

RAISING THE KEDUSHA IN OUR HOMES

A Collection of Essays

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BY MENDY LIPSKER



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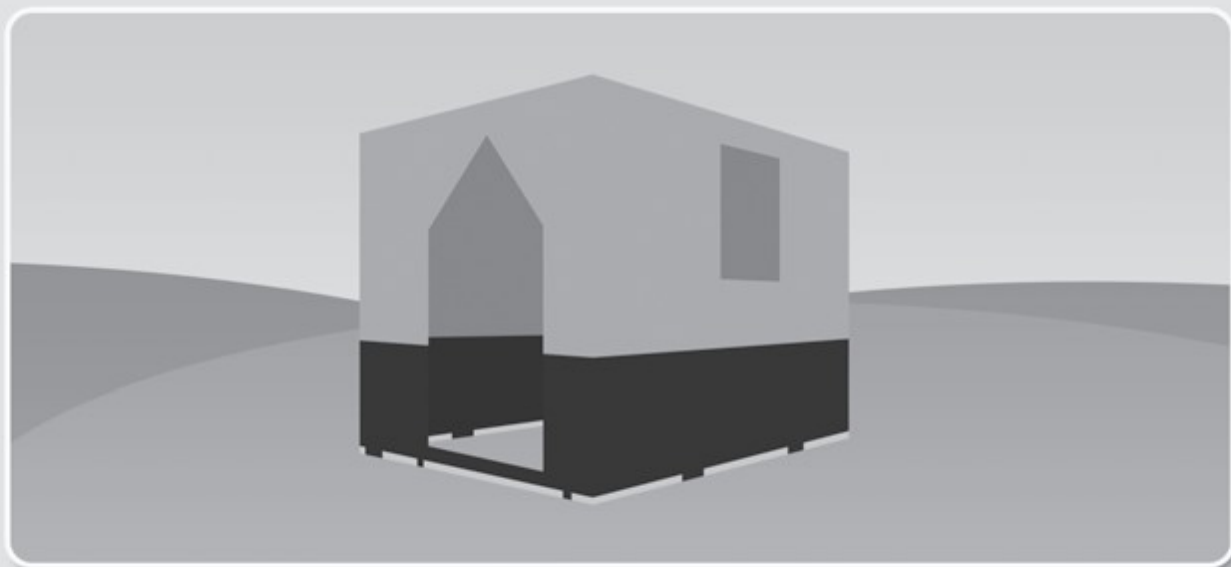
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RAISING THE KEDUSHA IN OUR HOMES

On Monday evening, 13 Elul, a crowd of over 400 men and women gathered in Kolel Menachem of Crown Heights for an evening of inspiration and growth. Thousands of Lubavitcher chassidim and Shluchim around the globe participated through a live broadcast. The title and focus of the event was "Raising the Kedusha in Our Homes."

The event was opened by the MC Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, director of Merkaz Anash, an organization based in Crown Heights, aimed at catering to the *ruchniyus'dike* needs of Lubavitcher chassidim worldwide. Rabbi Hellinger spoke of the significance of such an event and the need to gather regularly to refocus and re-inspire ourselves to attain passion in our yiddishkeit.



The first speaker, Rabbi Yossi Chazan, a prominent Rov from Manchester England, inflamed the crowd with his warm words on the light of kedusha. "We must carry, and pass on, a bright eternal torch; not just a mere match, which can easily be extinguished." Rabbi Chazan drew a lesson from '*asher yatzar*' that in order to be healthy it is crucial that those valves and orifices which must be open must not close, and those



which are supposed to be closed should not be opened. Similarly, in order to be healthy *b'ruchniyus*, we must ensure that we are exposed to kedusha and protected from the opposite.

The next speaker was Rabbi Leibel Groner, the mazkir of the Rebbe, who addressed the crowd on the significance of Chodesh Elul in Chassidus. "The Alter Rebbe gives a *mashal* of a king who, before entering the palace, passes through the fields and greets everyone there with a smile. Similarly, before the *yamim nora'im*, Hashem comes to us in the 'field', though we may be 'dressed' in 'unbefitting clothing' (behaviors), and encourages us with a smile to come closer. At the same time, it is necessary to make an honest *cheshbon hanefesh* to correct any wrong."



Rabbi Hellinger then shared with the crowd a sicha of the Rebbe from 57 years ago about the challenge to kedusha at that time – the television. At the time many perceived it to be quite ‘kosher’ and said they would use it to view “kosher



programs” only. Yet, the Rebbe foresaw the *nisyonos* that would develop and advised for it to be removed from every yiddishe home. Rabbi Hellinger pointed out that if we replace the word ‘television’ with our current nisayon ‘internet’, the talk is equally relevant today.

This was followed by a video clip of Rabbi Avraham Twerski on the dangers of the internet and its power in destroying individuals and families.

The next to address the crowd was Rabbi Shlomo Sternberg, a mashpia in Beis Medrash Oholei Torah, who related various first hand stories of internet addiction and conquests. He emphasized



how everyone is vulnerable, and there is no ‘type of child/bochur/kolel yungerman/adult’ which is immune to the internet’s dangers. He told numerous stories of the best bochurim, which as a result of unrestricted internet access became addicted to the lowest elements of the internet. While on the outside they appeared to be the same excellent bochurim, inside they were elsewhere. Only through extensive therapy were they able to repair some of the damage done.

The event was concluded by Mr. Yisroel Tabi from the R20 group and associated with GuardYourEyes.org, who directed the crowd on the necessary steps to protect them and their children from anything harmful.

Rabbi Hellinger shared with the crowd the guidance of the Crown Heights Rabbonim on the internet. The crowd left with a strong resolve of making the required changes to improve the kedusha in their homes.

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Preface

Dear reader,

We are all well aware of the difficulties that face us today; new challenges are constantly arising. We all put much effort into raising our families in the proper way, with true *chassidische* values.

From its inception, **Merkaz Anash** has come to serve this cause. Through its many projects, Merkaz Anash strives to create an environment in which Anash of today will thrive; providing the tools to raise our children to be true *chassidim* of the Rebbe.

For over two years, our publications have inspired Anash worldwide. **Lma'an Yishme'u**, our weekly Shabbos table companion inspires thousands of families across the globe, giving parents the necessary content to educate their children on various issues. Our booklets of guidance and inspiration have impacted the lives of Anash across six continents. Please join us as we proceed to inspire Anash with special evenings of inspiration and growth.

With *brachos* for a *kesivah vachasimah tovah*,
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The Kedusha of the Eyes

from Lma'an Yishme'u - the Shabbos table companion

The Power of Vision

Chazal say that the heart and eyes can be two 'middlemen' for *aveiros*, for they can lead one to sin. Hashem says, "If you give me your eyes, then you are mine!"

(ירושלמי ברכות פ"א ה"ה)

The Arizal says that eyesight connects a person with the subject being viewed, and whatever one sees has an impression on his *neshama*, for better or worse. This can be seen by an ostrich that can hatch its eggs just by looking at them.

(ס' הליקוטים פ' קדושים, קב הישר פ"ב)

The Shaloh Hakadosh writes: The eye of a Yid corresponds to the *ruchnius'dike* 'eye' above (*ayin tachas' ayin*), and when a person guards his eyes and looks at proper things, his eyes will be brightened with *kedusha*. However, if a person looks at improper things, he separates his eyes from *kedusha* and causes a *p'gam* (blemish) above.

(של"ה פרשת משפטים ד')

A scholarly chossid once came to Kotsk and complained to the tzaddik Reb Menachem Mendel about his weak memory in Torah. "The Torah itself gives us a *segula* to improve memory," said the tzaddik. He then quoted the two adjacent *pesukim* from Shema, "*V'lo sosuru acharei l'avchem v'acharei eineichem... l'maan tizkiru!* – You should not follow your hearts and your eyes... in order that you remember!"

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 419)

When Basya, King Paroh's daughter, heard an infant's cry and opened the basket floating on the water, she felt a strong *rachmanus* for the baby. Though the *middah* of *rachmanus* is a Yiddische characteristic, Basya was able

to feel it, because looking at a tzaddik leaves a strong impression.

(תורת יחיאל שמות)

The reason why Yerushalayim was established to be the center for Torah learning, was so that the talmidim there would see the great *kedusha* and the *kohanim* involved with their *avodah*. This would increase their *yiras shomayim* and Torah learning.

(תוס' ב"ב כ"א)

Once Rabbi Yonasan was being chased by the *apikorsim* (heretics), so he ran from them until he entered his home, locking the door behind him. Standing behind the door they called out, "Rebbi Yonasan! Go to your mother and compliment yourself that you had not turned around to look at us, for had you done so, you would have been running after us to join us."

(קהלת רבה א' כ"ה)

The tzaddik Reb Aharon of Karlin said: "What is the surprise that the younger chassidim are not unable to uplift themselves! It is because they make light of the 'small matters.' We, however, when noticing a *goyishe* woman with a slight breach of *tznius*, find it disgusting and immediately turn away, and then upon our return home, we thank Hashem for his kindness..."

(קדושת עינים ע' שמות)

The great chossid Reb Avremkeh Zhebner would not look out of his window on Shabbos, not wanting to see *chilul Shabbos*. Though all the townspeople kept Shabbos, he was concerned that he would see a *goy* traveling through the city. He said, "If one sees *chilul Shabbos*, even if it is performed by a *goy*, it blemishes the *neshama*."

(רשימות דברים ח"א ע' רסג)

Viewing Kedusha

There are certain holy things which Chazal say one should look at because of their positive effects. For example, looking at the heaven causes a person to think of Hashem and brings *yiras Shamayim*.

When Czar Nikolai decreed that Yidden can only wear a hat with a large visor, the Alter Rebbe said, "Klipah is disturbing people from gazing at heaven, which is a known *segula* for *yiras Shamayim*; now there will be additional *avodah* of turning around the hat." Indeed, many chassidim turned around their hat, making the visor face the back, so they would easily be able to gaze above.
(רשי"י ברכות ל"ד ע"ב, טעמי המצוות פ' ואתחנן, אג"ק ריי"צ חי"ד ע' תלה)

At a *farbrengen* (י"א ניסן תשל"ח), the Rebbe mentioned the practice of many Yiddishe women to surround a child with images of *kedusha* and Yiddishkeit and not *r"l* with non-kosher animals or ammunition. Although adults should not be exposed to such things as well, it is especially important for children who are so impressionable.

On a later occasion (כ' מרחשון תשד"מ), the Rebbe spoke of this again, this time encouraging everyone to adopt this practice. The Rebbe added that even pictures drawn for illustration purposes should be completely holy and kosher. The Rebbe connected this added level of *kedusha* to the imminent *geulah* when all impurity will be removed from the world.
(שיח"ק תשל"ח ח"ב ע' 140, לקו"ש חכ"ה ע' 311)

The Shaloh Hakadosh writes that when learning, one should look at the letters, because "*Osiyos machkimos*", seeing the letters of *lashon hakodesh* makes one clever. It is also a *segula* for one to remember that which he learned. The Rebbe said that the similarly by davening one should look inside a siddur and the letters will enlighten one's eyes.
(של"ה שבועות - תורה אור ס, תו"מ תשמ"ד ח"א ע' 485)

One should gaze at *tzitzis*, as the Torah says this will bring a person to remember the *mitzvos*, and consequently keep them. At the beginning of kiddush, one should look at the Shabbos candles, for it is a *segula* to heal eyesight. During *hagbah*, one should make sure see the letters of the Torah, to the point that they are readable, and they will be endowed with a great light. The Alter Rebbe writes that an effort should be made to come close to the *bimah* where the Torah can be seen.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' כ"ד ס"ה, סי' רע"א סי"ט, שער הכוונות דף מח, פסקי הסידור בסוף שחרית)

Chazal list certain things at which one should not gaze, for they bring negative results:

It is forbidden to gaze at the face of a *rasha* or a *goy*, for it brings the spirit of *tumah* upon the observer and causes one's eyesight to be weakened. Chazal say that part of the cause for Yitzchak Avinu's loss of eyesight, was his looking at Eisav. The *tana* Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha said that he merited to live long for he never looked at a *rasha*.

Similarly, one should not look at a person who is angry - for it causes forgetfulness; one should not look at the moon - except for a moment before *kiddush levana*; nor a rainbow (besides when reciting the *bracha*) - which causes harm to the eyes. Some say that all of these only apply to concentrated staring.

(מגילה כח ע"א, מגן אברהם רכ"ה סק"כ, שו"ע או"ח רכ"ט ס"א)

Seeing Tzaddikim

The Navi Yeshaya says, "*V'hayu einecha ro'os es morecha*," "ויהיו עיניך רואות את מוריך," that one should see his teachers. Chazal learn from here that much can be gained by seeing the face of a Rebbe.

Rebbi Yehudah Hanassi attributed his superior sharpness in learning, comparative to the other *tano'im*, to his having seen Rabbi Meir's back. Rabbi added that if

he had seen the face of Rabbi Meir, his mind would have become even sharper.

