

מוקדש לחיזוק
ההתקשרות לכ"ק אדמו"ר

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר וזוגתו
מרת לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו
שפאלטר

PRACTICAL HORA'OS

A CLOSER
LOOK AT
SOME OF
THE REBBE'S
HORA'OS

QUOTING FROM NON-KOSHER SOURCES

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On a number of occasions, the Rebbe made clear that when writing papers or articles, not only must the content itself be acceptable, but the source material quoted and referenced must be kosher as well.

As a student of sociology at Brooklyn College, Mrs. Chana Sharfstein once sent the Rebbe a paper she had written about the Lubavitch movement. Among other comments and corrections on the paper, the Rebbe wrote, "In the notes and the bibliography, leave in only the kosher books, of course."¹

Rabbi Immanuel Schochet wrote and spoke extensively about the Baal Shem Tov, quoting a variety of sources. After reading one of Rabbi Schochet's newspaper articles, the Rebbe sent a letter with some corrections, beginning with a general comment:

"You quote in the notes and in the text itself from a number of compilers, including some whom it is doubtful whether it is appropriate to mention even in the footnotes (although not everyone pays attention to these), and all the more so in the text itself. This is especially true when you can use — for the things you're writing and noting — sources whose names and books can be mentioned without any doubts ... In the case of any doubt in this, you should be stringent, as the readers come from all sorts of backgrounds."²

WHERE IS THE JEWISH PRIDE?

Mr. Avraham Yaron hosted a gathering in Eretz Yisroel and sent the Rebbe a copy of an English letter that had been distributed. The letter began by quoting Shakespeare. The Rebbe replied (in a postscript on a separate piece of paper, in case Mr. Yaron would want to separate it from the rest of the letter):

"I'm certain that most — if not all — of those gathered are aware that before Shakespeare was born, and before the culture from which he developed was created, the Jewish People had — two thousand years earlier — the Torah and Mitzvos ... for which the Jews suffered persecution by these so-called 'cultured nations.'

"The question is: Is it necessary that when Jewish people gather for a Jewish purpose — which, as you write, must emphasize the truth that Hashem chose us from all the nations — that a quote must be used from a non-Jewish source? This would be true even if that source was someone who was one of the righteous among the nations, and is all the more true in this instance when, according to his works, he was an antisemite."³

In another letter to Rabbi Immanuel Schochet, after Rabbi Schochet sent clippings of a number of newspaper articles he had authored, the Rebbe wrote:

“I wrote to someone else a while ago about those individuals and offices in Eretz Yisroel to whom internal *galus* has reached and they feel lowly before any non-Jew. Whenever they can, they try to use specifically non-Jewish source material ... [These choices of source material] have an influence on the readers, who will rely upon a book whose author is from this side, and not the other.”⁴

SOME READERS WILL TAKE QUOTATION AS APPROVAL

Another concern with quoting non-kosher sources is the potential that readers might equate the quotation with implicit approval of its author. For example, in a letter to Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel, after commenting on his recently-published *sefer Hedyonei Uziel*, the Rebbe gives “a minor note, but one that is crucial because of those in our nation who breach [acceptable conduct].” The Rebbe lists a number of publications⁵ Rabbi Uziel quoted and says:

“Although everything in the world has good in it, not every mind can grasp how to throw away the shell, seek out and find the good, and consume only that. The fact that you quote these books — even though you disagree with them — will serve as an approbation for them to some of your readers. They’ll take for granted that these books should be in their homes as well — this even as those living in Russia and Poland know the tremendous destruction that these books — and others like them — have caused, may Hashem save us.”⁶

In another letter to Mr. Eliezer Steinman, a journalist and writer, the Rebbe points out the unforeseen consequences that can take place when one is not careful whom they quote:

“When he sees a certain name mentioned in your book, the reader may come to conclusions, and it has always been human nature — and especially nowadays — that the reader does not seek and delve into the depths of the matter or the precise wording that is used, to see how much praise is given to the individual and to determine whether there are any disclaimers”⁷

The Rebbe objects to Steinman’s statement that he has to acknowledge and thank anyone from whom he learned anything. The Rebbe points out that there’s an exception to this rule when it comes to matters of *emunah*. The zeal with which we approach matters of *emunah*, the Rebbe concludes, has kept us throughout the generations.

THE LINES ARE ALREADY BLURRED

In a letter to Rabbi Zev Aryeh Rabbiner, the Rebbe

explains why nowadays it’s especially important not to mix in non-kosher source material:

“Another point here — that is unique to this — is that nowadays the malady that is especially prevalent is the blurring of lines and the admixture of good and evil, to the point that one is switched with the other. This emphasizes the necessity of not mixing the straw and the fodder, and all the more so not to introduce a strange vine into the holy vineyard — not even the good in [the strange vine].”⁸

A FEW QUOTES WON’T HELP

In the same letter to Rabbi Zev Aryeh Rabbiner, the Rebbe makes another point. Rabbiner quotes non-kosher sources to say, “this source also agrees with my points,” but the Rebbe explains that for the intended audience, these few quotes won’t be of benefit:

“A few quotes won’t be of benefit when the vast majority of the *sefer* is based on *sifrei kodesh*. For someone for whom this [the *sifrei kodesh*] is not enough, these few quotes won’t be of much benefit.”⁹

PEOPLE WON’T BUY THE BOOK

Lastly, the Rebbe also points out that quoting from non-kosher sources may be to the detriment of the author, as many may choose to avoid the book because of the objectionable content.

“Although yes, one should accept the truth from whoever says it, it’s still a shame that you quoted from a number of *sefarim* that are not accepted by many Yidden, as well as some authored by non-Jews, for because of this, many will hold back from buying this *sefer*, and therefore they won’t read it and won’t benefit from what is written in it.”¹⁰ **T**

1. *Teshurah Unsdorfer - Shapiro* 5763.

2. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 19 pg. 347.

3. *Ibid.* vol. 31 pg. 281.

4. *Ibid.* vol. 19 pg. 383.

5. Namely: *Moreh Nevuchei Hazman* (authored by Nachman Krochmal, a prominent leader of the Haskalah movement) and *Hatkufah*, a periodical collection of Hebrew literature edited by David Frishman, a secular Hebrew thinker and writer.

6. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 7 pg. 292.

7. *Ibid.* vol. 18 pg. 330.

8. *Ibid.* vol. 12, pg. 303.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*