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עש"ק חקת-בלק תשנ"ו

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Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Levin  
שליט"א Rosh Hayeshiva  
Telshe Yeshiva Chicago  
3535 W. Foster Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60625

Dear Rabbi Levin שליט"א:

It was very nice seeing the Rosh Hayeshiva and the Hanhala. It is always a *חיצוק* for me to visit the yeshiva and I hope I will have the opportunity to come again soon.

As a follow up to our conversation regarding the Internet, the Rosh Hayeshiva suggested I write my *הערות* in a letter for the recently established committee. Much of our discussion was previously addressed in an excellent *Jewish Observer* article (February 1995). However, I feel the points made in the article are for the most part being ignored by the general public - even the "Torah Velt". Hence, the need for our discussion and this letter which will illustrate the imminent danger we face.

Everyone has come to recognize the dangers of television. It is for this reason that many young families within the "Torah Velt" who grew up with television, do not own one. As the Rosh Hayeshiva indicated, this battle is unfortunately far from over. As dangerous as television is, the Internet is a lot worse. From what I have read, this innocent looking piece of technology has the potential to *רחמנא לצלן* poison the minds of many Yidden, with our youth being at greatest risk.

The most serious problems are as follows:

**I. What's Available** - The level of "schmootz" is much greater than standard network television. Pornographic material found in adult bookstores, video outlets, theaters, night clubs, and red light districts, can now be downloaded onto a personal computer. Thanks to modern technology which is constantly being upgraded, this includes clear pictures and graphic interaction. Many have claimed that one "has to really search hard" for the "schmootz". This is not true. It can be accessed with a few "clicks of the mouse". Although parental control is available, the "control software" has not been able to keep up. Also, parental control is a control set up *by* parents. Nothing is available to control *the* parents.

There is another unprecedented level of schmootz. Immorality was something one only read about in newspapers and novels or saw on a television screen. The Internet now gives someone the opportunity to *communicate* and strike up relationships with immoral strangers whom one would

normally cross the street to avoid . This includes people who are very proud of their עבודה זרה, גילוי עריות, and שפיכת דמים and who enjoy expressing their demented opinions and warped philosophies. Besides live online conversations in "chat rooms", one can also receive "E-Mail", and subscribe to electronic bulletins and newsletters published by such people who often practice and preach everything against Torah belief and practice. Once someone has your E-Mail address, they can send you כל מיני פריצות at anytime. One can not imagine the impact all of this can have on a yeshiva bochur or Bais Yaakov girl. What is there to stop a curious בן תורה ?

**II. Lack of Shame** - Until now, if someone wanted to obtain illicit material, their יצר הרע had to overcome the concern of potential shame of being seen by someone else. How could someone risk destroying their reputation by entering an adult video store? Similar to television, but more lethal, the Internet has removed one of the best defenses against the יצר הרע - the lack of בושה.

What is the היתר for anyone to put themselves in such a difficult מקום נסיין? This situation is similar to the משל given to the חטא העגל - the yidden were like a child whose father left him by a פתח של זונות with a lot of money - ממה יעשה אותו הבן שלא יחטא - Can parents with Internet answer this question posed by Moshe Rabbenu? Rav Schwab זצ"ל once said at an Agudah Convention, "Video Stores are like the פתחו של גיהנם." I only wonder how he would have described the Internet.

Parents who feel they will "control" what their children see, are making a big mistake. First, the best way of control is not having it - once it is in, control becomes extremely difficult. Second, parents should think back to their youth. Did their parents "control" (e.g. on television) really work, especially when the parents were away or late at night when they were sleeping? Today, most teenagers know a lot more about computers than their parents can even comprehend. They will get away with a lot more than the parents think.

**III. Feet חזיר** - No one can deny the Internet has an ever increasing amount of advantages. One has access to so much useful information - from how to buy a new car, to obtaining directions to any street in America, to referencing information from enormous government and library databases. It also serves as a tremendous business and communications tool (e.g. one can "talk" overseas almost for free). Even דברי תורה is available. This is very commendable, as it has increased הרבצת תורה and קירוב.

However, these advantages make the problem more serious. When one wishes to purchase a television it is 95% for entertainment and 5% for education (news, etc.). The disadvantages outshine the "educational" aspect. However, the Internet is 80% *educational*. It is very easy to claim, "Look at all the great educational and business opportunities." It has been an uphill battle with television which is black and white "bad", על אחת כמה וכמה, the Internet which is so "wonderful". In addition, because there is so much interesting material previously unavailable, one can waste many hours of precious time aimlessly searching the Internet.

Of course, these problems do not apply to an isolated home computer. However, the “innocent” personal computer combined with a modem and Internet subscription in one’s home is like storing medication in a candy jar with a two year old child present. As it becomes more popular (a first time user logs on every 30 seconds!), the danger only increases. The solution is not simple.

I have no doubt that the “Freedom of Speech” behind the Internet will רחמנא לצלן lead society at-large to even higher levels of domestic violence, promiscuity, etc., and cause permanent damage to the minds of not only children but adults as well. Unfortunately, the warnings of even some non-Jewish sociologists and fundamentalists are either ignored by the general public or overpowered by the libertarians.

Keeping the Internet out of *our* homes will בעז"ה allow כלל ישראל to retain the honorable status of מה טובו אהליך יעקב משכנתיך ישראל.

תלמידו,

ד"ר

Dovid Heber