Conversely, the *chachomim* did not rely so much on Rav Sheishes who was blind, since he was unable to see the gestures his Rebbe made when teaching.

(ישעי' ל, כ, עירובין יג ע"ב, ירושלמי פ"א ה"ב)

Chazal relate how Yosef Hatzaddik was saved from committing an *aveira* when he saw the image of his father in a vision. The Arizal writes that envisioning the image of one's Rebbe can help him understand a difficulty in learning.

(סוטה לו ע"ב, מדבר קדמות ערך ציור)

At a *farbrengen* (ש"פ ראה תשמ"ו), the Rebbe spoke how through envisioning the image of a Rebbe, one can be aroused in an exceptional way, and have all obstacles removed. The Rebbe said that even those who never saw the Rebbe in real life can accomplish this by looking at a picture.

(סוטה לו ע"ב, התוועדויות תשמ"ו ח"ד ע' 311)

Once a Yid, having committed many grievous *aveiros*, came before the tzaddik Reb Mottel Chernobiler to ask for a path to *teshuvah*. Seeing his *pan*, the tzaddik told him, "I am too old to handle this. Go to the Ruzhiner and he will help you."

The Yid traveled to the *tzaddik* of Ruzhin, and gave him the note listing all his wrongdoings. When the *tzaddik* finished reading the note, he instructed the Yid that from that day on, he should say every single word of *davening* and *bentching* from a *siddur*, even the *bracha* of "*Asher Yotzar*." He further instructed him to look at his face the entire time he is at his *tisch*. The Yid did as the *tzaddik* had directed and reached great heights.

(דברי דוד כ"ב ע"ב)

In the city of Kremenchug, Ukraine, there lived many *erliche* and learned Yidden, including wealthy philanthropists who generously funded the many

communal needs. Among them, there was one exceptionally prosperous man, the owner of a flour mill, who had many dealings with elite Russian officials. Over time, he left the path of Yiddishkeit completely, and proud of his riches and special bureaucratic connections, he spent his time socializing with the Russian ministers.

Once while in Petersburg for business, the wealthy mill owner heard that the Rebbe Rashab was then in town, staying in a hotel. Although he was steeped in worldly desires, he had a strong desire to see the Rebbe, who was known throughout the world for his wisdom and *kedusha*. The mill owner arrived at the hotel when chassidim were being admitted to *yechidus*, but was refused entry by the chossid in charge.

The affluent businessman attempted to enter by force and caused quite a commotion. Hearing the noise, the Rebbe Rashab opened the door, and motioned for him to be allowed in. As he entered the room and beheld the Rebbe, the mill owner was suddenly filled with awe and fear, and was unable to say anything. The Rebbe calmed him and asked why he had come, then waited some time until the Yid was finally able to reply, "I did not come for anything, I just came to see." The Rebbe gave him a *bracha* and he left.

Years later, this wealthy man related, "From the moment I saw the Rebbe, I changed completely, for seeing his holy face made a deep impression on me. I have seen great ministers and leaders of the kingdom, but never felt any fear; yet, when I saw the Rebbe, an intense awe overcame me, and I decided to change my ways. When I arrived home, I got rid of all my (non-kosher) dishes and began closing my mill on Shabbos." He became a proper Yid in every way and formed a strong connection to the Rebbe.

(זכרונותי ששונקין ע' 47)

Protecting the Eyes

from Lma'an Yishme'u - the Shabbos table companion

Standing Guard

The Torah commands us, “*v’lo sosuru acharei levavchem v’acharei eineichem*”, we should not follow our heart and eyes, for the eye sees, the heart desires and the body then commits wrongdoings.

(שלה טו, לט, רש"י שם)

The Navi Yeshaya praises one “who closes his eyes from seeing bad” and promises that he will be protected, lack no sustenance, his children will develop properly and he will merit to see the glory of the King.

Chazal give an example of one who does not gaze at the women laundering clothes by the river or similar. When there is an alternate route, one is obligated to take it and earns no special praise for doing so (for otherwise he is a *rasha*.) The Navi Yeshaya is speaking of one who must take this route, yet forces himself, with great difficulty, to turn his eyes away.

(ישעיהו לג, טו-ז, בבא בתרא נ"ז ע"ב, שו"ע אהע"ז סי' כ"א ס"א)

The Medrash says that whoever restrains himself in the area of *tznius* is called *kadosh*. The Navi Elisha is described by the woman of Shuneim as “*kadosh*”, for throughout the time he was there, he never looked at her.

(ויקרא רבה כ"ד ו)

The Medrash tells of the great *kedusha* of Yosef Hatzaddik who controlled his eyesight and guarded it. Potiphar's wife tried to entice him to look at her, even putting an iron rod under his neck, but despite all she did, he did not look. Later when Yosef, newly chosen as second to the king, was led throughout Mitzrayim, the princesses endeavored to look at his face, yet he did not glance at any of them. Yosef therefore merited success in *Olam Hazeh* and *Olam Haboh*.

(בראשית רבה פ"ז י"א, ילקוט שמעוני ויחי רמז קס"א)

On ben Peles's wife was determined to prevent her husband from joining Korach's campaign against Moshe Rabbeinu. She positioned herself at the entrance of her tent and uncovered her hair, saying to herself, “Now I know they will not approach the tent, for even these *resha'im* are careful to guard their eyes.”

(סנהדרין ק"ט סע"ב)

Safeguarding Oneself

A *talmid* of the Baal Shem Tov once requested his Rebbe's advice on how to guard his eyes from seeing bad. The Baal Shem Tov advised him to travel to a particular city and stay at a certain individual's home where he will learn the proper conduct. Arriving at his destination, the *talmid* was very surprised to find that his host was a simpleton who worked most of the day at the port.

Some days later, alone in his host's home, he noticed a window high up near the ceiling. Being very curious, he placed one table atop another, piled a third above those two, and climbed up. Moving aside the curtain to look out, he was shocked and disgusted to see some neighbors behaving inappropriately. When his host returned, the *talmid* asked him, “I'm surprised at you! How can you live near such bad neighbors?!” and related what he had seen through the window. The host replied, “The question is on your behavior! I have been living here for twenty years and have never considered checking to see what my neighbors are doing, and you're here for only a couple of days, yet you could not restrain yourself from climbing up to look...”

(רשימות דברים ח"א ע' ד)

During the time that the Rebbe resided in Paris, he was very careful to protect the *kedusha* of his eyes, and left a strong impression on the chassidim there.

The chossid Rabbi Sosonkin related: "Once walking down the street in Paris, I passed the Rebbe who was holding a fully opened newspaper in front of him. When the Rebbe noticed me, he commented, 'Nu, it is impossible to walk in the streets of Paris with open eyes...'" Chassidim once peeked into the newspaper and noticed that it was years old.

(ימי מלך ח"א ע' 465, ח"ג ע' 21)

The chossid Reb Mendel Futerfass was very careful not to gaze at women, even in his old age. Once some mothers of students in Beis Rivka of Kfar Chabad asked to meet with him to ask their questions, and Reb Mendel declined, for on principle, he did not meet with women. On another occasion, a gathering was held in Kfar Chabad for a mixed group of soldiers, and Reb Mendel sat at the head table, unobtrusively looking down the entire time.

(מפי הרד"מ שי' דרוקמן)

Someone once asked the Rebbe what to do when doing *mitvzoim* in such places which require caution of what can be looked at there. The Rebbe replied, "When one thinks words of Torah while going on *mitvzoim*, the Rebbe goes along and protects him from all negative influences."

However, to another who told the Rebbe that he feels that doing *mitvzoim* in such places is causing him damage *b'ruchnius*, the Rebbe responded, "If you feel you cannot go there, then do not go there!"

(סיפורים חסידיים ח"א ע' 164)

At a *farbrengen* in Riga, the Frierdiker Rebbe said: "There are times when one should not go out in the streets. If one must go out, he has got to set hours when he will not go, and take the least populated roads when he does."

(סה"ש תרפ"ט ע' 60)

When Shaul Hamelech asked some girls for directions, while searching for his donkeys, they gave a lengthy response. Chazal say that they did not do so because they wanted to gaze upon his good looks, "For just as it is forbidden for a man to gaze upon a woman, it is forbidden for a woman to gaze upon a man."

The Mittlerer Rebbe writes that when a woman does gaze, this can cause her children to be born with a certain sickness.

(ילקוט שמואל א' פ"ט, פוקח עורים)

Kedusha of the Eyes

The Rebbe Rashab writes: Those who care for their *neshama* and want to prevent it from becoming impure, should limit their vision and not to look at everything around them, especially forbidden sights. Even if this is difficult, one should strengthen himself like a lion and know that it is vital for his *neshama*, without which all his *avodah* is like nothing and will have no effect. For one's physical health, nothing is overlooked; how much more so should this be regarding the life of the *neshama*.

The Rebbe adds that the mere sight of something negative, even without thought, has a negative effect on the onlooker.

(קונטרס העבודה פ"ב, אג"ק ח"כ ע' פב)

The Rebbe writes in a letter: One who looks where he should not is misusing his eyes. He is considered blind for the moment, and a blind person is considered to be lacking in life.

A German Yid once traveled to the *tzaddik* Reb Pinchas of Koritz to request a *bracha* for his daughter who had suddenly become blind. "The reason," said Reb Pinchas, "is that her father is also blind and this is a hereditary disease." The Yid protested, "But my eyes are perfectly healthy, and I don't even wear glasses!"

The *tzaddik* explained that a sinner is the one who is truly blind. He warned the Yid that his entire family was in danger of losing their vision, for “One who gazes upon the face of a *rasha*, his eyes grow dim.” Hearing this, the Yid wept and resolved to begin conducting his life according to Torah, and upon his return to Germany, he made his home kosher in all respects. When the daughter was cured, she traveled to Koritz to see the *tzaddik* and donated money for the writing of two Sifrei Torah.

אג"ק חי"ט ע' שד"מ, ספורי חסידים זוין תורה, ע' 97

Once when Rashi left the Beis Medrash, he saw a minister's wife riding towards him and was greatly disturbed that his holy eyes had to witness such a scene. Later on, when he wrote his *peirush* on the Torah, and tried to describe the *eifod* of the Kohen Gadol, he understood that this was why he had seen that woman.

לקו"ש חכ"ו ע' 198

The *chossid* Reb Yitzchok from Yanovitch would do business with a German Yid who would deliberately ask him many questions of *k'fira* (heresy) to challenge his *emunah*, but Reb Yitzchok was able to answer them all.

Seeing his lack of success in angering Reb Yitzchok with his questions, he decided to make him stumble with lusts. “We’ve been doing business together for a number of years,” he told Reb Yitzchok, “so why don’t

you come over to my home for a friendly visit, at least to drink a cup of tea.” Reb Yitzchok agreed, and when he arrived and sat down by the table, the businessman had his daughter, dressed in an insolent *untzniusdik* manner, serve refreshments. Immediately, upon seeing her, Reb Yitzchok vomited, being unable to handle the insolent immodesty.

(רשימות דברים ח"א ע' רל"ז)

The Rebbe Maharash suffered from various ailments and would therefore travel occasionally to medical health resorts. On one such trip, he met one of the *g'dolei ha'mussar*, who also required this visit for his health. One of the procedures was to wash oneself in the remedial springs of water. Two lines of chairs, one for men and the other for women, were set up opposite each other for people to sit and wait their turn. Sitting on line, the Rov was greatly disturbed that he was facing immodestly dressed women, and wondered how the Rebbe Maharash was able to sit, wearing his glasses, yet undisturbed by this. Exiting the fountain area, the Rebbe showed the Rov how he had come with glasses made from opaque material, and so he was spared from looking at any immodesty.

רשימת דברים ח"ג ע' קמ"ו, וראה כע"ז בלקו"ס ע' קנ ולשמע אהן ע' 76

Positive Exposure

from Lma'an Yishme'u - the Shabbos table companion

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 *askens*: 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' ס"ל, קצות השלחן סי' קז בדה"ש מג)

In תרמ"ח, when the Frierdiker 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 literature 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 to 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 *askened* 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 it 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 to go off 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 well will become lax over time.

The Rebbe said that even if one sees a *frum* or even a chassidishe 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, תר"מ חי"ב ע' 192)

In תשי"ז 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 Frierdiker 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 makes 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 Mittlerer Rebbe (תקפ”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 (תרנ”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.”

(שיחור”ק תשכ”ט ח”א ע’ 261)

מצוה לפרסם עושי מצוה

Yishar koach to Reb Sholom Laine and The Print House for their help with the event and this booklet.

Yishar koach to Reb Moshe Tal of BH Tal Realty for his assistance.

