereof, he writes, can have a detrimental effect, both physically and spiritually. The Frieddiker Rebbe did not desist from highlighting the vital importance of the above, and even as late as in 5707* he writes to those involved: “*Men bedarf machen ah seder in hachnosas ma’amed*—there needs to be structure made in the collection of *ma’amed*.”

In order to facilitate the delivery of funds from different countries during World War II—something which entailed much difficulty—the Frieddiker Rebbe opened a special bank account in Montreal for this purpose and appointed Reb Moshe Eliyahu Gerlitzky as trustee on the account.

GABA’IM

Aside from the appointment of individuals as *shadarim*—personally chosen by the Rabbeim throughout the years—there were communities that appointed special committees to deal with matters of *ma’amed*, as well as designated *gaba'im* (collectors) who would be responsible to gather all the *ma’amed* of that area into one specific place. Regarding how to decide whom to select for the position, the Rebbe writes to a member of *anash* who had been offered such a position and was debating whether to accept it or not, to rely on the opinion of the people around him. Since, most of the time, a person is biased and may therefore come to the wrong conclusion, he shouldn’t trust his own opinion but rather he should rely on those who want to appoint him.

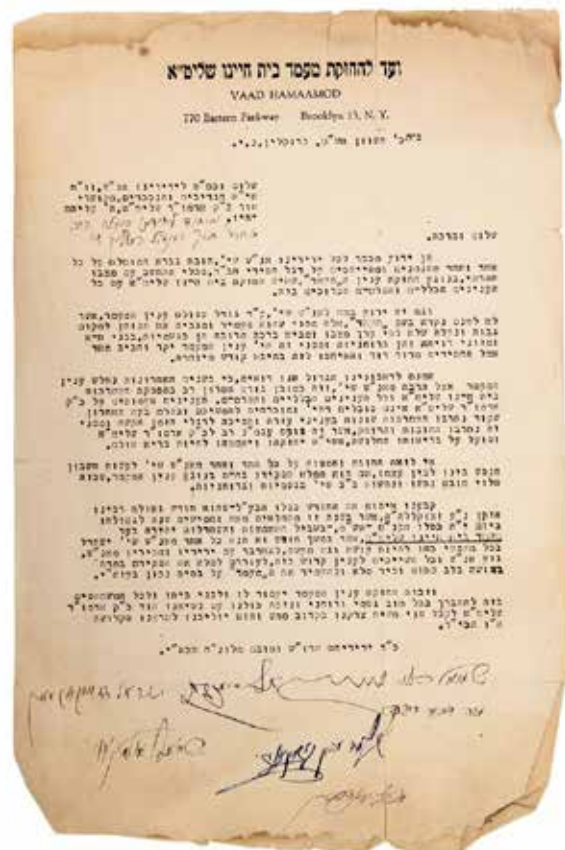
THE REBBE CHOOSES

On other occasions, however, the Rebbe was personally involved in determining who was to be responsible for collecting the *ma’amed*. Reb Avraham Alter Heber of Nachlas Har Chabad was involved in one such instance, and related the following story: “During the month of Tishrei of 5729*, I went in to the Rebbe for *yechidus*. At

the time, I was responsible for collecting *ma’amed* at the yeshiva in Kfar Chabad, after which I would transfer the money to the one in charge of *ma’amed* in Eretz Yisroel, who in turn would send it directly to the Rebbe. During that time, there was a vacancy in the position for general overseer of *ma’amed* in Eretz Yisroel, and I—not knowing where to transfer the funds—asked the Rebbe about it during the *yechidus*. (Later, I found out that another guest from Kfar Chabad had also asked the Rebbe the same thing.) The Rebbe replied to me: ‘Regarding [the question] to whom to give the money—there will probably be a decision about the matter during the month of Tishrei, *b’li neder*. It will then be passed on to everyone [involved], and it will be passed on to you as well’—implying that the Rebbe himself will make the decision...”

ADDITIONAL BRACHOS

The Rebbe wrote on one occasion that those involved in the perpetuation of *ma’amed* merit a special *bracha v’hatzlacha b’gashmius ub’ruchnius*: “I was happy to read your letter, which deals with matters of *ma’amed*, and surely this will bring you additional success in your health and personal matters.”



AN APPEAL FOR MAAMED TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY OF BEIS HARAV, SENT BY THE “VAAD LAHACHZAKAS MAAMAD BEIS CHAYENU,” IN 5709

WHAT WAS IT USED FOR?

