

Q1. May one use maaser for tuition in general?

Q2. Even if in a normal circumstance one cannot, is it possible that the tuition being paid during the COVID-19 school closures may be paid from maaser money?

Answer 1: The general Halacha is that wherever there is a mitzvah that one has to do, he cannot use maaser money for that expense. This being the case, there may be a difference between boys and girls schools.

● Boys Schools- As there is an obligation for a father to teach his son Torah, and most parents send to school to fulfill that personal obligation, maaser money should not be used. There are exceptions when there are additional items more than the basic tuition necessary. This would possibly include different programs within a school, or if by paying full tuition, the school can subsidize tuition for parents who cannot afford it. (One should discuss their specific situation with a competent posek.)

● Girls' Schools- Since a father is technically not obligated to teach his daughter Torah, it would seem on the surface that maaser can be used. However Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l says rules that since the government mandates all children to go to school, if one wouldn't send his daughter to a yeshiva, the government would mandate a public school. This makes it a mitzvah that has to be done, and thus one may not use maaser for it.

Answer 2: Regarding the current climate there are two reasons that make it different, and why the general consensus seems to be that one can use maaser.

1. Even though we are encouraged by the mo'etzes and the schools to go to do what we can to continue to pay full tuition, it could be that the bulk of the tuition is not a chiyuv (obligation) in the current climate, and thus one may be able to use maaser.
2. Regarding girls schools, there is even more of a reason to say that you can use maaser. Rav Moshe's pesak was due to the fact that the government forces kids to go to school, whereas now the government is forcing kids to be home. That being the case there is no chiyuv for a girl to go to school, so one should be able to use maaser.