וכל מי שעוסקים בצרכי ציבור באמונה הקב”ה ישלם שכרם

What the Rebbe Says About the Internet

In a remarkable Yechidus over 57 years ago, the Rebbe already addressed today's greatest challenge to yiddishkeit. At the time, yidden were challenged with the innovation of the television, and many frum yidden considered bringing it into their home. At the time, the television seemed to be an innocent provider of kosher entertainment. Yet the Rebbe recognized the far-reaching impact of its programs on yiddishe life.

Today, when we once again face a similar challenge, we are searching for direction. During this dark time, when we don't hear the Rebbe's continuing guidance, we turn to the Rebbe's holy words to guide us through today's dilemmas. We must apply the Rebbe's radiant vision to our lives today. All we must do is to replace the word 'television' with the contemporary 'internet', and the message is clear. Try it! [In a similar fashion, a church and priest can be exchanged for other immoral exposures on the internet today.]

Rosh Chodesh Elul 5714 (1954)

Translated by Sichos In English

...Television is an unparalleled departure from the bounds of Torah morality. Even non-Jews have recently raised a storm of protest against television because of its destructive influence on youth, and they're looking for ways of limiting it as much as possible. It's a disgrace that Jews have to learn this from non-Jews.

This is especially so after the recent cases of killings and murders by young people, which are partially a result, everyone agrees, of television and movies where one sees how people are killed and shoot each other.

Furthermore, even if someone thinks he'll watch only the "kosher" television programs that he feels he's allowed to watch, how can parents guarantee that their children won't watch other programs that the Torah explicitly forbids us to watch? They will argue that if their parents watch it, they too can watch whatever they want, especially here in America where children don't listen to their parents as much as they should.

And who can guarantee for the parents themselves? Today they'll watch a program they feel is allowed, and tomorrow they'll catch a glance at another program, and gradually they'll come to feel that everything is permitted.

We should especially ask: How did the world get by ten years ago [a decade before 1954] before television became prevalent? Didn't the world proceed in every respect just the same as now?

Another problem results when others find out that such a respected person, who wears a full beard, has a television. They don't know, of course, whether he watches only such programs that he feels are allowed, so they'll watch all programs, even those forbidden, relying upon that person's stamp of approval.

Some may ask why others who are religious or even *chassidim* have a television. However, we should not look at them as an example. By way of analogy: The 248 organs of the body aren't always all well. Some people have weak eyesight, others a problem with some other organ. Would anyone say that because someone else's eyes are not well, he wants his own eyes not to be well? It's the same on the spiritual plane: No one's perfect — everyone does as much as they can to observe the Torah and its Mitzvos. So why learn from someone else's faults?

No one who has a television will argue that he bought

it for the purpose of improving his Yiras Shomayim or good Middos. Everyone has an excuse — either he bought it as a piece of furniture for his home, or for his wife’s sake, or else he says he got it as a present, so how can he throw it out?

At one time, Jews would take care to avoid passing a church, preferring to make a detour. A mother wouldn’t allow her child anywhere near a church, nor to see a cross. Today, with television, people bring the church with the priest and the cross into their homes — may G-d save us!

A young rabbi, who happens to be sincere and G-d-fearing, and a graduate of a frum Yeshiva, tells how he listens and watches on television every day from twelve till one o’clock when a priest speaks, and learns from the priest’s sermon what to speak from his own pulpit in his Shul! He told this innocently, even under the impression that he does it for holy motives (*I’sheim shomayim*) so he’ll have material to speak in his Shul, without realizing how this transgresses a serious Torah prohibition!

At one time Jews sacrificed their lives not to hear a priest’s sermon; today, with television, they bring the priest into their home, and clothe this practice in *kedusha* — “*I’sheim shomayim*.”

That was the attitude of the early [secular] *Maskilim*, whose motto was: “Be a Jew at home, and a human being outside.” Among them were even ordained rabbis. On the surface, what’s wrong with it? The Shulchan Aruch has no prohibition against it, nor indeed do we have to go outside and announce that we’re religious. So what was wrong with that motto? Nevertheless, experience has shown us what happened to them and their children and descendants, among whom not a trace of Jewishness remained.

[Long ago,] a certain Shochet in a [Russian] township started wearing galoshes (rubber overshoes), for which he was fired from his position. We may ask: what was wrong with that? Even my father-in-law [the previous

Rebbe] used to wear them. However, at that time when the Shochet started wearing them, it was an innovation — the only Jews who wore them were those who dressed and acted in imitation of the non-Jewish nobility, attending their dances and dissolute celebrations. If someone would wear them, it was sign he had become spiritually corrupted. Eventually it was discovered that the Shochet and his family had indeed become corrupted.

Someone once came to the Rebbe Rashab in Lubavitch and asked: What’s so special about remaining a religious Jew when you live in Lubavitch, closed off in your room? Walk in the streets of Petersburg and avoid committing a sin — that’s an achievement!

Actually, he continued, that’s also not enough. Sit at a show in Petersburg with your eyes closed to avoid committing a sin — that’s a real achievement! In fact, he went on, sit at the show in the Petersburg Theater with your eyes **open** and still avoid committing any sin — that’s even greater! But even that’s not enough. Go into the theater, close to the stage where the actresses are performing, and still avoid committing a sin — that’s really a great accomplishment! And he went on to specify a whole list. You can imagine how such reasoning can lead one to the lowest depths of depravity! [One should know that in truth it is only a test, and its purpose is – “Hashem tests you to know if you indeed love Hashem your G-d.”]

You should make sure to correct this problem in your city, and you can even start right here in New York, because here this problem seriously needs correcting.

- Likkutei Sichos vol. 18, p. 459-61

Raising Holy Children in Today's Environment



Rabbi Yossi Chazan
Rabbi of the Holy Law Congregation, Manchester UK

The Scientist's Return

Dr. Shalom Srebrenik, a highly acclaimed, word renowned scientist, was recently at a Shabaton with one of my *Mechutonim*, Rabbi Shabtai Slavaticki of Antwerp, and related to him how he returned to his Jewish roots:

"I was born to a religious family," he began, "But I drifted away as a teenager." He was seduced by the allure of the secular world. He had a brilliant mind; he was captivated by physics, chemistry and other secular subjects. After enrolling in university he excelled in his studies, but his observance of Yiddishkeit slowly ebbed away. He received his doctorate, and he had a promising future in the academic world.

On the day of his graduation, he came home to tell his father of his momentous achievement. He could not contain his pride. He was beaming with joy and excitement. Yet, for some in-explicable reason, his father remained underwhelmed and unmoved.

For the first time the father proceeded to share with Sholom his personal history. "When the Nazis invaded my Polish Shtetl, they took me, my wife and children, my parents and siblings and shipped us all away to the death camps. Everyone perished aside from me. When I arrived in the death camp, the Nazis found out I was an incredibly talented opera singer; a powerful tenor who had composed some original music. They decided to hire me for the "night shift."

"These inhuman, depraved murderers would finish their "day job" of gassing and murdering Jews, they would then enjoy evenings of cultural enrichment. They

would sit with their wives and mistresses and savor the strains of Beethoven and Mozart. They hired me to sing.

"Each night, they would remove my prison clothing, dress me in a tuxedo and tie and I would perform for them, receiving standing ovations and applause. When it was all over, they returned to being vicious Nazis, and I was once again a "Dirty Jew." After the performance, they would enjoy lavish feasts, with fine food and aged wines. They would throw pieces of food into bin nearby which was filled with sewage, muck and slime, and say, "Jew, eat."

"I was dying of hunger, and so I took a piece out and tried to clean it but they said that I had to stick my head in and eat. And so I did."

Shalom was shocked. "But Dad, what of your dignity?"

"We had long lost our dignity, Shalom. It was simply life or death."

"But why didn't you just end your life like so many other Jews who threw themselves at the electric fencing?"

The father looked his son in the eye and replied, "The only thing that kept me going, the only thing which gave me the will to live throughout all those horrific years was you, Shalom."

"Me? But I was only born after the Holocaust?"

"What kept me alive was a dream. The dream that I would be liberated and go to Israel. There, I would remarry and establish a family. I would have a child to whom I could pass on the torch of *Yiddishkeit*. A child who would then carry that torch forward.

"The problem with you, Shalom," continued the father, "Is that I thought you would carry a torch. But I see that you are just carrying a feeble match."

"That statement seared into my brain," said Shalom.

“And I made a decision then and there not only to return to Yiddishkeit, but to ensure that its brilliant, radiant light would conquer the darkness all around and illuminate my path in life forever.”

Don't be a Shriveled Match

There is a famous 'vort' on the *possuk*, “A fire emanated from *Cheshbon*,” that when making a *cheshbon hanefesh* during *Chodesh Elul*, we must produce a fire. The question is: what are we creating? Are we establishing a torch that is enduring and everlasting, a torch that will be passed on to the next generation, or are we merely lighting matches, that light up for a few seconds, but then quickly shrivel and die.

The *Gemara* in *Pesachim* (49 a) states: “A man should sell all his belongings - everything he has - for the sake of marrying the daughter of a *talmid chochom*.” The *meforshim* ask can this be the *din*, after all, there is a *halacha* that a person may not spend more than a fifth of his income on a mitzvah. How then can one be required to sell all his belongings for this mitzvah of marrying the daughter of a *talmid chochom*?

There is a crucial distinction, explain the *meforshim*. When it comes to a monetary Mitzvah, a person cannot spend more than a fifth. But when we are dealing with *eternity*, there is no maximum; no limit. You have to have complete *mesirus nefesh*.

There is a story regarding an American *bochur* who possessed a brilliant mind, who during the day spent his time in yeshiva, studying *Reb Chaims* and *Reb Boruch Bers*, but at night was a drummer. Not a drummer for wedding bands or Jewish concerts. He was a drummer in a rock band. Needless to say, the places he frequented in his “night life” weren't the holiest of places.

Apparently he was a very good drummer and one night after finishing a gig, a wealthy man approached

him. He was wearing a five thousand dollar suit, and had a cigar dangling from his mouth. “You're great,” he said. “I'd like to sign you. Why don't you come up to my office?”

The *bochur* made his way to Madison Ave, auditioned, and was offered a contract. Excitedly, he glances at the paper work, and to his utter dismay, notices that his very first show is scheduled for Friday night! The *bochur* was clearly no saint. He was a spiritual schizophrenic. Yet he had red lines he wouldn't cross. Playing on Shabbos was just a step too far. On the other hand, the celebrity status, the red carpets, glitz and glamour were beckoning, and he didn't want to give up on that so fast. Torn, he asked for twenty four hours to think it over.

The *bochur* went to his *Rov*, a spiritual guide who was open-minded; who he was sure would hear him out and understand what he's going through, and asked him what to do. Instead of telling him to refuse the deal outright, the *Rov* advised him to go home and draw a line down the middle of a sheet of paper. “On the right side,” said the *Rov*, “list all the benefits of signing the contract. On the left side, note the benefits of remaining an *ehrlliche Yid*.”

The next morning, the *bochur* arrived with red and puffy eyes, clearly having spent many hours awake and crying. On the right side of the paper, was a long, detailed list describing the joys of fame and wealth sure to be his as a rock star. On the other side of the paper, there was only one word:

Nitzchivus. Eternity.

“I've made my decision,” said the *bochur*. “I'm staying here.”

This is our challenge today in keeping our home holy, free of the glamour and glitz that beckons from outside. Are we choosing eternity, or are we choosing fleeting moments of glory?

Your Home is Hashem's home

During Elul, we say, "*Achas Shoalti Me'eis Hashem*" twice a day. Every *Yid* has just one request, one thing he really wants: "*Shivti b'veis Hashem kol y'mei Chayai*, to dwell in the house of Hashem, all the days of his life, *ul'vaker Beheichalo* – and to visit Hashem's palace." Many *meforshim* ask about the seeming contradiction. If he is sitting in the house of Hashem, why does he want to "visit?"

They answer that "The House of Hashem" doesn't refer to a *Shul* or *Beis Medrash*, but rather refers to our own homes. We *daven* that the homes we build should be "*beis Hashem*." There were devoted Chassidim who would say in *bentching*: "*Harachaman hu y'varech adoneinu moreinu v'rabeinu, baal habayis hazeh*." We have to strive that the Rebbe should be *baal habos* in our homes. If the Rebbe were to enter our homes, would he be happy with what is going on there?

At the end of the day, when we have problems, we all know where to go to. A *chosid* turns to the Rebbe. After I had my first child, I was in *Kolel* in Australia. The doctor said that we will never have more children. You can imagine how broken we were. Naturally, we wrote to the Rebbe. Boruch Hashem, eleven more children followed...

When we are reunited with the Rebbe, we will show these kids to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe will tell us, "For these children I stood at the Ohel in the rain and the heat, in the snow in the sleet. What did you do to them?" What will we answer?

It's Doable

Raising children in a pure, pristine, holy home is doable. I see it all the time. I recently met a *Rov* from London who told me of a boy from his *kehila* who finished all of *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi* before his Bar-Mitzvah! These

things are doable, I know of *Lubavitcher bochurim* who have finished *Shas*.

