

## Paying For a Child's Extracurricular Activities With Ma'aser Money

### **Rav Baruch Fried**

**Question:** If someone's child needs extracurricular activities like clubs, piano lessons or horseback riding, can he use *ma'aser* to pay for it?

**Answer:** If someone cannot afford to pay for his household expenses, he certainly can use his money for that and does not need to give *ma'aser* to *tzedakah*. Even if he is wealthy and can afford to give *ma'aser*, he technically would be allowed to use *ma'aser* money for expenses like this. The reasoning for this is as follows:

Technically, the halacha is that a father is only obligated to support and feed his child until the age of 6. When the child is older than that, any money the father spends on him would be in the realm of *tzedakah* and one could use *ma'aser* funds for that. Rav Moshe Feinstein, however, says that this halacha is not applicable in most cases today. He explains that the Gemara says that part of one's obligation to support his wife is to feed both her and the "*archi u'parchi*", which translates as the people who hang around the house. Providing for those whom it is normal to find inside the house and depend on the wife to feed them is part of the obligation a husband has to his wife. Since in today's times it is normal for children to remain at home until well after age 6, the husband's responsibility to his wife is to feed and support them as long as contemporary society dictates. Having said this, the father only has to provide them with whatever falls under the societal norms. Anything that is extracurricular does not fall under that category; therefore, he has no direct obligation to provide his children with such activities. If he does pay for such needs, he can use *ma'aser* money.

Note that how we define a "need" is subject to the rules of "*dei machsoro*" found in the Halachos of *tzedakah*. It would have to be deemed a necessity for the physical or emotional wellbeing of that particular child.