

The Weekly *Farbrengens*

MERKAZ ANASH
מרכז אנאש

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EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

POSITIVE EXPOSURE (I)

THE IMPACT OF READING MATERIAL

The *Rambam* writes: *HaShem* commanded us to refrain from studying about an *avoda zara* or its service, for this can cause a person to be drawn after it. Furthermore, anything that can bring someone to question the basis of our *emuna* 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 whoever reads books of an 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 rules in *Shulchan Aruch*: Books which arouse the reader to *taivos* are absolutely forbidden because they incite the *yetzer hara*. People who write or publish such books are counted among '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 parts.

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

SECULAR BOOKS

In תרמ"ח (1888), when the Friediker Rebbe was only eight years old, the Rebbe Rashab wrote his first will, in which 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 *begashmiyus* and *beruchniyus*, which nowadays necessitates a special safeguard. Most importantly, he needs to be protected from bad friends, who lack *yiras Shamayim* and an acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. Because of their exposure to inappropriate things, including books and stories written in Yiddish, 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 in anything holy. May *HaShem* have mercy on us and send *Moshiach* speedily, in our days. Amen."

(חנוך לנער ע' 26)

CONSIDER

How can objectionable reading cool one's enthusiasm in holiness if he does not accept what he reads?

Why should Chassidus protect a person from wanting to engage in secular literature?

During a routine search conducted in the Tomchei Temimim yeshivah, secular books were found among the possessions of some *bochurim*. The Rebbe Rashab was extremely disturbed and was most upset with the *bochurim* for allowing such a thing to happen. The *maspia* Reb Groinem and the *chozer* Reb Moshe traveled to the Rebbe's *datche* to reconcile between the *bochurim* and the Rebbe. They asked him: "Since only a few *bochurim* had these books, why then is the Rebbe so upset?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the Rebbe. "They are being showered with *Chassidus!*"

(רשימו"ד חדש ע' 175)

In תשי"ז (1957), various secular newspapers were being issued in *Eretz Yisroel*, and the Rabbonim there proclaimed that they were forbidden and not to be read.

When a certain 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, for the *Shulchan Aruch* explicitly states that reading them is forbidden, and many proclamations have been recently made in *Eretz Yisroel* against them."

(לקו"ש חכ"ג ע' 363)

The *Chiddushei HaRim* would say that just as an infant whose brothers had died from a *bris* may not undergo a *bris*, even though the danger is doubtful, secular newspapers which have caused more than two Yidden to desert the proper path should not be read by any Yid.

(בואו חשבונו ע' כז)

KOSHER TELEVISION?

In a *yechidus* with with R. Moshe Chaim Sapochinsky of Montreal in תשי"ד (1954), the Rebbe lashed out at the challenge of the time – television. At the time, many Yidden considered television to be an innocent provider of kosher entertainment and numerous *frum* Yidden brought it into their homes. The Rebbe explained that the 'kosher' television was not really so 'kosher' and would only spiral further downward. Children would see their parents using it and would watch other programs, and the adults as well would become lax over time.

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

The Rebbe concluded: "In the past, Yidden were extremely particular to keep their distance from any negative influences, even avoiding walking near a church or the like, but with television, one brings the church *r"l* into their home! One must know that this is all a test from *HaShem*, to see if we indeed love Him with all our heart. Make sure that you correct this matter in your hometown, and here in particular."

(לקו"ש ח"ח ע' 459, תו"מ ח"ב ע' 192)



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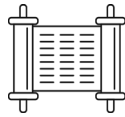


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ENGAGEMENT GIFTS

What kinds of gifts are appropriate between a chosson and kallah?

Minhag Yisroel is that the chosson and kallah receive gifts from each other's family during the engagement period. In the time of Chazal this took place on the night before the wedding and our custom is earlier on during the engagement.¹

Many communities had specific minhagim what the gifts should consist of. The Rebbe mentioned the minhag to give the chosson a Shas and the kallah a siddur with commentary or halacha books in her preferred language. Elsewhere the Rebbe mentioned seforim for the chosson and a pushka.²

The Gemara records a concern that gifts between the chosson and kallah ("sivlonos") could create a concern of kiddushin. Rashi explains that the chosson may have intended to be mekadesh the kallah with the gift, while Tosefos understands that the gift is perhaps an indication that he was mekadesh her with something else beforehand.