I am from a different generation. I look at today's *bochurim*; their *chassidishkeit*, their *frumkeit*, *mesirus nefesh* for *shlichus* and *Midos Tovos*, and I am ashamed of my generation. I look at them and tried to find a common denominator between them. I realized that they all come from homes where the parents understand and believe that it is possible to instill *Kedusha* even in our modern times. Even with all the *Nisyonos*.

They came from homes where there is constant positive energy and happiness, an excitement for *Yiddishkeit*. As the *Gemorah* at the end of *mesechta sota* describes the horrific tribulations that will take place in the days of *Ikvisa dimeshicha*. One of the predictions is "*yerie chet yimasun*," literally meaning those that fear sin will be despised. Reb Zusha of Anipola explains that the *Gemorah* is trying to say that the main approach to *avodas Hashem* in *ikvisa dimeshicha* is *ahava*.

These are homes where the father sits down on Erev Shabbos to prepare *divrei torah* and *chassidische* stories for the for the Shabbos meal as long as the mother prepares in the kitchen.

In *Shulchan Oruch, Yoreh Deah (siman 81 se'if 7)* it states that although it is permissible for a Jewish child to nurse from a gentile wet-nurse, nonetheless it should be avoided because it is *metamtem halev* and instills bad *middos* within the child. The Vilna Gaon comments that the source for this *halacha* is *Moshe Rabeinu*. Many ask, how can this serve as a proof? There was a specific reason why Moshe couldn't use a gentile wet-nurse; because his mouth was destined to talk with Hashem, and as such could not receive nourishment from an impure source.

The answer is that every Jewish child has to be raised as if he is the future *Moshe Rabeinu*!

The director of a *Talmud Torah* in *Yerushalayim* whose standards were a bit modern once asked the *rov* of Yerushalayim Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld for a letter

of recommendation. Without the letter, he would not be able raise funds.

Rav Sonenfeld clearly wasn't happy with this particular *Cheder*, and asked the director, "You know your student body, is it possible for Moshiach to be one of your students?" The director was taken aback and replied, "Rabbi! that is a bit too far. I know my students; none of them will be Moshiach."

"If so, I cannot give you a recommendation. Our sages (*Shabbos 119 b*) explain the *Possuk 'al tigu bimshichoy'* to refer to *cheder* children. If you are sure that *Moshiach* cannot be a graduate of your school, it obviously doesn't have the advantages of a *cheder*." Every Yiddishe child has to be brought up as if he is potentially Moshiach.

It is for this reason our sages say that one who produces a wicked son or student loses his eyesight. How is this punishment in accordance with the principle of '*mida kneged mida*'? Obviously, his assessment was wrong. He has not used his 'right' eye.

The Right Education

There is a rule, "*Hovu goidel le'Elokeinu*." When it comes to *Yiddishkeit*, one must "think big." I always tell my English congregants that 'life is too short to be small'; you have to strive for greatness.

People say that to have a child become a *talmid chochom* depends on how much you learn. But a child's *yiras shomayim* is based on the amount of tears you shed over them. *Tzadikim* say that just like a child cannot be born without blood, so too, he cannot have *yiras shomayim* without tears. Obviously the father has to be a *dugma chaya* - a living example, as the *Imrei Chaim* explained the *Possuk "chanoch Lanaar al pi darko* - educate a child according to his way" i.e. the way of the father." How he grows up depends upon what he saw by his father.

Although humility is a great and beneficial thing,

it applies during *krias sh'ma sheal hamitta*. In front of your children, you have to be a Rebbe running a *Tish*. "*Va'yigba Libo Bedarkei Hashem*."

At the beginning of *maseches Shabbos* it states, "Here that we are discussing the main concept of Shabbos, we teach '*Avos*' and '*Toldos*.'" This can be interpreted to say that whoever has a Shabbos table in the appropriate manner; sitting hours preparing *divrei Torah*, *sichos* and stories is, sure to have "*avos*" and "*toldos*."

There is a '*vort*' explaining the juxtaposition in *krias shma* between the mitzvah of *veshinantom levonecha* - *chinuch* and the following mitzvah of *tefilin*. Just as it is forbidden to be *mesiach daas* from *tefilin* so too it is forbidden to lose focus regarding *chinuch*.

The Lion in Bronx Zoo

A person may ask, "How is it possible that a person who has *mesirus nefesh* for *Shulchan Aruch* and *Chassidishkeit* has children who are not on that level?" Why isn't everyone successful in producing the kind of children we want?

Similarly, The *possuk* states, "*Arye shoag mi lo yira* - who does not tremble from the roar of a lion?" "*Arye*" is an acronym for *Elul*, *Rosh Hashana*, *Yom Kipur* and *Hoshaana Rabba*. If it is *Elul* now, how can it be that not everyone is trembling?

When you go to a zoo and see a lion you are not afraid. There is a big separation between you and the lion, which muffles the roar, and prevents it from penetrating your heart. The same idea applies during *Elul*.

One of the *tzadikim* of the last generation said that *Elul* is an acronym for a part of the *bracha "asher yotzar"* (in a different *nusach*) "*efshar l'hiskayem v'laamad l'fanecha* - it is possible to live and stand in front of You." Simply, it means that usually we are unable to face

Hashem. How are we able to do so on *Rosh Hashana*? If we have use the month of *Elul* properly, then we will be able to stand before Hashem on *Rosh Hashana*.

However, there is a deeper explanation.

The *Gemara* (Baba Kama 69) says that if an item is stolen and the owners haven't yet given up hope of finding the item, neither the owner nor the thief may dedicate it to Hashem, for the thief does not own it, and the owner does not have it in his possession. The *Gemara* later says (on *daf* 105) that someone who denies a *pikadon* (deposit) that was given to him is compared to a robber.

The idea of '*asher yotzar*' is to reiterate that our body is a *pikadon* that was deposited to us by Hashem. A person acknowledges that he belongs to Hashem and only then can he sanctify himself. If he does not appreciate that his life is a *pikadon*, he is a *kofer bepikadon*, who has the *din* of a *ganev* and can't be *makdish*, as the *Gemara* says.

That is the idea of *Elul*. We acknowledge that Hashem is king over us, meaning each of our limbs and faculties.

In "*asher yotzar*" we say that Hashem created us with *chochma*. Hashem created within us both external and internal limbs; some have to remain closed at all times and some have to remain open at all times. We continue saying that it is clear and known to Hashem that if something which is closed opens up, or something which is open closes, we cannot live. We conclude with hope, that Hashem heals all flesh, "*umafli la'asos*" which means Hashem makes it possible for the *neshama* to connect with the body.

After *bedikas chometz* in *kol chamira*, we say "All the chometz we have, that we **have seen and that we have not seen.**" *Chassidus* asks how is it possible for a person to have *Chometz* inside of him? The answer is "that we have seen and that we have not seen," we saw what we didn't have to see, and we didn't see what we should've seen.

In other words, Hashem gave us limbs with which we are supposed to hear the message of the *neshama*.

Why can we not hear the message? *Halacha* tells us that two voices cannot be heard simultaneously. If our eyes, ears and mind are filled with other things, even if they are permitted (and certainly if they are prohibited) we cannot become a vessel to hear G-dliness. It is impossible for us to sustain ourselves.

That is what *Elul* is all about.

It is brought down in *seforim* that *Elul* is acronym for "*anu l'koh v'eienu l'koh* – we are to Hashem and our eyes are to Hashem. The way to make sure that our love for Hashem remains intact, "*anu l'koh*," is when our eyes are only looking at holy things, "*eienu l'koh*."

One of the reasons there is a separation between us and the lion's roar is because we think we deserve to live. We think we have a "squatter's right" to life; we were here last year and the years before, and we think -like the *Zohar* says - the world is ours and we will be around for generations. We are immortal!

But we must know that we don't have a right on life. There is a popular magazine (not to say that it should be read) called "Time." A friend of mine mentioned that once a year he receives a postcard saying, "Your subscription to Time has run out. For 52 more weeks of time, please send your payment." That is the month of *Elul*; if we want 52 more weeks of life, we have to stand before Hashem and submit our payment.

A year and a half ago, in the CineMall in Haifa, a great miracle occurred. There were thousands of people in the mall, and police discovered a car laden with 100 kilos of explosives parked next to a support beam in the underground parking lot. Thank G-d, they were able to neutralize it before it caused any damage. If it would not have been discovered, the consequences would be too horrendous to contemplate r"l. Even according to the police, it was a clear miracle that it was discovered in time.

What happened? Two weeks earlier, a girl from a non-religious home in the city was diagnosed with advanced stomach cancer. The doctors said the situation was

hopeless, and that she should go back home and spend the next few weeks in familiar surrounding before she dies. The mother wasn't interested in giving up, and pleaded and cajoled the doctors until they agreed to perform surgery, just to entertain the mother. They told her to return after three days and assigned a young inexperienced surgeon to practice on this girl.

The night before the operation, the girl turned to Hashem and said, "Master of the universe, in days of old you had a *Beis Hamikdash* with *korbanos*. Today there is no place for us to make sacrifices, but I will do so. I will give you a *korban*." She went to her drawers, removed any clothing she thought were immodest and put them into a trash bin, and burned it in the back of her yard. This was her *korban*.

The next day, this girl went to the hospital in her nightgown. She had burnt her entire wardrobe, and this is all she had left. The doctors opened her up and were shocked to discover that it was a benign tumor and that it had shrunk. They removed it and informed her she has

many more years to live.

The next day friends came to visit her, and she related the amazing story of her miracle and her sacrifice. A week later all the girls decided to do the same and "sacrificed" their immodest clothing to Hashem with a massive bonfire in the backyard. The next day, there were a bunch of Jewish girls with nothing to wear, literally, so they decided to go shopping together at this big mall and replenish their wardrobes.

At the moment they were there, the car was discovered and the place was saved.

We all need major *sayata dishmaya* in our service of Hashem and *chinuch* of our children. The lesson this incredible story teaches us is that to move Hashem to transcend nature, one needs a *korbon* – to sacrifice and transcend one own nature. We need to eradicate form our hearts and from our homes the things that interfere with *kedusha*. And in that *zechus* may we merit to a *kesiva vechasima tova, a shnas geulah shleima*.

Strengthening Our Kedusha



Rabbi Leibel Groner
Mazkir of the Rebbe

We find ourselves in the midst of the auspicious month of Elul. During this month Hashem reveals Himself to every Yid by means of the *yud gimmel midos harachamim*. We are given the opportunity to request of Hashem a *gut gebentcht yor*.

Elul is the month when “*Melech basodeh*”, the King is in the field. When learning this concept throughout the Rebbe’s *sichos*, we discover new aspects to this *moshol* which the Alter Rebbe does not speak of in *Likutei Torah*. I will not discuss all the additions the Rebbe makes, but will point out only one of them:

The Alter Rebbe mentions that when the king is on his way to the palace, he passes through the fields, and there the city folk – *anshei ha’ir*- are able to greet him. The Rebbe adds that “*anshei hasodeh*” - people of the field, who are wearing “*bigdei hasodeh*” – clothing of the field are also able to approach the king, and are greeted *b’sever ponim yofos*.

The appropriate practice when greeting a king is to dress in one’s finest clothing. In *Likutei Diburim*, the *Friediker Rebbe* describes the *Mitteler Rebbe*’s travels to various cities. Upon arrival in a city, all the men, women and children would greet the Rebbe dressed in their finest.

Bigdei ha’ir refers to a person whose *ruchniyus’dike* clothing, *levushim* of *machshovo*, *dibur* and *maaseh*, are holy like “Shabbos clothing.”

The Rebbe adds that during Elul, the King greets “*b’sever ponim yofos*” even those dressed in *bigdei hasodeh*, referring to clothing which is dirty and inappropriate for greeting royalty. *Bigdei hasodeh* refers

to a person whose spiritual *levushim* are not holy – not fitting for a king. Yet even people wearing such clothes, says the Rebbe, are able to approach the King. Hashem will accept each and every person during this month and *is mareh lohem ponim sochakos*, show each of us his beaming face.

Making an Honest Cheshbon Hanefesh

While it is true that Elul is a time when Hashem will accept us all, regardless of our position or situation, it is also a month known as the “*chodesh hacheshbon*” - month of examination, when we are to examine our past conduct and behavior. However, although on the surface these two aspects of *melech basadeh* and assessing ourselves seem contradictory, the truth is that they compliment each other. The knowledge that no matter the conclusion of our *cheshbon*, Hashem will accept us all “*b’sever ponim yofos*,” makes it much easier for the *cheshbon* to be honest. We know, ultimately, the end result will be positive.

Although, it is generally best to speak positively, as the *possuk* says: “*Ur’ei b’tuv yerushalayim*,” Elul, being a time of assessment, is an appropriate occasion to address various concerns.

