

ALL THE BEST!

by Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann

The Rambam (Maimonides) (Hilchos Issurei Mizbeiach 7:11) writes that when one feeds or clothes the needy, he should give them his finest. And when one builds a synagogue, it should be more beautiful than his own home. An example of this is Abel, who presented Hashem with the choicest of his produce (see Genesis 4:4), which Hashem accepted, unlike the offering of Cain, which was rejected by Hashem, for it was not the best he had. The Rambam concludes by quoting a posuk in our parsha, "Kol cheilev le-Hashem - All of the choicest should be for G-d." This posuk dictates that if one sanctifies something for use in the Beis HaMikdash (Holy Temple), that too should be taken from his finest possessions.

It is well known that in Europe, among the most desirable pairs of tefillin (phylacteries) were those containing the parshios (portions of the Torah hand-written on parchment) of the renowned sofer (scribe) R' Moshe P'shevorsker, a disciple of the holy Maggid of Mezritsch. Not only was R' Moshe a saintly man, but he also took meticulous care in writing every letter of the parshios, constructing each one according to the very exacting refinements contained in the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law). Furthermore, he wrote each word, and in particular the name of Hashem, with great kavannah (concentration and meaning). It was not easy to find a pair of tefillin written by R' Moshe, and those that were for sale were generally very expensive.

The Gerer Rebbe, R' Avraham Mordechai Alter (1866-1948), who was rebbe for more than forty years, owned a pair of R' Moshe P'shevorsker's tefillin. He treasured them, and had a custom of using them only once a year, on erev Yom Kippur.

Once, a poor young boy came to the Gerer Rebbe and told him that he couldn't afford a pair of tefillin. "Stay here a moment," said the rebbe, "and I'll see what I can do." Soon, the rebbe returned with a pair of tefillin in his hands. They were his own treasured pair, the ones with the parshios of R' Moshe P'shevorsker. "Here," he said, "I rarely use these tefillin. Take them, and use them in the best of health."

When the rebbe's family found out that he had given away his priceless tefillin, they were aghast. They protested and complained. "I don't understand," said the rebbe, "the Torah says kol cheilev le-Hashem p one should give the very best that he has for Hashem's mitzvos." For the mitzvah of tzedakah, he had given away his very best. (Adapted from The Maggid Speaks).

Not too long ago, a sefer Torah (Torah scroll) was donated to our beis hamedrash (synagogue) by

the father of one of our mispallelim. Although not a sofer by trade, he taught himself how to write, and personally wrote an entire Torah scroll. His wife, not to be left out, felt that she too would like to have a part in this great mitzvah. She sold her diamond engagement ring in order to buy a magnificent silver atarah (crown) for the sefer Torah. We were profoundly inspired by this amazing example of kol cheilev le-Hashem!

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