

THE Jewish OBSERVER

Cheshvan 5764 • November 2003
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The invasive and corrosive effects of the Internet on Jewish homes and individuals has proven to be a cause of deep concern to our community's leadership. This problem was the subject of several sessions in last spring's Torah Umesorah National Convention, where hundreds of Torah educators and a number of prominent *Roshei Yeshiva* gathered to discuss pressing educational matters. Since then, Torah Umesorah issued a letter to be sent to all Day School parents

warning them of the irreparable harm that can result from allowing their children access to computers and the Internet.

In addition, the Agudath Israel Conference of Synagogue Rabbonim sponsored a meeting this past September on the topic of "The Enhancement of *Kedushas Habayis*," specifically as regards home use of computers and the Internet. More than 60 prominent *rabbanim* from throughout the New York Metropolitan Area and beyond were in attendance. This gathering was

(Introduction continued on next page)

Recognizing And Dealing With **Some Major Moral Hazards** In Contemporary Society

NEGOTIATING WITH AN ALIEN ENVIRONMENT

These times of *chevlei Moshiach* – the stormy era prior to the advent of *Moshiach* – are fraught with dangers everywhere. But we have certain guidelines taught to us in the Torah, which enable us to invoke maximum *rachamim v'chassodim* – Divine mercy and compassion – in our lives. The first thing to do is to commit ourselves to live fully Jewish lives, uninfected by the virus of alien value systems. Yes, we all adjust to certain demands of our host society, and we accommodate ourselves to many elements in the prevailing culture. We do this technologically, even socially! But *David HaMelech* reminds us, he warns us, "Vayisarvu vagoyim vayilmdu ma'aseihem – They mixed with the gentiles and learned their ways" (*Tehillim* 106, 34). If accommodation is necessary in order to economically survive, we may feel that we must adjust in certain elements of our lifestyles; we may not, however, allow their spirit or their norms to invade our thinking, and certainly not our behavior.

This, then, is the crucial test of living in our comfortable *galus*. How much *govishkeit*, how much alien cul-

ture, are we consciously – and unconsciously – absorbing? Are we careful enough, sensitive enough, to prevent foreign values from penetrating our Torah lifestyle?

ORTHODOX MODERNITY: ACCOMMODATION OR CAPITULATION?

The defenders and promoters of Orthodox modernity would make it appear that we're successfully meeting the challenge, at least most of the time. But we are not. Modernity, unless constantly reinforced with strong Torah values, with *mussar* and *yiras Shamayim* and strict behavioral parameters, is making serious inroads in our families, in our youth, in many ways that we tend to sweep under the carpet, pretending not to notice that the *yiras Shamayim* is slowly ebbing away. Worse yet is that recently, accommodation with modern technology has created a spiritual monster, a ravaging disease that is destroying the very foundations of our *kedusha*. I mean specifically the computer, and more specifically, the Internet. We all know the rationale that is commonly given – that one's business cannot be main-

tained without the use of the computer and Internet, that the Internet is a basic living aid which saves people money, and provides necessary information; even *divrei Torah*. An office cannot function without a computer, and this is the way children are being trained to learn, to play, to study, to do homework.

TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES

All this may be true, to one extent or another. What, however, are the consequences of this wonder of technology? You may or may not be aware of all the gruesome facts that are festering as a result of Internet use, or a computer with a little gadget called a modem. Our families, both children and adults, have open access to the worst pornography. The finest people, otherwise *frum* and observant, have fallen victim to the ugly attraction of *gilui arayos* (promiscuity). The Internet, with the flick of a button, invades a Jewish home, a Jewish soul, and makes moral disaster. And it is happening all the time.

One may think that this is an exaggeration, but the *rabbanim* who are unfortunately privy to the facts, who must deal with the forbidden relationships that have developed, *Rachmana*

addressed by Rabbi Yaakov Perlow שליט"א (the Novominsker Rebbe and *Rosh Agudas Yisroel*) and Rabbi Yosef Rosenblum שליט"א, as well as by several men of vast experience in various professional and business fields, with much hands-on experience in computers and the Internet.