There have been a number of gatherings about the issue of *tznius* in Crown Heights; whether in dress, behavior or speech. I want to mention that the problem needs to be addressed not only to the *ezras noshim*, but also in the *ezras anashim*. Men need learn their responsibility to demand *tznius*, and not, *rachmana litzlan*, to have no want or feel for its need.

The *possuk* states, “*V’hoyo machanecho kodosh,*” our camps should be holy. “*Ish v’isha zochu Shechinah shrayah beineihem.*” Hashem rests among us. How can the *Shechinah* rest in places where the behavior is the opposite of what it should be?

Aside from each one of us working on an individual level, we have a responsibility towards our friends, in the spirit of “*v’ohavto l’reiacho kamocho.*” Each person should influence their friends to realize the importance of *tznius*, and what it brings into the home.

Now that we are in the month of Elul, we have to find a way to rectify the situation. We simply cannot continue on in this way. This situation is certainly causing the Rebbe tremendous *agmas nefesh*. The Rebbe constantly emphasized that the situation in Crown Heights was very important to him.

The Rebbe’s Concern for a Yid’s Kedusha

I heard from the Vizhnitzer Rebbe’s oldest son, Reb Yisroel Hager. Reb Yisroel received strong *kiruvim* from the Rebbe, when he first arrived in America, and we received word that he wished to meet the Rebbe. The Rebbe told me not to postpone his appointment until night, saying, “I want to see him tomorrow at 2:00.” After being in *yechidus* for more than an hour, Reb Yisroel told me, “The Rebbe lifted a ‘stone’ off my shoulders,” and gave him relief from a serious family problem.

Reb Yisroel told me about a Gerer Chossid who lived in Crown Heights, and had gradually become closer to the Rebbe. Eventually, he moved to Los Angeles for business reasons, after having received a *brocho* from the Rebbe.

While in L.A., he fell ill and was admitted to a hospital. A nurse began behaving inappropriately toward him, in the manner of “*eishes potifar.*” He was terribly

embarrassed, and did not know what to do. He soon received word from the Rebbe’s office that the Rebbe wanted him to leave the hospital immediately.

Later, when meeting with Reb Yisroel, the *chossid* asked, “How could the Rebbe have known? I did not mention this to anyone!”

“I told him,” said Reb Yisroel, “This is what a Rebbe is. He sits in Crown Heights, and knows what is happening with another Yid no matter where he may be.”

Indeed, the Rebbe is concerned about the state of *kedusha* of every single Yid, and today he gives us the *koach* to overcome the challenges in *kedusha* that we are experiencing today.

In the *zechus* of working on this matter, we should be *zoche* to have a *k’sivah v’chasimah tova*, and a *shono tovah um’sukah*.

The Only Solution to Protect Your Family



Rabbi Avraham Twerski
Noted Psychiatrist and Author

The Most Important Message

There is an interesting Medrash, which states that when the Yidden heard Hashem speak at Har Sinai, they retreated twelve *mil*. Malachim had to come down and bring them back to the mountain. Part of the reason may have been that when Moshe Rabbeinu told the people that Hashem is going to come down and speak them, everyone became fired up with enthusiasm. "We are going to hear enormous spiritual messages," they thought. They were ready for this great spiritual revelation.

Then Hashem began speaking and He told them, "*Lo signov, lo sirtzach, lo sin'af.*" The Yidden thought, "Who are You talking to? Is this what we came to hear?" So they ran back twelve *mil*. The malachim dragged them back and said, "No. You have to listen to this. You have to hear this."

It has been said that I may be specially equipped to share this message. And there is truth to that. The bulk of what I intend to say could be said by any Rov or Rosh Yeshivah. The problem is that when you hear such a person share this message, you might think he's just towing the party line; he has to say this, that's all he knows.

But you can't accuse me of that. I've never been into party lines.

There is a *possuk* which states that it is better to hear the reprimand of a wise person, rather than listening to the "songs of fools." One of the *meforshim* explains the *possuk* to be saying that it is best to hear the reprimand *from* a person who has heard "the songs of fools," someone who has heard outside messages.

Well, I've heard them all. I am well versed in enough secular subjects to say that I am a lot different from your average Rosh Yeshiva.

What I am here to say now, is the most important message you hear for the rest of your life. It's not out of *gaiva* that I say this; that is just how important it is.

The Moral Cancer

The issue I am here to address is that many young people - and even old people - are getting hooked and addicted to the filth - the immoral images - on the internet. It destroys them morally, it destroys families and it is a severe addiction.

There are some drugs that have to be used several times before one becomes addicted. But with some drugs, one becomes hooked after the very first use. Please accept my word of what I am about to say as a psychiatric authority:

If you are on the internet, and there is an indecent pop up or immoral scene, **you have 3 milliseconds to shut it off**. If you watch it for just a few seconds, you can get hooked.

Ideally, what you'd like me to give you is a list of solutions. You would like to me to say, "Here, do A, B, C and D and your children will be protected." I wish I could tell you that. I wish I had the answers.

It is similar to a patient who goes to the doctor and is informed he has a severe form of cancer that is spreading to other organs. The doctor says, "Look: this is going to require very drastic treatment. We will need to perform major surgery. It will require chemotherapy and radiation." The treatments are all very distressing and uncomfortable. The patient may ask, "Is there anything I

can do to escape the misery of these treatments?”

“No!” says the doctor. “Your life is at stake. If you want to save your life, this is what you need to do.”

No one wants to be miserable, so people look for an easy way out. You may recall that how a few years ago people ran to Mexico for Laetrile – the miracle drug to cure cancer. Well, it’s long gone. But every once in a while there is still some kind of cure that people come up with. You can’t blame them for looking for an easy way out, but there just isn’t any.

When a person’s life is at stake, he’s going to have to decide, does he want to save his life or doesn’t he? If he wants to save his life, he has to suffer the misery of the treatment.

This problem is a cancer. There is no easy way out, and there is no immunity.

In a sense, I wish there were more people who experienced what I experienced back in the 1940s. Before there was a Polio vaccine, summer was a frightening season. Once there were two cases of Polio in a city of two million people. The swimming pools were shut down; children couldn’t go to theatres or public places. If a child had a back ache, the parents rushed to the doctor. No one was foolish enough to say, “My child is immune.” Everyone knew that everyone was vulnerable. There was a fright. There was a panic.

That’s where we are today.

There is a plague of internet immorality. It’s a plague. It’s a cancer. It kills and destroys families and there is no immunity. And lest anyone thinks, “I can handle it, I won’t let it affect my behavior.” I can tell you what a Rov or Rosh Yeshiva cannot. Because I see the cases.

The Suffering Bochur

Many years ago, the following letter was written to my column in the Hamodia newspaper. I will quote it in

its entirety, because it is that important.

“I’m going to reveal something I’ve never discussed with a living soul and thought I never would,” says the letter. “Your answer could save my life. But more importantly than receiving your answer, I’m writing this so it will be printed in its entirety and read, because there are hundreds of people in my situation.

“I’m a 21 year old yeshiva bochur. I went to prominent American yeshivas all my life and I am now learning in a famous *yeshiva gedola* in Eretz Yisroel. Modesty aside, I was the top of my classes in shiurim, widely respected by my friends and Rebbeim. I planned to learn for many years and go into chinuch. I would find a perfect *shidduch* quickly - some Rosh Yeshiva’s daughter - raise a beautiful family and spread nachas all around. A perfect life awaited. I was the frum community’s model son. As far as anybody knows, all this is still true.

“When I was in my first year of Beis Medrash, at age sixteen, my parents brought the internet into our home, and my secret life began. To condense the story, I was very quickly hooked on *dvarim asurim* and forbidden pictures. Let’s not kid ourselves. Like everybody on this planet, I was always curious. And all the blockers my parents set up fell away quickly without their knowledge.

“Like any person that becomes addicted to something, I quit many times. Once, for a whole year. For months, many times, I buried my head in the Torah in order to save myself as best as I could, but it always came back. Going against everything I had ever learned, I continued. I slowly trained myself to shut G-d out whenever I wanted to, and this led me to more serious *aveiros*, R”l. Without going into detail, suffice it to say I am terribly ashamed of myself, because I’m not a loyal Jew anymore.

“But all this is secret. I allow none of it to show through. As much as I want to help myself, I realize I can’t, but I can’t get help either; I can’t bring myself to discuss my dark side with anyone. The only difference between me and others who went off the *derech* is that I’m afraid

to face the people who would lose respect for me. I pretend to tow the line, and therefore I am un-helpable.

"Hundreds, maybe thousands, of yeshiva guys are seriously addicted to a secret life such as me. I know. I see it. It takes one to know. You can imagine what kind of rocky futures are awaiting us.

"I read all the Jewish observer articles of the evils of the internet. I want this letter to be published to say that you have no idea how prevalent and far reaching the affect is already, and will continue to be. What you see is less than the tip of the iceberg.

"My question is how to get out. Is this a behavioral addiction that only a psychologist can help? Can I turn to my Rebbi and avoid involving my parents or there is a way I can help myself?

"Without being overdramatic, you are reading the last gasp of a drowning soul."

At the time, about eight or nine years ago, I had no answer for this young man. There wasn't anyone to send him to that knew what to do about it. Right now there is a website, GuardYourEyes.org, which has a great deal of material and a great deal of help. It has saved hundreds of people that I already know of.

You can't get rid of the internet entirely; it's here to stay. And while I think the filters are extremely important - they are particularly helpful as a preventative measure - Once a person is addicted, the filters don't work. As the young man said, any person who is slightly savvy on computers can run around the filters.

Recognizing the Severity

This problem is a cancer because it spreads and destroys families.

Wives will say, "I can't trust him. I feel betrayed." You have no idea the number of families that are being broken up because of this. It's not only young

men that are caught in this horrible condition, it's also older people.

Once, a Kollel *yungerman* told me about a visit to his father. His father is a renowned Torah supporter. He is a Talmid Chacham, and a pillar of the community. "I asked to use his computer," said the son, "and I was horrified at what I found he was looking at. How do I respect that man? How do I teach my children to respect their grandfather?"

It is not only a masculine thing. There are young women are caught into internet immorality as well. It does not discriminate.

You might say, "But all this is, is a *taivah*. Nothing worse! Let him learn some *sifrei mussar*. Let him learn Torah." However, it will not work, for the following reason:

We are told that Adam Harishon did not possess a *yetzer hara*. If that is the case, how did he perform the *chet eitz hadaas*? It is because there are two types of *yitzrei hara*. One is the instinctual *yetzer hara*, which we all have. Then there is a *yetzer hara* called the Satan; a Malach which Hashem created with the mission to make people do *aveiros*. That's not the *yetzer hara*, it's the Satan.

There is a frightening Gemara in Kiddushin. Rebbi Akiva would mock those who gave in to lust and temptations. The Satan said, "I'll show you." He transformed himself into an attractive woman sitting on the top of a tall palm tree, and seduced Rebbi Akiva. Rebbi Akiva began climbing the palm tree to reach her, but before he could get there, Hashem ordered the Satan to stop.

We are talking about Rebbi Akiva! The very same Rebbi Akiva cried out Sh'ma Yisroel when they tore his flesh and tortured him. Yet even Rebbi Akiva could not resist the temptation. How is this possible?

Rebbi Akiva could have easily overcome his *yetzer hara*. But this wasn't his *yetzer hara*; it was a Malach, the Satan. This was an angel with extraordinary superhuman powers, and only Hashem can stop the Satan.

Let me tell you: There is a Satan inside the internet.

This is no *yetzer hara*, and learning *mussar* is not going to stop that addiction. Don't think I'm naïve to think this. Trust me, there is a Satan in the internet, and *mussar* is not going to stop it. You need to have a force much stronger than that.

That's the cancer we're up against. And once that starts, who know where it ends up.

Don't think "Oh, it won't affect my kid." Don't walk around with blinders. It happens to all of us. We're all vulnerable. With all the evils of the world, we're all vulnerable regardless of how frum we may be. You may

be stringent about eating only *glatt kosher* meat, *chalav yisroel*, *pas yoshon*. All these wonderful *chumros* are fine, but they are not going to protect kids from internet immorality, and it's not going to stop kids from becoming addicted. Something else has to happen.

Thank you TorahWeb.org and GuardYourEyes.org

Not even for Educational Purposes!

If it is permissible in one school, it will become permissible in general. More so, since it was permitted in a school whose name carries my father-in-law's name, it will be perceived that he is supporting it. On the contrary, this is not the case. Therefore, do not bring any television into the school even for educational purposes.

Teshuvos u'Biurim, p. 329

In Search of Our Lost Sensitivity



Rabbi Shlomo Sternberg
Mashpia Beis Medrash Oholei Torah

Who Educated You? Surprise...

Every person is an educator in his own home; a teacher for his children, a teacher for himself. Just as one is obligated to educate one's children, one is obligated to educate oneself.

When it comes to *chinuch* we have to be prepared for everything. We know there will be surprises with our children or students. As parents, we know what surprises to expect, we know which child will come home with a note saying she disturbed the class, and which one will come with a note saying he beat up a friend.