Shulchan Aruch notes that most communities aren't concerned about such gifts in terms of kiddushin, and the Rema adds that if the chosson says there was no kiddushin we follow his word.³ Some acharonim note that in the present age there is even less concern since the kiddushin and nisuin are always done together under the chupah.⁴

Yet, the Rebbe stressed that the chosson should not give the kallah a ring, even without intention for kiddushin. Since a ring is commonly associated with kiddushin, there is concern that it may cause kiddushin.⁵ The Rebbe specifically requested to publicize this issue.

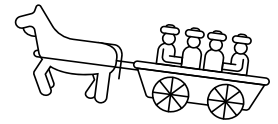
In a similar vein, the Rebbe suggested not referring to the engagement as eirusin (betrothal) which implies kiddushin, and instead to refer to it as kishurei t'naim, binding an agreement. During the engagement period the young man and woman are not married at all and have only agreed to marry.⁶

1. ראה מג"א אור"ח סי' תמ"ד סק"ט. 2. ראה ערוה"ש אה"ע סי' מ"ה סט"ז, ושו"ת מהרשד"ם אה"ע סי' ט"ו ט"ז. 3. ראה שיחת י"ד כסלו תשל"ח אודות ספרים בכלל. 4. ראה לקו"ש ח"ט ע' 510, שיח"ק תשמ"א ח"ב ע' 512. 5. שו"ע ורמ"א שם ס"ב. 6. אג"ק חכ"ו ע' קמ, שיח"ק שם.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

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Our Heroes



R. ZEV VOLF LEVITIN

R. Zev Volf Levitin (5608-5670) was a chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek in his youth, and later a chossid of the Rebbe Maharash and Rebbe Rashab. The son-in-law of the famous chossid and shadar R. Gershon Ber Paharer, R. Volf lived in Pahar until he was appointed to serve as mashgiach in the Lubavitch in 5660, a position a held until his passing. His son was R. Shmuel Levitin, the Rov and Mashpia of 770.

At fourteen years old, R. Volf became engaged, and he spent the next two years learning all three "Bavos" and Choshen Mishpat. When it was time for the chassuna, he was so engrossed in learning that he was delaying to go.

At eighteen, his father-in-law R. Gershon Ber sent him to Lubavitch. It was during the last year of the Tzemach Tzedek's life and he was quite weak. During yechidus, the Rebbe repeated softly, "Oif! Oif!" meaning that he should stay up learning every Thursday night. The meshores interpreted that it meant learning Niglah for half the night, and Chassidus for the other half.

During his time in Lubavitch, Reb Volf brought one of the leading maskilim to see the Tzemach Tzedek. In yechidus, the Rebbe uncovered part of his hand and pointing to it he said, "Look Who gives this life!"

At that moment, *emunah* became so real to the maskil that he went on to become an outstanding chossid. (R. Shmuel Levitin recalled meeting that chossid years later.)

Reb Volf was in Lubavitch during the Tzemach Tzedek's *histalkus* and he recalls hearing that during the *taharah* the Rebbe's body dipped under water on its own, like what happened with the Mezritcher Maggid.

Maharil, the Tzemach Tzedek's son, had been away from Lubavitch at the time of the *histalkus*. When he returned, he stated that his father was even greater than the Maggid, since from every line of Chassidus he wrote an entire maamar could be developed. The Rebbe Maharash responded, "Not just every line; every word!"

R. Volf was an incredible masmid, and he continued to learn even on his deathbed. He was completely fluent in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch.

His wife ran a tavern and R. Volf would sit there learning. The *goyim* were in awe of him, and they would ask if they were disturbing him from learning.

(ניצוצי אור - וויינגארטען)

A Moment with The Rebbe



THE PERFECT SHIDDUCH

In a sharp letter to a young man involved in *shidduchim*, the Rebbe wrote:

"If only you would conclude, once and for all, that there is no perfection in the women's section, just like there is none in the men's, since only Hashem is perfect, then you would have closed on a *shidduch* long ago."

A woman who was struggling to find a *shidduch* for her daughter shared her anxiety with the Rebbe.

"Could she identify what she is looking for?" the Rebbe inquired.

"Oh, of course," answered the woman, and began an endless list of characteristics her daughter was seeking in her life-mate.

The Rebbe smiled softly, "It seems to me that you are describing at least three separate *bochurim*."

(Igros Kodesh Vol. 15, Page 95; Seeds of Wisdom Vol. 1, page 78)

In Honor of our Daughters.
May Hashem Bless Them
Saul and Bunia Newman