In response to the urging of our rabbinical leadership to assume an active role in countering this affront to *Kedushas Yisroel*, we present, in the pages that follow, observations, insights, and some suggestions from people with expertise in

this field. We are keenly aware of the sensitivity of some of these discussions and recognize that people who have succeeded in sheltering their lives and environment from destructive influences may find some of these references gratuitous and even distasteful. We publish these discussions under the guidance of our rabbinical leadership, because of the critical gravity of these problems, and in the hope that these articles may call the readers' attention to these issues and perhaps contribute to their solutions.

(Main article begins on previous page)

Recognizing And Dealing With Some Major Moral Hazards In Contemporary Society

Based on excerpts from an address by the Novominsker Rebbe שליט"א, Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, at the recent *Leil Hisorerus* on September 21, '03, the first night of *Selichos*



litzlan, know the bitter truth, more than most people do.

DEALING WITH THE THREAT

The time has come that the general public know it too. If there is any one single area that needs *tikkun* – control, improvement, and yes, change – in our *tzibbur*, it is the pervasive disease known as the Internet. If your business cannot get along without it, you must create the strictest controls around yourself and your staff. Create fences, strictures, around its use. Do not give it free rein! Remember that you are dealing with a force that contains spiritual and moral poison.

Ask yourself further: must it come into your home – openly accessible to yourself

and your children? I think that in most cases, the home can easily survive without the computer-Internet hookup. And why must children be exposed to all this, and do their school assignments on a computer? Why must they waste many precious hours in the *batala* of playing games? Why not teach them to think, and write, and gather information in the way their parents did, and not be subject to *sakonas nefashos*?

Parents who are not careful about this destructive instrument and allow it to be accessible to children are being *oveir* “*Lo sa'amod al dam rei'echa*” every day (transgressing the prohibition: “Do not stand by as the blood of your friend [spills]”)... – not to speak of the *sakana* (hazard) in

which the adults place themselves. Something must be done about this.

Permit me to say, in closing, that noble intentions are not enough. What is needed in those areas of our lives that need change is resolute action, an unswerving determination to be Jews who are committed to lead Torah lives and conduct ourselves like the *Am Kodesh* that we are meant to be. Keep the *elohim acheirim* (alien influences) out of our lives and restore the *kedusha v'tahara* (sanctity and purity) to the *neschama* that yearns to be close to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. ■

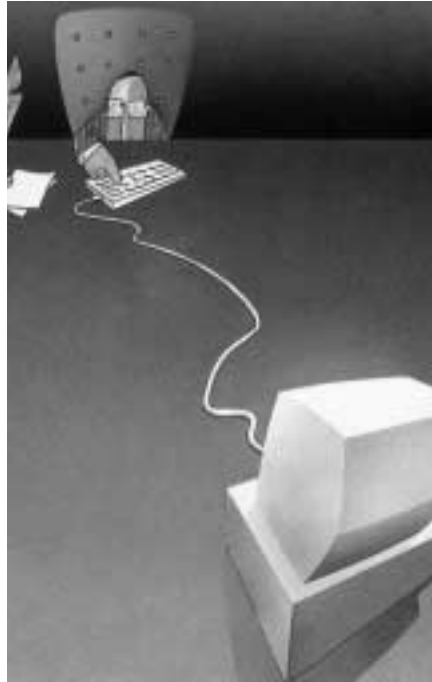
Staying Away From THE CYBER-SLUMS

A CONFUSED WORLD

Like most public libraries in the United States, the Central Phoenix Library provides adults and children with Internet access. When Toni Garvey, the chief librarian, recently spotted three separate men and a group of giggling girls viewing pornographic material on the library's terminals, she had no idea how to respond. She says she feels uncomfortable providing such material for the public, but so far, federal courts across the country have ruled that banning the Internet from public institutions or even filtering its contents "offends the guarantee of free speech" and "restricts First Amendment rights." Garvey complains, "For me, this has been one of the most challenging issues of my career. We all want to do the right thing, but it's not clear what the right thing is."¹

Garvey, like most people of conscience in the secular world, is morally confounded by the technology that links together nearly half a billion people in a "Worldwide Web" – a global city – allowing instant, anonymous exchange of uncensored text and images. Anyone in this virtual-metropolis can put anything online, and once it is there anyone can access it.