We know the strengths and weaknesses of our children. We try to empower our children to learn how to deal with their weaknesses, face challenges and overcome them. We try to instill proper values and try to impart the sensitivity of recognizing right from wrong. We want our children to enjoy *Yiddishkeit*, and stay away from negative influences. We encourage our children to befriend the right friends, we look for the best teachers and we make sure our children have the right environment to become *Chassidim* and *y'rei shomayim*. We hope and pray that when they grow up and lead their own lives they will know what to do when faced with a challenge.

When it comes to educating ourselves it is exactly the same. We know our strengths and weaknesses, we know what to expect from ourselves, what surprises we will encounter and how to overcome them. For this reason we create boundaries, and commit never to cross certain "red lines." While there may be ups and downs, our

behavior is generally within a particular realm and we are in total control. We work hard to maintain this level by learning *chassidus*, going to *chasidische farbrengens* and setting guidelines for ourselves of what is appropriate and what is not.

Real Surprises and the Blame Game

It is no secret that lately we are experiencing new kinds of surprises. Many are experiencing this with their children and many are experiencing it with themselves. Suddenly, problems are appearing from places we didn't expect. The pure and innocent *chassidische bochur* is acting a bit funny; the refined *Chassidische yungerman* has quickly lost his *eidelkeit*.

The red lines have been crossed; the boundaries are so far away in the distance we no longer notice them. Although there is a concept of "*yeridas hadoros* – the degeneration of generations," the downgrade from our parents' world, to ours is far too drastic. In fact, it seems we see a regression each and every year.

Naturally, we look for scapegoats. Some blame the schools. Some blame the teachers. Others blame friends, while their friends blame Hashem Himself for leaving us in *golus*. Another common claim is the "lack of leadership."

Certainly, these are valid explanations, and each issue should be addressed. But as we find ourselves in the month of *Elul*, a month of reflection over past behavior, a month of *Cheshbon Hanefesh* – it is high time we turn toward ourselves and see if we are to blame, if there is anything we can do to rectify the matter.

The Pros and Cons of Internet

To say the internet is the sole source of all problems and challenges is simply untrue. However it is certain that irresponsible, unrestricted internet use is the biggest cause of this disaster. It is certainly the biggest factor in creating “the leak” through which we lose people daily, from *cheder* children through *mesivta*, *yeshiva*, *kollel* and even from Chabad Houses. We have lost far too many of our children to the internet.

Saying the internet is completely “*Treif*” is also untrue. It is a most useful tool. *Shluchim* use it on a daily basis to be *mekarev Yidden* to the *Eibishter*, many *Yidden* require it for *parnasa* – an extremely important matter. Clearly, the internet can be harnessed to provide great benefits. However we must be aware of the lurking dangers and the methods to avoid or deal with them. We must be mindful of the fact that irresponsible use of the internet can destroy our lives and the lives of our children, both physically and spiritually.

There are three main points I would like to discuss:

First and foremost is the danger of the internet.

Second, who is most vulnerable; who we should be most careful with - children or teenagers, boys or girls? What about adults; is there an age when the danger no longer exists? What type of child is most vulnerable, the curious one or the troublemaker? What about the *masmid* or the *eidele neshama* who will cringe and blush when he sees something that isn't appropriate? Must we be concerned about him?

Thirdly, what is the solution to someone who already succumbed to this issue?

I would like to preface this by saying that it is not a *chilul Lubavitch* to say that we have problems in Lubavitch or in Crown Heights. We are human and we have problems. The *chilul Lubavitch* would be to decide not to talk about it; to ignore the issue, claiming that “it is not the *derech* of Lubavitch” to talk negatively.

Some people are mistaken and think that the internet problem only applies to other communities which don't learn enough *Tanya*, don't have *Farbrengens* or don't have *Mashpi'im* to talk to. Perhaps, they say, it applies only to communities which are so closed-minded that they become entangled as soon as their minds are exposed to something foreign. But us Lubavitchers? We are immune to the issue! We have *Chassidische bochurim* and *yungerleit!* We have real *yiras shomayim!* We learn *Tanya!* And we are open-minded and therefore less vulnerable.

This is clearly not the case, and I will show this through sharing a few harrowing tales about these issues from our own community.

The Damage of the “Kosher” Sites

In addition to the danger of addiction to the lowest elements on the internet, I would like to add that there are many more dangers to be aware of, and I will discuss them by starting with the lighter ones.

The internet is full of good. There are websites which are tailored toward our needs as Lubavitchers. They tell us what is happening in our community, who got engaged and who is getting married; there are forums where people share ideas and help each other out. This appears to be wonderful, and it can indeed be wonderful as long as it is not abused.

But sadly, this is not the case. A quick glimpse at some of the so-called “Lubavitch” news sites will showcase the total loss of sensitivity and lack of standards.

In the past, a magazine featuring Lubavitch news was sent to the Rebbe every week, and the Rebbe set the standards what is fit to be published and what is not, which pictures may be printed and which may not.

These guidelines were not made by *kanoim* elsewhere, they were made right here, in Crown Heights, by the Rebbe! But today, who is running these websites? Who is blowing the *Shofar* of Lubavitch? Who decides what is fit to print? Who decides who should be featured? Who decides which pictures are to be shown?

If there would be Rabbonim or responsible respectable Anash running these websites, it would be beneficial. But to our utter dismay, some of these websites are responsible for much of the destruction and damage we see on our streets, in our educational institutions and in our homes.

Let's start with the "news" articles. Who is featured and who is not? Who are the celebrities in Lubavitch? Never mind the coarse street language that is used in describing events! I am not even discussing the dirt and *machlokes* being showcased on those websites, the comments and "*shfichus domim*" which goes on, the pictures which are completely inappropriate, the absolute lack of self-respect, lack of respect to *Rabbonim* and the rampant *chilul Lubavitch*.

Then there are the op-eds, articles written by people who, instead of focusing on educating our children, espouse ideas completely foreign to the ethos and values of *Yiddishkeit*. Anyone who has some heartburn about anything has a set stage. He/she writes a beautiful article, describing the terrible state of *shiduchim*, detailing the ins and outs of boys and girls dating, claiming that girls lie to boys and vice-versa. Each one of these articles carries hundreds of comments, each one saying what he found out about this one or that one. This is what our children are reading! This is what is getting into their heads; this is what is defining their *Yiddishkeit*, their *Chassidishkeit* and their marriage!

It's come to a point that when you talk to an average person about the featured pictures, he might say he didn't see anything wrong, for he has totally lost his sensitivity and moral compass. A child who reads these

websites and sees these pictures will slowly change his attitude and lose his sensitivity.

Other articles appear on these sites which question the relevance of many directives given by the Rebbe, "Are they realistic expectations in today's day and age?" The writer claims to be just "just thinking out loud" and writes that although he is aware of the Rebbe's position, but we know that we don't listen to everything the Rebbe says, and in regarding this issue there are important reasons not to obey. A myriad of comments then follow to explain why the particular issue is no longer applicable, as it was in the 'olden days.' I personally have had to deal with *bochurim* who made life-altering decisions based on too much exposure to such articles.

Another problem is the quotes from and the links to sites covering some piece of news which are somewhat connected to *Yiddishkeit*, a *Shliach* or *Eretz Yisroel*. These sites are usually *non-frum* websites with questionable content, and link to YouTube, etc. Once a person gets used to going to those sites, he may suddenly find himself visiting sites he would never have considered a few months earlier.

I was recently at a *Farbrengen* in the *Shluchim* Office with a few of my friends, and during the *Farbrengen* another *Shliach* came in to use the computers stationed at the other side of the room. He checked his email, checked "what's new in Lubavitch" and then proceeded to open a website for an Israeli TV station, and with no shame, watched the nightly TV news show. I am sure this was totally inconceivable to him a few months earlier, but slowly he lost his sensitivity and it became a regular daily routine for him.

The Mother's Group

The issue increases when discussing the forums, where everything is up for discussion, and people feel

free to *pasken* on every topic.

Recently a friend of my wife called her and asked, "What happened to Rivky?" "Rivky" is a friend of hers and a close friend of my wife. My wife asked what it is about, and this friend proceeded to tell her that she is a member of some forum or Facebook group of Lubavitcher mothers helping each other, and Rivky recently posted some things about her *shalom bayis* problems.

My wife couldn't believe this and immediately called Rivky to ask her if maybe someone was using her name to publish private questions? Rivky explained that on this forum you cannot be anonymous and are required to use your name. It's real, it's very confidential and everyone who signs up commits not to tell anyone what they saw there. There are 2000 women in the group, but their committed not to let anything get out...

Rivky was taken aback by my wife's shock. She could see nothing wrong with it. She proceeded to tell my wife how comfortable she feels there; it's her family, her support group. The women discuss what bothers them, issues they have between them and their husbands, and the forum has helped them a lot. She even got good tips in *Halacha!* One woman asked a *shaila* of a *Rov* and now everyone else doesn't have to ask this *shaila*...

How is it possible? What happened to the walls around our homes? Is there no more shame in discussing private matters? Is one person's *sholom bayis* everyone's business? Where did our sensitivity disappear to?

I am sure that this woman would not muster the courage to get up in front of 2,000 *Shluchos* during the *Kinus* and share her *sholom bayis* or other private issues, but for some reason, when on the internet people switch to a different mode. They move to an imaginary world with no borders or shame, with no limits on what can be discussed. [Similarly people will speak out against others in a way they never would in "real life".]

In my eyes this constitutes a serious breach of Torah and *tznius*, and causes a total destruction of a

person's home.

It is important to clarify this spiritual damage before discussing the most dangerous and lowest elements in the world which are available at our fingertips. We must first clarify the issue of that which seems "Kosher," but in actuality, destroy our education, our marriage, desensitize us to holiness and distort our perception of right and wrong.

All this is beside the absolute waste of time and *bitul-Torah* which is inextricably connected to the internet.

Harrowing Tales of Destruction

Along with the spiritual damage, itself a major part of internet usage, there is an extreme physical danger lurking in the internet. This is caused by having the lowest and most vulgar elements in the world available at our fingertips. It destroys the physical and spiritual life of hundreds of *bochurim* and *yungerleit*.

Many years ago, anyone who wanted to find this *shmutz* was able to find it, but they had to really want it; they had to be motivated, they couldn't be lazy. They had to get up and go to find a *goyishe* store to see whatever it was they wanted. No one found it in their pocket by mistake. The problem with the *shmutz* on the internet is that the majority of the people come across it by accident. Many people aren't interested in it and don't want to see it, but through a few mistakes, the internet drags them into a trap, and they become so entangled in the garbage, that it becomes increasingly difficult to set themselves free.

My first experience dealing with this issue was five years ago. He was a *Chassidische bochur* who *davened* at length every day, was considered one of the best *bochurim* in *yeshiva* and was even careful with his eyesight: when he walked down Kingston Avenue he would take off his glasses! He never used the internet; all he used was email

(Gmail – to avoid picture ads) to keep in touch with his friends from previous *yeshivos* and people he had met on *mitvzoim*.

One day this *bochur* comes to me and asks to have a private conversation. After a few minutes of ‘beating around the bush’ and speaking in general terms, he burst out crying and described how six months earlier he had checked his email, saw an email subject “Free iPod,” which seemed like a dream come true! As the son of *Shluchim* who don’t have any money, he was always jealous of his friends had iPods with all of the Rebbe’s *sichos* and videos of *farbrengens*.

“I clicked on the email,” he continued, “and something popped up that made me lose total control. I forgot about *chassidishkeit*, I forgot about the Rebbe for whom I opened the email. I forgot everything.” He ended up spending hours going from site to site.

It has been a downhill slope since then. It began as something he did once a week, then progressed to twice, three times, until he was doing it every day. By then he couldn’t even go half a day without getting his “fix” of *shmutz*. The only thing that held him back was the request for a credit card, which he luckily didn’t have. He still continued *davenning* at length, he still didn’t wear his glasses down Kingston Ave, and he still is a *chassidische bochur*. He concluded by saying, “I want to commit suicide. There is some person inside of me I have no control over; I am one person among my friends in Yeshiva and a different person in private.” He was badly addicted.

Another *bochur* had a similar story. He was looking to buy an airline ticket, but he misspelled the web address, and with one simple mistake he took a flight to a completely different place... The sad part about this story is that he didn’t come to seek help as a *bochur*; he came two weeks before his *chassuna*. We were having a random discussion and he mentioned that he doesn’t know if it will be a problem, but he was involved in these

things regularly. While he was a *chosson*, it became more controlled, but he still succumbed to it once in a while. “Once I’m married,” he said, “it will all be under control. I replied that I was not so sure, and we ended the conversation.