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

Though given together, *ma'amed* was usually used for two purposes: 1. Tzedakah expenses and for general activities, as the Rebbe sees fit. 2. Maintaining the Rebbe's household.

In earlier generations, the main emphasis of *ma'amed* was on the second purpose, its personal aspect. The fund had a clear objective—to provide for the needs of the Rebbe and his household (“*beis harav*”). At the same time, however, the money was also used for general needs, such as for *hafatzas hamaayanos*. (This is all aside from the money that the Alter Rebbe collected for “*Ma'amed Eretz HaKodesh*,” which was used to support Chassidim living in Eretz Yisroel.)

Beginning with the *nesius* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, the emphasis was placed more on the public aspect of it (even though, then also, part of it was used for the Rebbe's personal needs). From then on, the *ma'amed* funds formed a sort of “Lubavitch Activities Fund,” from which the needs of *beis harav* were also funded.

An example of a general use made of the *ma'amed* is the purchase of *sefarim* for the central Lubavitch library, which for several years was funded by *ma'amed* money. Another example of *ma'amed* money being utilized for the general public can be found in a letter of the Rebbe written on 18 Kislev 5711*, in which he reveals to Chassidim how the Frierdiker Rebbe used part of the money—for a discretionary tzedakah fund (“*לשכת חשאי'ן*”).

“MANY LOFTY MATTERS”

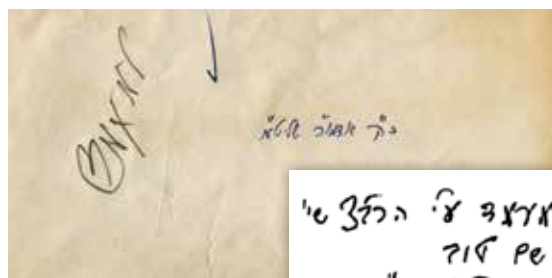
In 5706*, Reb Moshe Leib Rodshtein (secretary of the Frierdiker Rebbe and, later, the Rebbe) was appointed to oversee the *ma'amed* fund. In a letter dated 24 Teves 5707*, he describes the purpose of the fund and amongst other things he writes: “It is worth emphasizing that the institution of “*ma'amed*”—aside from its simple purpose, which is to provide for the expenses of the Rebbe and his household—also includes in its purpose many other lofty matters; matters too many for me to write them all...”

Amongst other things, it was discovered in the *igros* of the Frierdiker Rebbe that one of the “lofty matters” for which he made use of *ma'amed* was ensuring a transfer of property in Chevron to be under his name.

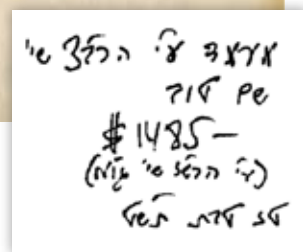
In a *yechidus* with elder Chassidim in Elul 5748*, the Rebbe said:



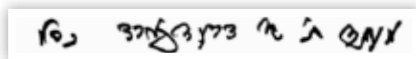
A RECEIPT FROM THE “LISHKAS CHASHA'IN” FUND IN THE 5710S.



OFTEN, THE REBBE WOULD NOTE ON THE ENVELOPES THE SUMS OF MONIES AND THE DONOR. ON AN ENVELOPE, THE REBBE MADE A CHECK TO INDICATE IT WAS RECEIVED AND WROTE למעמד.



מעמד על ידי הרב בנציון שיחי' שם טוב \$1485 - (על ידי הרב שניאור זלמן שיחי' גורארי) ט"ז טבת תש"ט



מעמד תמימים שיחי' דבעדפארד. כסלו

“Regarding *ma'amed*—my father in-law the [Frierdiker] Rebbe had a practice to divide the money into three parts for three different causes: *Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch*, *Machne Yisroel*, and *lishkas chasha'in* (the discretionary fund—a subsidiary of *Machne Yisroel*); and I have done the same.

“Therefore, this should continue also after 120 years; all the *ma'amed* monies should be divided between these three institutions...”¹

1. Much of the information in this article is based on Kovetz D'mei Ma'amed, Vaad Hatmimim, 5774.
2. Sichas Shabbos Parshas Bereishis 5737.
3. See letter from the Frierdiker Rebbe, Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5702.
4. I.e. they will expect to have a say in matters of Chabad, etc.
5. Cheshbono Shel Olam, p. 72.