

See, I have taught you decrees and ordinances, as Hashem, my G-d, has commanded me. (4:5)

Chazal derive an interesting *halachah* from this *pasuk*. Moshe *Rabbeinu* enjoins the nation to observe his manner of teaching the law to the nation. Just as he performed his mission gratis, likewise, when a Jew teaches Torah to his fellow Jew, he should not do so for remuneration. Does that mean that the thousands of *rebbeim*, *moros*, *roshei yeshivah*, *rabbanim*, *roshei kollel*, *menahalim*, anybody who teaches and disseminates Torah, should relinquish payment? Does this indicate that their profession is a “non-profession”? You get what you pay for. The salary one commands indicates the significance and value of the position. If one does not command much of a salary – or worse, does it for nothing – is this an indication that the endeavor in which he is engaged is of little consequence and even less significance?

Clearly not. In *Yalkut Meam Loez*, *Horav Yaakov Culi*, *zl*, offers the following analogy to illuminate us concerning the incalculable value of Torah. A man was very close with the ruler of a small country. The ruler was a brilliant man who kept to himself, disinterested in becoming involved in the everyday strife and petty issues that plague other rulers. This ruler had his close circle of friends of which this man was one. He had enormous wealth; thus, he was satisfied to rule over his small country in a benevolent manner.

One day, the friend paid a visit to the ruler. He gave his friend an in-depth tour of the country and the palace. The two friends feasted together and had a great time enjoying one another’s company. As a parting gift acknowledging their abiding relationship, the king gave his friend a sword. In those days, a sheathed sword was part of one’s apparel, his daily uniform. The king’s sword was comparable to his scepter; no one could ever wear it. This sword was made completely of the finest, purest gold, its hilt inlaid with diamonds and precious jewels. The material value of this sword was beyond a “king’s ransom.” This is the extent to which the king valued his relationship with his friend.

Effusive with expressions of gratitude, the friend bid the king farewell as he began his journey home. All went well, as the king presented his friend with the sword and returned to the palace. All the king’s ministers stood in awe, observing the beauty of the sword. One of the ministers, himself a wealthy man, was envious of the friend who had received this impressive gift. He, too, wanted such a sword to call his own. He went to an artisan and commissioned an exact replica of the king’s sword for his personal use. Once he received it in his hands, he was a new person, his envy ameliorated.

Weeks passed, and the minister took a trip outside the country’s borders. When he came to the border, he was asked if he had anything to declare. He proudly displayed his sword, for which they assessed a heavy tax. The minister was beside himself with anger. “How dare you charge me taxes on my sword?” he complained. “Did you collect a similar tax a few weeks ago when the

other person (the king's friend) with a similar sword passed through?" They replied that they had not. "Why is his sword any different than mine?" he railed at them.

"His sword is the sword that belonged to the king. Apart from its material value of gold and precious stones, it is part and parcel of the king's uniform, part of his honor and glory. We are unable to appraise such a sword. It is priceless! To place a premium on the sword would, by extension, impugn the honor of the king. What belongs to the king is above and beyond estimable value. We cannot say the same for your sword."

For those who have toiled in the vineyard of Torah, who have dedicated themselves and their families to a life of excellence in Torah, both in learning and dissemination, the value of Torah has never been a question. One cannot possibly place a price on Torah. To study it is our obligation; to teach and disseminate it is our privilege. How can anyone put a price on the prime entity that connects us with the Creator? A Torah educator receives remuneration for the time he expends during which he could have engaged in other, more lucrative, pursuits. No one receives payment for teaching Torah, because we are unable to assess this endeavor.