Rabbi Kelemen is a *rebbe* at Neve Yerushalayim seminary in Yerushalayim, and a prominent counselor, author and lecturer. His most recent book is *What They Don't Want You to Know About Television and Videos* (Targum/Feldheim, 2003). He is a frequent contributor to *The Jewish Observer*.



THE SEEDIER SIDE OF CYBERSPACE

Like any metropolis, the Web has neighborhoods, some safer and some horrific. Unlike any other metropolis, the Web lacks a government, laws, or a police force. There are universally acknowledged economic cyber-crimes like the intentional spreading of computer viruses – infectious software programs that could impair the experience of other cyber-tourists. Beyond this, there are no moral guidelines. A turn down the wrong cyber-street guarantees exposure to information or images at least as corrosive as anything available in the streets of New York, Paris, or Tokyo – and often even worse.

For example, the Web hosts thousands of pornographic sites – offering material that is as explicit and generally more violent than what is found in print pub-

lications² – and these sites are heavily trafficked. In response to academic surveys, 25-50% of men with Internet access admit spending time online viewing explicit material.³ While most visitors to pornographic sites are married college graduates⁴, a Canadian survey reveals that 44% of men who visit these sites admit that they began doing so before age 16.⁵ A British survey reported that over half of all word searches on the Internet are aimed at locating pornography. The top eight word searches are all pornography related.⁶ Although much of the explicit material available online is free, through fee-per-view services and advertisements the online pornography industry currently generates about \$1 billion annually.⁷

Researchers explain that it is the web's "Triple-A Engine" – access, affordability, and anonymity – that drives the online pornography industry:^{viii}

Access: Unlike material sold in x-rated stores and through mail-order services, online images are available instantly and from the privacy of one's home or office. There is no time for mature contemplation to overcome childish impulses – "and [the yeitzer] knows that if men would give a moment's thought to their ways, they would certainly begin to regret their actions" (*Mesillas Yesharim*, ch 2).

Affordability: Unprecedented supply minimizes prices, and much of the obscene material is entirely free.

Anonymity: Users have the (false) impression that their web activity is untraceable. The Vilna Gaon writes that *taava* rages when a person feels no one is watching.^{ix} The reality is that servers – the companies providing

Internet connections – possess records of every site visited by every user (and have consistently provided these records to investigators tracking down those who spread viruses). But the feeling that “no one knows” corrodes normal inhibitions.

While men outnumber women 6:1 in their online use of explicit material, women slightly outnumber men when it comes to the “Chat Room” and “Multi-User Domain” (or MUD).^x A Chat Room is a public or semi-public site dedicated to facilitating social interaction among total strangers – the cyberspace equivalent of a singles-bar. Logged-in users introduce themselves and join a live, theme-based group discussion. MUD sites provide public or semi-public, interactive gaming and are also engineered to facilitate friendships between strangers. Studies reveal that about 90% of Chat and MUD users form personal relationships; about one-third of these relationships result in a face-to-face meeting; and about a quarter of these relationships evolve into romantic involvements.¹¹

A large study of American teens just revealed that close to 60% have received an instant message or email from a total stranger, and 63% of those teens who have received such instant messages or emails say they responded but never told their parents.¹² In the last three years there have been several infamous cases of abduction, rape and murder in which the victim was first approached and lured through a Chat or MUD site, instant messaging, or emails. There are, no doubt, many more cases in which Chat, MUD, instant messaging, or email interactions led to spiritually or psychologically destructive relationships. These are the harsh realities of cyber-streetlife.

