

POSITIVE EXPOSURE

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לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי ש"י בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

THE IMPACT OF READING MATERIAL

The Rambam writes: Hashem commanded us to refrain from studying about an *avoda zara* or its service, for it can cause a person to be drawn after it. Furthermore, anything which will bring a person to question the basis of our *emunah*, may not be studied. Since a person's mind is limited, he may think of a question to which he will not find a satisfactory answer, leaving him in doubt about the truth of Yiddishkeit.

(רמב"ם הל' ע"ז פ"ב ה"ב)

Chazal say that one who reads books of extraneous nature (*sfarim hachitzonim*) may lose his portion in *Olam Haba*. The Rivash explains that even if he does not believe what is written there, he still forfeits his *Olam Haba*.

(סנהדרין ק ע"א, שו"ת ריב"ש סי' מה)

The Alter Rebbe *paskens*: Vain literature may not be read if they distract a man from learning Torah, and books which arouse *taivos*, are absolutely forbidden for they incite the *yetzer hara*. Those writing or publishing these books are amongst those who 'cause others to sin'.

Furthermore, a book or magazine which contains forbidden material may not be read at all, for one may come to read the forbidden sections.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' שו ס"ל, קצות השלחן סי' קז בדה"ש מג)

In תרמ"ה, when the Friediker Rebbe was only eight years old, the Rebbe Rashab wrote his first will. In the will, he directed the Rebbetzin concerning the education of their young son.

"Regarding our son *sheyichye*, I request that you watch over him in all matters *b'gashmius* and *b'ruchnius*, which nowadays necessitates a special safeguard. Most importantly, he needs to be protected from bad friends, who lack *yiras shamayim* and acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. Because of their exposure to inappropriate things, including *yiddish* written books and stories which many of them read and lend to one another, they can negatively influence others. Much of such literatures can *r"l* cause a person to think foreign thoughts when occupied with matters of *Torah, mitzvos* and *tefila*. They desensitize and cool down one's enthusiasm in anything holy. May Hashem have mercy on us and send Moshiach speedily

in our days. Amen."

(חנוך לנער ע' 26)

During a search conducted in the *yeshivah* Tomchei Temimim, secular books were found among the possessions of some *bochurim*. The Rebbe Rashab was extremely disturbed and was very upset at the *bochurim* for allowing such a thing to happen.

The *mashpia* Reb Groinem and the *choizer* Reb Moshe traveled to the Rebbe's *datche* to reconcile between the *bochurim* and the Rebbe. Speaking to the Rebbe, they said, "Being that only a few *bochurim* had the books, why then is the Rebbe upset at all the *talmidim*?" "What do you mean?" exclaimed the Rebbe, "they are being showered with Chassidus!"

(רשימו"ד חדש ע' 175)

'KOSHER' READING

In is *paskened* in Shulchan Aruch that it is forbidden to learn anything from an *apikores* for one may be influenced by his beliefs.

The Mezritcher Maggid said that one should not learn from a *sefer* written by a *rasha* even if contains valid ideas, for the reader connects with the *neshama* of the one who wrote the *sefer*. Certainly one should not learn from books written by *apikorsim*.

(שו"ע יו"ד סי' קע"ט סכ"ג, מגיד דבריו ליעקב סה, מעין גנים פט"ו פ"ג)

The Chidushei Harim said that just as a boy whose brothers had died from a Bris may not undergo a Bris despite the doubt; similarly, secular newspapers which have caused more than two *yidden* of the proper path, should not be read by any *Yid*.

(בואו חשבון ע' כז)

In a *yechidus* with *n'shei chabad* in תשי"ד, the Rebbe lashed out at the challenge of the time – the television. At the time, many *Yidden* considered the television to be an innocent provider of kosher entertainment and numerous *frum* *Yidden* brought it into their home. The Rebbe explained that the 'kosher' television was not really so 'kosher' and would only spiral further downward. Children will see their parents using the television and will watch other programs, and the adults as

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well will become lax over time.

The Rebbe said that even if one sees a *frum* or even a chassidische Yid who has a television in his home, one should not learn from him. No one is perfect, and that person is deficient in this area. One would not want to be blind, though there are successful people with that deficiency.

