

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11213
Hyacinth 3-9250

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
9th of Sivan, 5739
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. Elimelech Epstein
Hadassah House
1095 Rochdale Rd.
Manchester M9 4FW, Eng.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 30th of Nissan, which reached me with considerable delay. In it you write about _____, who would like to open a shop and, presumably, would want to manage it personally.

Although it is generally difficult to give advice in such a situation from a distance, and not knowing the person - I do not think, generally speaking, that it would be advisable for her to undertake such a responsibility, in view of the fact that she has _____ children of school age and has also to take care of household responsibilities in her important role as Akeres Habayis. Even, as you write, she can get adequate help in the house and there would be no problem of child-minding, it cannot be a substitute for the personal attention and care that the children need in their upbringing and Chinuch. These considerations surely have top priority, and all other considerations can only be secondary.

To be sure, if one has time to spare, it should be utilized in the best possible way, but one should not confuse the order of priorities.

Inasmuch as everything is by Divine Providence, and I note from your stationery that you are a chartered accountant, I want to call your attention to the well known teaching of our Sages, based on the principle of "Know Him in all your ways." In light of this, I trust that you are utilizing your professional contacts with Jews to encourage them in the matter of Cheshbon Tzedek, which every Jew is expected to make from time to time, in order to ensure that his everyday life and conduct is fully in keeping with the Torah and Mitzvoth.

There is the well known saying of the Baal Shem Tov that everything in a Jew's life is instructive as to how to serve G-d. Thus, there is a special and basic instruction that one can derive from accountancy, namely, that where there is a discrepancy even of only a penny, it indicates a basic error in the bookkeeping, as though it involved a very substantial amount, which is not the case in ordinary business transactions, where a discrepancy of a

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penny would be of no consequence. This helps to understand better the imperative, "Be careful with a small Mitzvo as with a stringent one." At first glance it is difficult to understand how one can compare a small Mitzvo with a stringent one, especially as the Torah itself terms one small and the other stringent. But in the light of the above, if one truly makes a Cheshbon Tzedek, one must realize that all Mitzvoth come from the same Source, and each one of them "sanctifies us with His commandments." Therefore, a transgression of even a "small" Mitzvo is basically as deplorable as transgressing a stringent one. There is surely no need to elaborate to you any further.

I trust you had a joyous and inspiring Yom Tov of Mattan Torah, and may the inspiration be with you and yours throughout the year.

With blessing,

Schneerson