The *Ramban*¹³ describes how indulgence in one *taava* (desire) creates a drive for another, more depraved *taava*, and so forth, in a potentially unending downward spiral towards total degradation. In a nightmarish scenario, a *ben Torah* could thus wake up to find himself on one of the web’s many sites explicitly dedicated to facilitating illicit activity. Thousands of sites offer 24/7

online gambling, and researchers say upwards of fifteen million people visit these sites annually and leave several billion dollars of their family’s funds there.¹⁴

**A GLIMPSE AT THE DAMAGE:
AN ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE**

Recent surveys identify a burgeoning trend of Internet-related divorces.¹⁵ In most of these tragedies, visits to explicit sites, or extramarital relationships forged over

the web, destroyed mutual trust and ripped the marriage apart. Sadly, our community has been touched by this plague as well.

In a landmark study, published in *American Psychologist*, researchers from Carnegie Mellon University examined the amount of time people spent interacting with other family members before and after installation of a computer with Internet access. During the two-year longitudinal study, family interaction declined dramatically, and the drop was directly proportional to the

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increase in Internet use. Ironically, many study participants justified their increasing time online, saying they needed to “stay in touch” with more distant friends and relatives, while they

increasingly ignored those they were living with.¹⁶ In my counseling practice, I hear complaints weekly from spouses, parents, and especially children who feel the Internet has robbed them of their loved ones.

As Internet involvement increases, so do loneliness and depression – especially among middle- and upper-class males.¹⁷ There are many theories about the relationship between Internet use and depression. For example, some researchers argue that productive people have only limited time to develop and maintain their most significant relationships, and moderate-to-heavy Internet use necessarily siphons hours off this precious reservoir, leaving people socially isolated and sad. Other researchers remind us that the mere act of sitting still in front of a computer display can trigger a biochemical chain-reaction that ends in depression.¹⁸

A whole genre of studies describes the damage Internet involvement can wreak on academic performance. Although

many parents help their children get online in order to bolster grades, research reveals that more time spent online translates into less time spent reading books and worse study skills.¹⁹ The Internet cultivates impulsive jumping from web page to web page, but real learning requires still concentration. At a large New York university, the dropout rate among freshman rose proportionally as their involvement in computers and Internet access increased.²⁰ Business analysts also note associations between employee Internet-access and decreased productivity.²¹

All these academic studies touch only on the concerns of the general population. They say nothing about the *bittul Torah* or spiritual degradation *bnei Torah* experience when they visit the cyber-slums.

STAYING AWAY FROM THE CYBER-SLUMS

“There is nothing new under the sun,” *Kohelles* teaches.²² The Internet is just novel packaging of an ancient threat – a threat to which we have always responded the same way.

On *erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, 5735, Rabbi Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky, Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, and Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky זצ"ל, issued a joint letter against television. Before this proclamation, television had made its way into many Torah homes, but *bnei Torah* exhibited wondrous strength and effectively banished television from our midst.

Today, the Internet has penetrated our community, but with the same strength we will uproot it, too. *Baruch Hashem*, unlike our neighbors in the secular world, we are not confused. We recognize the danger; we see the inadequacy of partial protection; and we know what needs to be done. We possess a vaccination. “*Barasi yeitzer hara, barasi lo Torah tavlin* – I [*Hashem*] created the *yeitzer hara*, and I created Torah as the antidote.”²³ Just as those who clung to the Tree of Life survived the *yeitzer's* attacks over the last 3,300 years, so too