The Rebbe told the women, "In the past Yidden were so particular to stay far from any negative influences, even walking near a church or similar; but with the television one brings the church *r"l* into their home! One must know that it is all a test from Hashem, to see if we indeed love Hashem with all our heart. See to it to fix this matter in your cities, and here in particular."

(לקו"ש חי"ח ע' 459, תו"מ חי"ב ע' 192)

In Eretz Yisroel there were various secular newspapers being issued in Eretz Yisroel. The Rabbonim there proclaimed that they are forbidden and not to be read.

When one Yid questioned the Rebbe about them, the Rebbe replied: "Concerning the secular newspapers, especially those which contain forbidden material - there is no need to elaborate about this, for the *Shulchan Aruch* explicitly states that it is forbidden, and many proclamations have been recently made in Eretz Yisroel against them."

(לקו"ש חכ"ג ע' 363)

When one man complained about *machshavos zaros* during *davening*, the Friediker Rebbe replied that it is a result of reading newspapers. "Stop reading the articles of foolishness and *aveira*, dedicate yourself to learning, and Hashem will help you in your learning and *yiras shamayim*."

(אג"ק ריי"צ ח"ט ע' שעה)

READING THE 'NEWS'

In a *yechidus* with a group of chassidim, the Rebbe expressed his disappointment with those who read newspapers, even for 'good reasons.'

"How is it that chassidim read the newspaper to find out what is happening in Lubavitch? The papers are for people on the outside; chassidim have other ways of knowing about Lubavitch. The fact is that when one looks at one page where there is a write-up on Lubavitch, he comes to read what is written in the second and third page as well..." The Rebbe concluded, "This is such a descent from who we really are..."

(דעם רבינ'ס קינדער ע' רה)

Reb Yoel Kahan related: I was once told by the Rebbe to positively influence another *talmid*, address his questions and guide him in his *avodas Hashem*. I was dealing with him for a while, and he was progressing nicely. I was therefore shocked to hear him comment something which implied doubts in his *emunah*. At a loss of how to respond, I decided to seek the Rebbe's counsel.

The Rebbe said, "I know this person, and there is no need to worry. These words are meaningless and are most likely

a result of reading a newspaper before going to sleep. It can therefore be expected that he will speak as such the following day..."

It is needless to add, that after talking it over with the *talmid*, he realized that he was falling in his *avodah* solely due to inappropriate reading material. As soon as he stopped reading the newspapers, he was well on his way, on the right track.

(מפי הרב יואל כהן שי')

On *erev Shabbos Parshas Vayigash* תשכ"ט, the first space shuttle landed on the moon and made headlines in all the media. At the Shabbos *farbrengen*, the Rebbe explained a lesson to be learnt from the event and added, "One should not mistakenly think that he should read the newspapers to be able to derive lessons in serving Hashem. The world would be better off without the papers at all, and it is a *rachmonus* on those who read them.

"There are those who immediately upon arising in the morning listen to the radio to hear the latest news. They then hurriedly buy the paper to read up on all the details, and memorize the names of all the personalities, their families etc. Then it's back to the radio to ensure they are updated on any details they may have missed... Entering shul on Shabbos, they make sure to display their knowledge, so as not be deemed a '*batlan*' who does not know what is happening in the world..."

The Rebbe then related a story: "There was a Yid in Lubavitch who would sit day and night learning in the *beis medrash*, and had no interest in what was happening in the outside world. One day, someone related to him that Czar Nikolai was crowned. The Yid was surprised, 'Didn't they crown him years ago? Why are they crowning him again?'

"It turned out that when he was a child, in the days of the *Mitteler Rebbe* (תקע"ה), Nikolai the first had been crowned and in his honor they had lit additional candles in the shul. Since then, without this Yid realizing it, two Czars had come and gone. When Nikolai the second was crowned seventy years later (in תרס"ד), the Yid was perplexed by the second crowning of Czar Nikolai."

The Rebbe concluded, "From this story we can see how Yidden lived in the past, long peaceful years; unlike today, when people need to run to doctors and take tranquilizers out of stress."

(שיחיו"ק תשכ"ט ח"א ע' 261)

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