

The Time Frame For Ma'aser

Rav Dovid Grossman, Rosh Bais HaVaad

Question: Is there a specific time frame to give *ma'aser*? If I prefer to give all of my *ma'aser* once a year when I do my taxes, is that okay?

Answer: There is no obligation to give *ma'aser* at any specific time. Some people take *ma'aser* off of every paycheck, while others take every few months or once a year. According to halacha, all these ways are acceptable. Whichever way one chooses to separate his *ma'aser*, it is important to make a good calculation and to be exact. The Gemara says that there is a guarantee that if one gives *ma'aser*, he will become rich. Some people ask, I give *ma'aser*; why am I not rich?

One answer offered for this question is that this guarantee applies only to people who make an exact calculation and give the precise amount of *ma'aser*.

Accordingly, it is a good idea for many people who are paid by the month to make an exact calculation every time they receive a paycheck and put aside that amount of money for *ma'aser*. (One need not take off *ma'aser* from earnings that were deducted from his paycheck for taxes.)

In short, one can arrange any setup he wants for how and when he separates his *ma'aser*, as long as he is careful to keep precise calculations. If he has no reason not to, it might be a good idea to separate *ma'aser* from each paycheck, but if one has a reason why a different arrangement works better for him, he may do whatever is easiest. The Chofetz Chaim suggests that it is better to calculate *ma'aser* twice a year as it says "*Asser t'asser*". He suggests two specific times, the month of Nissan and before Rosh Hashanah. If this works for you, you can do it that way, if this does not work for you, you may do it any time that does.