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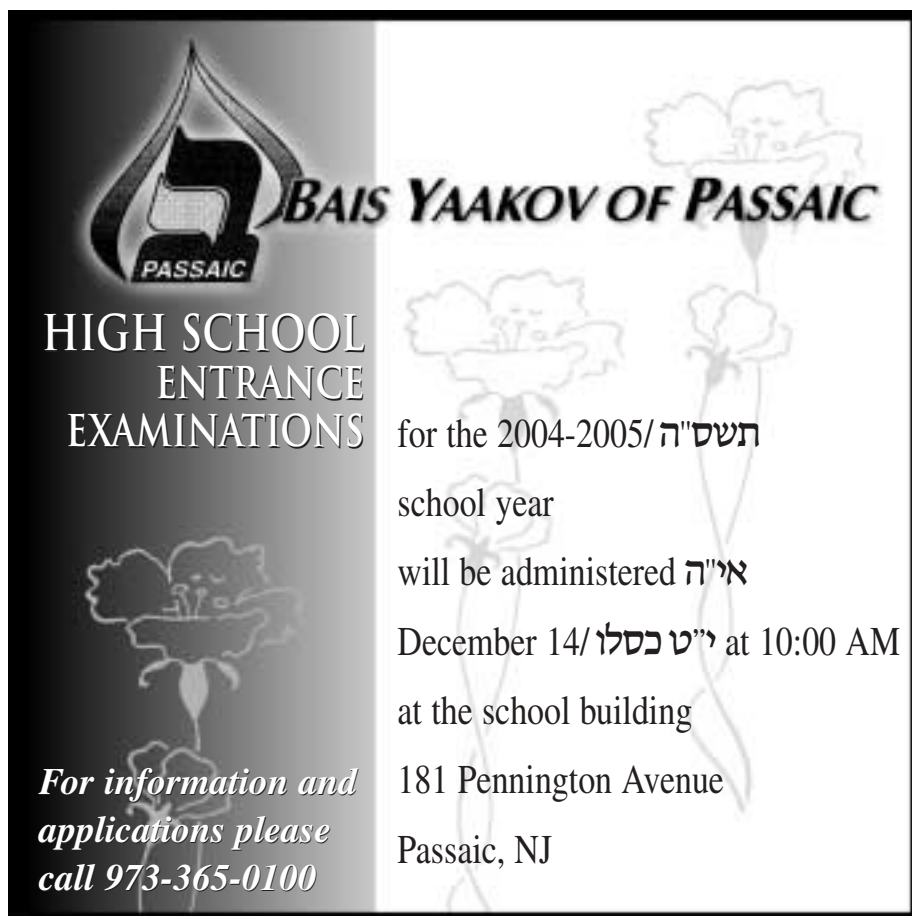
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will we survive the era of the Internet by clinging to *daas Torah*. *Mesillas Yesharim* warns, "It is obvious that if the Creator only created this cure [Torah]

for that disease [*yeitzer hara*], one can only recover by taking the prescribed medicine; and one who thinks he can survive without this prescription is

mistaken, and will ultimately recognize his error when his sin kills him."²⁴ Our *gadolim* have advised us to remove Internet from our homes, and so we will do. ■

¹ Michael Janofsky, "What Would Dewey Do? Libraries Grapple with Internet," *The New York Times*, 2 Dec '02.

² Jennifer Lynn Gossett and Sarah Byrne, "Click Here: A Content Analysis of Internet... [Violation] Sites," *Gender and Society*, Vol. 16(5), Oct. '02, pp. 689-709.

³ Amanda Lenhart, Lee Rainie, and Oliver Lewis, *Teenage Life Online: The Rise of the Instant Message Generation and the Internet's Impact on Friendships and Family Relationships* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2001), p. 33; Sylvain C. Boies, "University Students' Uses of and Reactions to Online Information and Entertainment: Links to Online and Offline Behavior," *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, Volume 11(2), Summer 2002, p. 82.

⁴ Mark Griffiths, "[Immorality]...on the Internet: Observations and Implications for Internet... Addiction," *The Journal of Research*, Vol. 38(4), Nov. '01, p. 338.

⁵ Boies, p. 82.

⁶ Mark Griffiths, "Excessive Internet Use: Implications for... [Illicit] Behavior," *Cyberpsychology and Behavior*, Volume 3(4), 2000, p. 541.

⁷ Griffiths, 2001, p. 333.

⁸ A. Cooper, "Surfing into the New Millenium," *Cyberpsychology and Behavior*, 1998(1), pp. 181-187.

⁹ *Likutim M'peirushei HaGr"a Za'l B'inyanei Taava v'Chemda*, p. 122.

¹⁰ Boies, p. 79; Griffiths, 2001, p. 336, 338.