He was right, for a while. For a full month after marriage he was “clean.” And then he fell right back in. I was in touch with him, trying to convince him to go to therapy, but he kept on refusing saying he has no money (considering his meager *Kollel* paycheck), and even when I offered to help financially, he refused saying, “If I really want to, I can control myself.” He tried very hard, but it didn’t work.

A few months later, his wife realized that something was amiss. His general behavior wasn’t befitting a *chassidische yungerman*, and definitely not the *choshuve bochur* she had gone out with. Eventually, she checked the history on his computer, and discovered the answer to all her questions. She was at loss. She was ready to drop her husband, but decided to call her *kallah* teacher who called me, knowing that I am involved in these matters.

I called the husband to my house to break the news to him. “Your wife found out,” I told him. “She can’t stand to look at you anymore. Her *kallah* teacher worked hard to explain to her that it is a weakness, and you really didn’t mean to betray her. She told her to try working with you because she is the only one who can help you. Although she was devastated, she is still ready to make it work and go to therapy.” Thousands of dollars later, spent on therapists for him, for her (to help her deal with having an addicted husband) and for them as a couple, he is on the path to recovery.

There is another *bochur* I know, one who describes himself as the type of *bochur* who “never watched a movie.” He still doesn’t watch any movies – even when he is the only Yid on the plane, because of his self-control. He recently finished his *shlichus* in a Yeshiva where he

was instrumental in inspiring many *bochurim*, and is now coming to 770. But inside he is a different person; someone who has watched “*shmutz*” since the age of eight. A good friend of his was nice enough to share some knowledge with him, and exposed him to that world. Though he wasn’t addicted at the age of eight, he was involved since then and it developed into the most serious case of addiction I have ever known. Now that he is finished yeshiva and is about to face real life, he came for help.

The last story is a most encouraging one. This *bochur* was involved from the age of twelve. By fourteen he was heavily involved, and addicted by twenty. Now, at twenty three, he just completed a year as a Magid Shiur in a yeshiva, and is a very influential and charismatic person. I asked him how he was able to juggle these two opposing extremes, and he answered, “They are two entirely different people. I do not know how they coexist within me.”

I asked him why he suddenly decided to come for help. “I recently called my father to say I was ready for *shidduchim*,” he answered. “And my father said we have to talk”. His father was totally unaware of this issue - as he was very careful never to access anything at home - he merely wanted to have a discussion with his son to help prepare him for life ahead.

He sat down with his father for an open discussion about married life, and his father told him, “If there are any issues that might affect your marriage, you should take care of them now. If there is anything in that realm; whether something was ever done to you, whether you were even slightly involved with anything, let’s be open about it because marriage won’t take care of it.”

Being very open with his father, he burst into tears and told the truth. His father didn’t lose his cool, thought about it, and said he would help him work through it, and will pay whatever it costs. The *bochur* looked around for help and came to me. He will be starting therapy soon.

The beautiful part about this story is that he actually had someone to talk to; someone he felt comfortable with and who was able to help get his life back on track. The sad part is that had he come two years earlier, while he wasn’t yet addicted, it would have been much easier to help him.

My father-in-law, Rabbi Mendel Gluckowsky, recently told me a story. He received a phone call one early Sunday morning from a mother who was crying uncontrollably. Between the sobs, he heard about her sixteen year old son, a *chassidishe bochur* in a good yeshiva away from home. When he came home for his Shabbos off, he woke his mother up at 2:00 AM on *Motzoei Shabbos*, crying bitterly. She was sure something terrible had happened. She wasn’t wrong.

The *bochur* began by saying that in yeshiva he heard about a certain concept. Someone told him about a certain website, but he pushed it out of his mind, sure he would never visit it. A month earlier he came home for a Shabbos off, and ended up spending *Motzoei Shabbos* on the computer. Somehow he ended up on that website, and spent the whole night going deeper and deeper into it. After getting up in the morning, realizing what he had done, he did *teshuva* like never before. He went to *mikvah*, learned *Chassidus*, *davened* in tears, and promised himself he will never fall again.

This Shabbos off, he once again ended up alone on the computer. Again, he visited the sites. Only this time, he was asked for a credit card. Desperate to see more, he snuck into his parent room, and took a credit card out of his father’s wallet! This *bochur’s* head was somewhere else; it was as if he was in a trance. He had no control over what he was doing. Only after he had finished did he realize his mistake, and knowing that his father will ultimately discover the mysterious charge on the credit card, he decided to approach his parents and tell them the truth.

We must wake up to the issue before our children wake us up...

The Vulnerable Ones

I am still searching for that type of child or *bochur* that one doesn't have to worry about; the one who is immune to these issues. In my years of experience, I have yet to find even one. I was shocked again and again as I saw *bochurim* of all types; from the quiet to the *lebedik*, whether emotional or intellectual, every type of upbringing and every type of personality. A person doesn't know how he will react until he is in harm's way.

This destroys *shiduchim*, and it usually comes out during that period of time. *Bochurim* cannot make up their minds; they don't find what they are looking for because they are searching for a girl that doesn't exist. They have all kinds of warped ideas in their heads. When you speak to them about marriage, you find that they have a totally different picture in their head.

This is like a sickness in the body, it can affect even our best, and it can start from 3rd or 4th or 5th grade. All it takes is one "knowledgeable" boy in the class or overnight camp, and everyone else is informed.

The Serial Abuser in Your Own Home

These stories show us how deadly the internet can be. It is an addiction, comparable to drugs, that is extremely difficult to get out of. Addiction doesn't only imply that he cannot *daven* with right intentions, or learn without improper thoughts in his head. Living with addiction means no chance for real *sholom bayis*, not being able to keep a job or educate his children. Falling into this trap is throwing your entire life into the garbage. We see it clearly every day. Obviously a person can do *teshuvah* and go for therapy, but the point is that this form of addiction is not a specific, localized problem. It's an all pervasive one.

This concept can be understood with the following analogy:

The new school year started and your child is going to *cheder*. He has this wonderful *melamed*: he is warm, caring and the child comes home describing how friendly and loving this teacher is. Soon, you hear some rumors in the *mikvah* that this *melamed* is a bit too "friendly." You head to the principal's office and confront him about the situation, demanding an explanation as to why this *melamed* is still teaching if there are serious allegations against him.

The principal calms you down and says that the rumors aren't completely true. "It was blown out of proportion," he says. The *melamed* has been teaching about 25 children a year for 10 years. That's 250 children, and there have only been 3 complaints, (roughly 1%), and none of these complaints were concrete and there was no proof. "He has a large family and needs *parnasa*," says the principal, "I can't just throw him out." The principal then tells you "Your child is a strong boy, nothing will happen to him, trust me. I know your child; he isn't the type people will start up with."

Even with only a 1% chance that is unsubstantiated, and your child being "untouchable," you would not let your child anywhere close to this *melamed*. You would start campaigns to get him fired and would plaster Kingston Avenue with warning signs. "If the principal doesn't fire him, the principal should be fired himself for tolerating him," you would cry.

But what about us? We are the principals in our own homes. Sometimes we hire a babysitter, someone to educate our children. This babysitter doesn't have a 1% bad track record; it comes with a 90% bad track record! A parent that has unguarded internet in his home, or allows his children unrestricted access to the internet is simply abusing their child!

A parent who doesn't know 100% of what their children are doing on the internet at any given time is

bringing a serial abuser into their home to babysit the children in complete privacy!

You are ruining your children for the sake of your peace of mind, so they will stop nagging you. They want internet in the house, it's easy and cheap, and it allows you to escape your duties. But you have to educate your children. We have to be on top of them, be involved in what they are doing. We must speak to them and get to know them a bit better. We must talk to them about this issue. Don't think you are revealing to them something they do not know; trust me, they know more than you.

It is important to know that in the world, the "shmutz" industry accounts for the biggest chunk of internet, over 50% of Internet use is for these things. This is the largest and most profitable business on the Internet. There are thousands of people who make money by catching one more child, one more *bochur*, and they will use any trick to get someone to enter their site. And you sit there permitting your child to browse alone? In privacy?

We have to remember that even if we won't become addicted, and even if our children won't become addicted, if a child encounters these things even once, his pure mind is lost. Even if he never returns, or doesn't return often, his ideas are different, his outlook changed. His life has taken a turn; he will be looking for different things in life.

We must realize, either we wake up or our children will wake us up. This is the biggest problem facing our children, *bochurim*, *yungeleit* and older. It is true that the older you are the less the risk there is, but still we shouldn't put ourselves into a *nisayon*.

Obviously, not every person gets addicted the first time he sees it. Yet one shouldn't think that it won't do damage to him, because a person can never know when it will become an addiction. One never knows when one will be in a bad mood, when one will encounter a weak moment or on a bad day when everything seems to be going wrong, and he is then more vulnerable to become addicted.

I once *farbrenge*d with *bochurim* and spoke about the dangers of the internet, and one of the *bochurim* took upon himself not to use the internet without someone watching what he is doing until after he is married. The next day I received a call from his father, a respectable *chassidische Shliach*, complaining about what I had done to his son. This *bochur* ran all the technology in the Chabad House. He runs the website, sends the emails and takes care of everything.

"Trust me, he is a *chassidische bochur*," said the father. "I know him through and through. We live in a place where he is able to do whatever he wants, and he controls himself." I asked the father if he knew everything his son does on the internet, and he answered, "Yes."

"So why can't you take care of the emails and the website yourself?" I asked. The reply was, "I know nothing about the internet." So he knew and understood everything his son was doing, but was clueless on how to use the internet...

The Grim Statistics

I think by now it is clear that the danger applies to everyone, but I would like to conclude by presenting some statistics I gathered from conversations with noted psychologist, Rabbi Yosef Shagalov, who was very helpful in many cases, and with a school principal who is in touch with what is happening in his school.

Over 90% of children in our educational institutions use the internet. Boruch Hashem, 10% of parents are strong enough to protect their children and do not have internet in the home.

95% of children who have unrestricted and unguarded Internet access have bumped into "shmutz" at least once. Next time you talk to them about "those things you shouldn't see on the internet," they know what you're referring to. They have already seen it.

Over 70% of the people say that their first encounter with “*shmutz*” was unintentional, and they weren’t looking for it.

The percentage of parents who know what their children are doing online is so negligible. The children are far ahead of their parents, and the parents are clueless of what is happening with their children.

I inquired about who is most prone to become addicted. The response was: 12% of people are addictive by nature, but the percentage of people who are **at risk** of addiction is much more.

90% of children who are not happy in their lives, who are not satisfied or who do not succeed in the school are at risk of developing an addiction upon seeing something inappropriate.

With children who do not have an open channel with their parents and who do not feel comfortable talking to their parents, the risk is doubled. The pain someone has after the first time doing it will cause him to continue doing it again and again, and this applies specifically to those who do not have someone to share their problems with.

Every person at every age is vulnerable, no matter how successful they are. People, who are in a bad mood (specifically concerning *sholom bayis*), are sick at home for a week or are simply bored, are also at high risk.

The Solution

Professionals all agree that two things will prevent this issue:

- Reducing vulnerability – make sure your children aren’t in the high risk categories (as outlined above).
- Reducing the opportunity – make sure that the availability of internet is restricted or limited. It is obviously better if you will decide to have mercy on yourself and on your children to take the internet completely out of your home.

It is important that parents keep an open channel with their children specifically about these issues, and talk about them. However, it is not enough just to strengthen their *yiras shomayim* and talk to them, it is also crucial to protect them and reduce their accessibility to danger.

I know it is *mesirus nefesh* to disassociate ourselves from the leading tool in the world. It will definitely compromise our comfort, limit what we can have at home and it might mean paying higher costs for our products, but it’s better than losing the *nefesh* of our children.

Hope is not lost

As bad as addiction is, there is help. There are many good treatments and many great therapists, support groups, etc. It might be expensive at times, but it is definitely worth it. It should be looked upon like an addiction to drugs that has to be dealt with by a professional.

While it is imperative for each person to have a *mashpia*, and consult with him (or her) regularly regarding all issues; once it’s a real addiction, the influence of the *mashpia* is extremely limited.

There is a very interesting letter from the Rebbe in which the Rebbe advocates using professional help in a case of addiction. The letter was written to an alcohol addict, but it can be applied equally to these issues. The Rebbe brings out a few important points, and focuses on what an addict should do to recover: First and foremost, although he has taken a *hachlata* and not kept to it, he should not be depressed about it.

Then the Rebbe enumerates three important points:

- He shouldn’t carry too much money in his pocket, for then he will not be able to buy the bottle of alcohol. In other words limit the opportunities to succumb.
- He should befriend only those who will have a good influence on him. Again the Rebbe is

instructing him to take precaution to avoid the problem.

- He should seek Doctors and treatment and follow through with everything they instruct.

The Rebbe concludes by telling him to learn *Mishnayos Be'al Peh* and *Tehilim*, and repeat them by heart whenever an urge or craving overpowers him, and he feels he is not in control.

