



לע"נ
ר' אלטער מאיר דוד
בן ר' אלקסנדר ע"ה
גלב"ע ו' מנחם אב ה'תשנ"ב

In loving memory of
Alter Diament
Dedicated by
Stewart and Chana Diament
and family



Purity

Exposing our children (and ourselves) to kosher images only

“רבי יהושע בן חנניה, אשרי יולדתו.”

“Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania: fortunate is the one who gave birth to him...”¹

Talmud Yerushalmi explains: From the time he was a baby, his mother brought his crib into the *beis midrash* so his ears would absorb the words of Torah.²

ALL AGREE

“There are those people who will only follow what we say if they hear it from other sources,” says the Rebbe. “With recent discoveries, doctors have found and confirmed what Torah has stated all along: The first impressions upon a child’s heart and mind, even before the child can comprehend anything, have a significant impact on his or her life—even into their old age.”

Based on this premise, the Rebbe cautioned that as soon as a child is born, they should only be surrounded by pure and holy objects. When choosing pictures and toys to entertain an infant, care should be taken that instead of using pictures of a cat or a dog, a lion or an eagle, one should hang up a tzedakah pushka, a *bentcher*, a poster with *krias shema* or the Aleph-Beis, etc. This way, when the child looks up, they’ll see Torah-themed concepts.

When the child gets a little older, they will begin pointing at it with their finger. Then when they begin to speak, they will ask, “What is that? It’s not a food-item, it’s not a drink, it doesn’t make noise. So what is it?” And the mother will have the opportunity to explain to the child: “This is Torah, and Torah is *di beste schoira* (the most valuable merchandise).”³

THROW OUT THE MOUSE

The Rebbe insisted that even when adding pictures to animate a story, in attempt to pique the children’s interest, care should be taken that only kosher animals should be used. “A Yid, and especially a Yiddishe child, should only absorb pure things,” the Rebbe said.

“It is shocking that even in children’s newsletters that are (in all other areas) ‘*al taharas hakodesh*,’ they still insist on featuring a mouse!”⁴

Still, the Rebbe cautioned that when trying to influence others in this matter, we need to be careful not to come across as if saying “Aha! We caught you with this mistake and you need to correct it!” In addition to the fact that this approach is completely wrong, it is also far less effective. The other person is far less likely to listen to you when you simply try



to prove that you know better, because he in turn will feel the same way and try to prove that in fact *he* is superior.

TOYS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

When buying animal-like toys for children, they should only be stuffed animals that are kosher. When drawing pictures for children to assist in their learning, these too should only consist of kosher animals.

Then the Rebbe gave a very interesting example: Often when teaching children Aleph-Beis, educators draw pictures to make the letters come to life—like drawing an Aleph as a man carrying two pails on a stick, with one pail higher than the other. The person might be shown walking next to a river with fish inside it, or maybe a cat sitting next to the river. “Throw out” the cat and replace it with

ALEPH-BEIS HOUSE

On the subject of teaching Aleph Beis with pictures, Mrs. Esther Mentz relates:

In 5729*, we were in *yechidus* with our two-year old daughter. Unfortunately, she decided that the Rebbe’s room was a wonderful playground and she began touching and taking things off the shelves. I was quite embarrassed.

But then the Rebbe called her over, stood her between him and the desk, and said, “Let me draw you a picture.”

The Rebbe took a paper and pencil and drew a house—it was the letter Ches. The door was a Hei. Then he had a Lamed coming out of the chimney like smoke. He made a full picture using many of the letters of the Aleph-Beis. It was like, “Wow!”

Unfortunately, when the Rebbe offered my daughter to take the picture home, she said no. I almost fainted. I wish we could have taken it home and framed it for posterity. But I still have the memory...

(Living Torah disc 88, program 352)

something kosher, and make sure all the fish in the river are kosher too!

[However, when teaching a story from the Torah that involves a non-kosher animal, and the educator feels that the children will better understand their learning if they are shown a picture of it, the above obviously does not apply.]

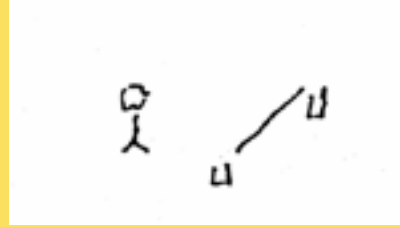
Guarding the child’s senses when they are young and allowing in only what is pure and holy is extremely important. Whatever the child sees at this tender age will have an impact for their entire life, as the *possuk* says, גם כי יזקין, לא יסור ממנו—educate the child according to his way, even in his old age he will not stray from it.

HALACHIC SOURCE

The Rebbe quotes the Shulchan Aruch that when a woman emerges from the *mikveh*, she should be careful to see only pure things. If the first thing she sees is a non-kosher animal (like a dog or a donkey) a *yiras shamayim* will go back and *tovel* again.



After this farbrengen, someone wrote to the Rebbe that he does not understand how a drawing of a man holding two buckets can be used to depict an Aleph. The Rebbe responded with a diagram in his holy handwriting:



(Tzaddik L'Melech vol. 4, p. 178)

THE WONDERS OF HASHEM

In addition to the exceptions mentioned above, the Rebbe also mentions going to a zoo in order to be able to make the *bracha* “משנה הבריות” (that Hashem creates many unique types of creatures), or in general to gain appreciation for Hashem’s creations. (Although the Rebbe does stipulate that one need not gaze at the non-kosher animals for a long time.)

Also, it is customary to have images of lions or eagles in shul, in order to remind us to strengthen our *avodas Hashem* like a lion.⁵

EVEN THE SMALLEST HEART

“The fact that Hashem resides within the Jewish people is not because of a status they obtained through *avoda*,” the Rebbe explains. “Therefore, even a small Jewish child who was just born also has Hashem’s *Shechina* residing within his or her tiny heart!

“It is therefore understood how important it is to surround the child with pure and holy images, *Shir Hamaalos* and the like.

“Contrary to what some people believe, that a child of only one day cannot see and hear the things around him anyways—so what difference does it make? This is completely wrong. Torah tells us that the exact opposite is true: Whatever the child sees or hears reaches the depths of his heart—he or she hears it, and “*derhers*,” creating a strong impact on him or her for their entire life!”

The Rebbe again reiterates that even contemporary medicine recognizes the value and



impact of these first impressions on the child's life. That's why we train children to kiss the mezuzah before going to sleep, and try to allow them to see only pure and kosher images. We try to surround the child with holy *sefarim* in their room and also place a tzedakah pushka there, to help bestow Hashem's blessings upon them in all they do.⁶

As we come closer to the time of Moshiach—when Hashem says “ואת רוח הטומאה אעביר מן הארץ”—I will wipe off the impure spirit of the face of the earth,” we need to begin living this way already now. Where and whenever possible, we need to try to expose ourselves only to kosher and pure images.

With Hashem's help we will finally be *zoche* to the time when the entire world will be filled with the purifying waters of knowledge of Hashem.

7“כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה' כמים לים מכסים.”

1. Avos 2:8.
2. Yevamos 1:6.
3. Shabbos Parshas Emor 5736; Sichos Kodesh 5736 vol. 2, p. 170.
4. The Rebbe is presumably referring to the “Mendel the Mouse” column in the Olomeinu magazine. It should be noted that it was later renamed as “Duvy the Duck.” See illustrations.
5. Chof Cheshvan 5744; Likkutei Sichos vol. 25, pp. 309-311.
6. Yechidus Klolis 16 Adar 5747; Hisva'aduyos 5747 vol. 2, p. 647.
7. Likutei Sichos *ibid*.