¹¹ M. Parks and L. Roberts, "Making MOOsic: The Development of Personal Relationships Online and a Comparison to their Offline Counterparts," *Journal of Social Personal Relation*, 1998(15), pp. 521-537. See also K.S. Young, E. Griffin-Shelley, A. Cooper, J. Omara, and J. Buchanan, "Online Infidelity: A New Dimension in Couple Relationships with Implications for Evaluation and Treatment," *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, in press.

¹² Lenhart et al, p. 19.

¹³ *Devarim* 29,18

¹⁴ Mark D. Griffiths, "The Social Impact of Internet Gambling," *Social Science Computer Review*, Vol. 20(3), Fall '02, pp. 312-320.

¹⁵ J.P. Schneider, "Effects of Cyber[-] Addiction on the Family: Results of a Survey," in A. Cooper (ed.), *Cyber[-]: The Dark Side of the Force* (Philadelphia: Bruner Routledge, 2000), pp. 127-144.

¹⁶ Robert Kraut, Vicki Lundmark, Michael Patterson, Sara Kiesler, Tridas Mukopadhyay, and William Scherlis, "Internet Paradox: A Social Technology that Reduces Social Involvement and Psychological Well-Being," *American Psychologist*, September 1998, Volume 53 (9), pp. 917-1031.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Kraut, et al.

¹⁸ For a detailed outline of this process, see Leib Kelemen, *What They Don't Want You to Know About Television and Videos* (Southfield, MI: Targum/Feldheim, 2003).

¹⁹ K. Young, *Caught in the Net: How to Recognize the Signs of Internet Addiction and a Winning Strategy for Recovery*, (New York: John Wiley, 1998).

²⁰ A. Wallace, *The Psychology of the Internet* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²¹ Keith Beard, "Internet Addiction: Current Status and Implications for Employees," *Journal of Employment Counseling*, March 2002, Volume 39(2), pp. 2-10.

²² *Kohelles* 1:9.

²³ *Kiddushin* 30b.

²⁴ *Mesillas Yesharim*, ch. 5.

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A UBIQUITOUS CHALLENGE

AN INSIDIOUS TRAP

BLACK CLOTHING, AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Reb Illai the Elder said: If a person sees that his evil inclination is overwhelming him, he should go to a place where they do not recognize him and clothe himself in black, cover himself in black, and he should do as his heart desires. He should not desecrate the Name of Heaven openly (*Kiddushin* 40a).

Reb Illai's intent was not to give advice or succor to a person contemplating immoral conduct. *Tosafos* comments on R' Illai's dictum:

Rabbeinu Chananel explains: *Chas V'Shalom* [Heaven forbid] that [R' Illai] permits one to transgress [under the stated conditions]. Rather R' Illai said that traveling long distances as a wayfarer and clothing oneself in black will serve to break the hold of the Evil Inclination and prevent one from transgressing (*Kiddushin* 40a).

Sadly, today it is no longer necessary to travel long distances and clothe oneself in black to attain anonymity. A user of the Internet can travel worldwide by several clicks on a mouse and visit the most immoral of sites and the most amoral of people under the blackness of almost total anonymity. By locking the door to one's room or office and by utilizing a personal password, the likelihood of being

Rabbi Twerski, a member of the Editorial Board of *The Jewish Observer*, is a professor in Brooklyn Law School and serves as chairman of the board of Agudath Israel of America's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action.

discovered is relatively remote. The "place where they do not recognize him" is no longer hundreds of miles away. It is the next room. The "black clothes" are the locked door and the password. The barriers that R' Illai envisaged as protection against immoral conduct have been almost totally obliterated. The *yeitzer hara* has been given a weapon of almost unparalleled power and it has inflicted mortal wounds upon the weak and unsuspecting.

PERSONAL PEEPHOLE INTO PURGATORY

Let me begin by confessing that I am neither a computer nor an Internet *maven*. The reader will find in this issue excellent articles by those knowledgeable in this technology. They deserve your careful attention. What I bring to the table, so to speak, are my discussions with families devastated by the Internet, and observation of professionals who have shared with me cases very much like the ones to which I have been personally privy.