As mentioned, the most important thing is to muster the courage to fortify our homes before the damage is done. It's no question that it is difficult to part with the world's most dominant tool. Indeed to forbid the internet

completely would be considered by many to be a "*gzeira she'ain rov hatzibbur yecholim lamod bo*" – a decree by which the majority of the population cannot abide. But on the other hand the damage that unrestricted internet is causing is also a "*gzeira shein rov hatzibbur yecholim lamod bo.*"

In merit of our *mesirus nefesh* for the cause of our *yiras shomayim* and the *yiras shomayim* of our children, we should merit much *chassidische nachas* and joy culminating with the joy of the coming of *Moshiach* now!

Safeguarding Your Computer

Prepared by Yisroel Tabi
Chief Technology Officer at The R20 Group

How can my Child access the Internet?

- Computers and Laptops located at Home or a Friend's house
- Library
- Stores such as Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts
- Free Wifi Locations/HotSpots
- An old cellphone with Wifi capabilities, such as a Blackberry or iPhone
- iPod Touch, iPad, Tablet, PSP, 3DS, Xbox, Playstation, Nintendo Wii, and almost all gaming devices available today

What can I do as a Parent?

- Learn everything you can about computers, the Internet and related technology
- Place the computer in a "well-trafficked" area, **NOT** a child's bedroom or a secluded area
- Use Computer/Internet Management:
- Age-based access levels – Allows for various levels of access for different family members
- Filtering and Blocking (incoming and outgoing.)
- Time Restrictions
- Activity Logs - Parents can view logs that list web sites visited, web sites blocked, chat sessions... Software can even capture screen shots and email messages to you if a rule is violated!

Warning Signs

Elevate concern if your child...

- Significantly increases on-line time
- Quickly exits IM, chat, email, websites and other activities when you are near
- Increases use of new slang words or expresses inappropriate knowledge
- Withdraws from family and friends
- Begins using new screen names, an online account belonging to someone else, etc.
- Is reluctant to discuss activities or your concerns

Monitoring Software

- For Windows and Mac – Web Chaver
- For Blackberry – Spector Soft
- For Android – Mobi Stealth
- For iPod Touch, iPad, and iPhone – Web Chaver

Computer Filter Software

- For free: Norton Minder
- At a cost: Jnet

Mobile/Phone Filter Software

- For Blackberry – Jnet Mobile
- For Android – Mobi Security Trend Micro
- For iPod Touch, iPad, and iPhone – K9 Web Browser



General Guidelines on Using the Internet

Use of the Internet

- The internet is a very powerful tool which can be used for both positive and negative. It can be compared to a knife which can be used for food, but can also *ch"v* cause injury. Unfortunately many individuals and families have been destroyed as a result of the internet.
- Considering the potential dangers, the internet should be used **for work only**. While the internet may ease certain aspects of life (i.e. shopping, *simchos*, etc.), they do not justify exposing oneself to the influences of the internet.
- The internet should be kept out of the home **at all costs**. Since the dangers are great and the protection is uncertain – one should do everything possible to keep the home safe *b'gashmiyus* and *b'ruchniyus*. One who needs the internet at home should discuss it with a Rov.
- At any rate – **children should not browse the internet at all**, just as a knife is kept far away from those too young to protect themselves from its danger. Computers should be password protected as an extra measure. If one has older children who are already accustomed to using the internet – one should consult a Rov.

Protective Measures

1. **Wherever one has internet** precautions must be taken so that it will be used correctly. It is crucial that one take the following protective measures:
2. **Filter**: Set up a strong filtering system (such as K9) on all computers and mobile devices. Though it may not be foolproof, it can serve as a deterrent. The filter should be password protected by someone else.
3. **Monitor** ('*yichud*'): Set up a monitoring system (such as WebChaver) and have it report to a respected friend or *mashpia*. Also, place the computer in a central room, where computer usage is easily viewable.
4. **Limit**: Set limits according to the standards of your home – what you consider acceptable and what not (just as one would with books or magazines). There are many negative influences on the internet which a filter will not block (as *goyim* do not consider them objectionable). Furthermore, each site should be carefully scrutinized; even if a site includes some good content, don't assume that everything on it is acceptable.

Time Limit: As internet usage can drag on uselessly, one should limit the time of internet usage.

Important: Since each home is different, it is vital for each person to speak to a Rov or *mashpia* who is familiar with the workings of the internet, and find the solution that is right for them.



Resources and Treatment

General Resources

- **Internet Guidance for Anash:** InternetGuidanceCH@gmail.com.
- **Filters Installation (Crown Heights)** – Have a professional come to your home and install a filter on your computer for a nominal fee (\$25): InternetGuidanceCH@gmail.com.
- **GuardYourEyes.org** – Resource for protection and Information about treatments and advice.
- **TSFA** – Free support for all your technology safety needs: support@tfsAlliance.org 443-420-8372.
- **Guides to Installing Filters and Monitoring Software:** www.tfsalliance.org/?page_id=11.
- **Block Unwanted Ads:** www.tfsalliance.org/?p=1.

Treatment for Internet Addiction

General Guidance

Rabbi Shlomo Sternberg347-647-1982
Crown Heights

Doctors

Rabbi Dr. Yosef Shagalov952-831-3662

Dr. Gavriel Faygin917-257-8626
Specialist in Internet Addiction

Dr. Benyamin Tepfer516-426-5415
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Dr. Hillel Sternstein718-382-0045
Chief Therapist of Tikvah at Ohel

Dr. Lewis J. Abrams201-725-3627
Manhattan • lewisabrams@verizon.net

Dr. David Kohn davidkohn@hotmail.com

Women

Rachel Rubenstein917-607-1315
Flatbush

Overheard from the Underworld

Mrs. Mina Gordon – Melbourne Australia

Sometime in the early '80s, the Nachash Hakadmoni, also known as the Satan, called an urgent meeting of his chief henchmen. They gathered together in the bottommost cavern of She'ol Tachtis, a motley crew of *sonei Yisrael* from all of Jewish history. The cacophony of noise settled down at the banging of the gavel in the Satan's hand.

"Order, order," he called out. "I've invited you here today for an emergency meeting. The footsteps of you-know-who" (there was hissing and booing from the crowd, necessitating another loud rap with the gavel) "are already starting to be heard in the world. We must distract the people! Without a nation to greet him, there is no king! This may be our last chance for battle — if we don't put in our greatest effort, the war will be over, and we will exist no more!

"We need a plan, a new, amazing, foolproof strategy to stop the Jews from bringing the world to its true goal." (More hissing and booing. Another bang with the gavel.) "Order, order. Nu? Who's got an idea?"

Antiochus called out: "Outlaw Torah!"

Haman screamed: "Destroy, destroy!"

"We've tried both this past century," answered Satan, "and they've managed to outlive our dear diabolical duo, Stalin and Hitler, and bounce back stronger than ever! Neither six million murders nor seventy years of communism could put out the fire hidden within them. We need something more original."

"Original?" echoed Bilam. "There's nothing new under the sun,¹ but I've got a brilliant idea for a new twist to an old tried and true strategy. Remember how desperate we were when the Jews were about to enter the Land of Israel? Even my attempt to curse them didn't work — and that was a first for me! But in the end, I did succeed at least somewhat with my superb advice."

Balak interrupted with a sneer: "There he goes again — just as they say, you can always recognize a student of Bilam by his conceit!"²

"Order, order. Please continue, my dear Bilam."

"I'm suggesting presenting our most potent poison in a state-of-the-art product. The female division heads are heavily involved in the design. They are confident that with it they can destroy all modesty and morality."

"The female division heads? Aren't they busy enough? They've got the intermarriage section running full time."

"True, but that is mainly geared to catch those already far from Judaism, and with the *baal teshuvah* movement flourishing, even the intermarried are coming back. My new idea is to infiltrate the nation at all levels, affecting even those who are observant — the ones who really look frum, even teachers, outreach workers, *yeshivah* students, etc. I've already explained the plan to some of our ladies. Could our women's division leaders please present our proposed plot? Princess Kozbi *bas Tzur*.³"

There is much clapping from the audience as Kozbi saunters up to the podium, nearly tripping in her high heels.

"If you remember," she begins, "we managed to infiltrate the Jewish camp in the desert, first by pretending to be innocently running a market day to supply permissible refreshments for weary travelers. Once we got the customer in the door, we used our power of enticement until he would even be agreeable to serve our idols!"⁴

"And what about me!" interrupted Queen Izevel. "I single-handedly instituted Baal worship as the national religion, and made murder look like an act of justice!"⁵

"Ah, yes," replied Kozbi, trying to be polite but bristling at the interruption, "You had poor Achav eating out of your hand. In any case, until now, if we wanted to *shlep*

someone into sin, we had to get him to at least take the first step. He had to leave the daled amos of the Torah environment, and actively look for something 'unkosher,' hoping not to be seen by others. Even television, which brought everything unkosher into the privacy of his home, was hard for him to justify buying in the first place.

"Our plan is to inundate the world with a new invention, one that is so useful that everyone will be convinced that they need it — and at the same time, so private that no one will worry about anyone finding out what he's accessing. It will have good and evil side by side, so that in one moment, one movement, the user can unintentionally discover a whole universe of klipah that he might never have known existed."

"One of the beauties of this scheme," interjected Queen Assalyah,⁶ "is that it appeals especially to the young. To quote a colleague of mine, 'If there are no kids, there will be no goats.'⁷ If we can destroy the youth, there will be no future generations. I nearly succeeded in destroying Malchus Beis Dovid⁸, but this is soooooo much more subtle and cunning!"

"What about the bitul Torah angle?" spoke up the daughter of Pharaoh Necho excitedly. "I managed to fool Shlomo Hamelech into sleeping in on the day of the Temple dedication⁹. Just imagine how easy it will be to keep people up late into the night with our new invention. They'll be too tired to get up to daven with a minyan, or to daven with kavanah, or maybe they'll skip davening altogether. No one will have time for learning or mitzvos."

"How about the lashon hara aspect?" came a masculine voice. It was Do'eg Ha'adomi. "The telephone was a great boost to slander-spreading, so maybe we

can incorporate some way for instant and widespread communication using this new tool. Something that encourages people to say what comes into their heads without much thought or editing, and communicate it to thousands of others instantly."

"I myself was thinking along those lines," answered the Satan excitedly. "Don't forget that I'm also the Nachash Hakadmoni, originator of lashon hara!"

"We're even planning to eventually develop a wireless, pocket-size model," added Bilam.

There was an excited buzz in the room. Then Amalek piped up: "Is this scheme foolproof?"

The noise quieted as everyone present turned to the Satan to hear his response.

"Nothing is foolproof!" thundered the Satan. "We can put forth our very best effort, but ultimately, every Jew has free choice. Meeting adjourned."

In the Upper Heavenly Spheres, Michael and Gavriel turn to each other. "Did you hear what I just heard? Oy, what will be? Will the Children of Israel be able to withstand this test?"

"Don't worry," said Eliyahu Hanavi. "Have faith. Didn't the Holy One, Blessed Be He, empower each and every Jew to choose life? For each one the test is different, and each one must sincerely and honestly seek the right path. Let them ask advice and find solutions. Some must stay far away from it. Some must discipline themselves to eat only the fruit and discard the shell. Some must harness its energy to spread Torah and mitzvos. But all must beware — for the paths are misleading and the choices are complex."

It's the same old snake, just new skin.

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1. Koheles 1:9
2. Pirkei Avos 5:19
3. Bamidbar 25:15
4. Ibid. 25:2
5. Melachim I 16:31; 21:7-15

6. Melachim II 8:18, 26-27
7. Bereishis Rabbah 42
8. Melachim II 11:1
9. Bamidbar Rabbah 10:4



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Rabbi, Dr. Yosef Shagalow has been practicing psychology in Minnesota and *providing counseling internationally by phone* for individuals and couples struggling with the consequences of *internet abuse and addiction* for the last 12 years. He is also an ongoing consultant for Rabbonim and Shluchim who face this issue in their communities and are looking for a professional with a thorough *understanding and awareness of the religious community's unique needs*. Rabbi Dr. Shagalow, is available for phone counseling and consultation.

Rabbi, Dr. Yosef Shagalow, PsyD LP, is a licensed clinical psychologist in Minnesota and the state of New York. He was born and raised in London, England. He graduated from Lubavitch Yeshiva Morristown, NJ, and received his smicha from United Lubavitch Yeshiva 770, Eastern Parkway. He later moved to Minneapolis Minnesota to work under Upper Midwest Merkos Chabad.

Rabbi, Dr. Shagalow, received his Masters degree in Counseling Psychology from the University of St. Thomas, MN and his Doctorate degree in Clinical Psychology from Argosy University. He is currently the clinical director of Twin Cities Behavioral Health, a Day Treatment clinic using the DBT therapy model for individuals with history of high risk behaviors including suicidal ideation and self injurious behaviors and severe unstable emotion. He also provides therapy for individuals and couples. He has been working with internet addiction issues for the last 12 years.



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