- An anguished spouse called to say that her husband had become distant and remote over the past several months. He had either locked himself up in his home office professing to be working or returned to his office after hours. When the spouse suspected that something was seriously wrong, the

husband confessed that he had become addicted to viewing immoral sites and cannot break the addiction. Exposure to these sites began quite innocently when an image came across the screen and he clicked onto the forbidden site. Aside from the very difficult problem of breaking serious addictive behavior, the wife is convinced (with considerable justification) that her spouse's moral compass has been damaged for life. He will never be the same person she married.

- Teenagers or adults using the Internet for seemingly legitimate purposes begin surfing the net. Material that would never find its way into any self-respecting Jewish home is read and then clicked off. Since each exposure is a mere fleeting minute or two, it does not seem to be based in reality. It, so to speak, exists only in the air. But heart-rending discussions with those who have been exposed tell a very different tale. "I am confused and I can't get my head straight. I was the frumest girl in my class and I will never get back there again. I feel violated. How did this happen to me?"

- One spouse (either husband or wife) experiences some dissatisfaction with some aspect of the marriage. The cause of the dissatisfaction may be inattention (e.g., long hours at work), lack of warmth, or general malaise. Instead of seeking counseling, either professional or rabbinic, one of the spouses enters

into chat room relationships with anonymous correspondents of the opposite gender. Persons to whom the spouse would never talk to in a real person-to-person encounter become confidants from whom nothing is withheld. The respondent need not be Jewish nor pay homage to any religious or moral values. But they offer a comforting shoulder and advice on any and all aspects of marriage. Spouses have shown me correspondence between them and chat-room friends. At best, it was stupid. At worst, its immorality would shock the conscience of even a primate. I can attest to the fact that some have acted on cyber-advice with horrendous consequences.

CHAT ROOMS: EVEN WORSE

But the story gets worse, much worse. Chat-room relationships are serious relationships. Emotional entanglements with anonymous partners can have a profound impact on the psyche of the correspondent. The anonymous correspondent is not a real person with warts and faults. He or she is a fantasy: compassionate and caring. The cyber-partner trumps real life human relationships by a country mile. Not only does a troubled marriage not get the attention it needs, it can be destroyed beyond repair by a phantom person who is neither identified nor identifiable.

Some will say that what I am describing is the result of over-sheltering our children and even ourselves from the real world. If we would only be more open and less protective and insular, we would be less vulnerable. There are several responses. First, a huge body of secular literature finds these problems to be universal. Internet addiction in general, and addiction to immoral sites in particular, is not limited to the *frum* Jewish world. But even if they were so limited, we would have to address it. The very essence of *kedushas Yisroel* is at stake. The entirety of Torah rests on the rejection of the kind of immorality that pervades our society. This is a battle that cannot be lost.

I have no easy solutions. The ubiquity of e-mail, the undeniable fact that thousands of our brethren conduct businesses on web sites, and thousands more must utilize the Internet for their business or professions, make total rejection of the Internet impossible. But every Internet user must understand the profound dangers that this new medium presents. Every safeguard available must be used. One must impose the most stringent limitations on oneself and one's children to prevent access to improper sites. Chat

rooms should be considered *chazar treif* without exception. How we meet this challenge will be determinative of the *tzura* (image) of *Klal Yisroel* for generations to come. Vigilance, vigilance and more vigilance is our only recourse. ■

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THE VORT

- The *Vort* celebration is to be discontinued. The *L'chaim* (held at the time that the engagement is announced) should also not turn into a *Vort*.

THE WEDDING

- Only 400 invited guests may be seated at the *chassuna seuda*.
- The *kabbolas panim* smorgasbord should be limited to basic cakes, fruit platters, a modest buffet, and the caterer's standard chicken or meat hot dishes.

- The menu for the *seuda* is limited to 3 courses followed by a regular dessert.
- No Viennese table and no bar.

THE MUSIC

- A band may consist of a maximum of 5 musicians (one of the musicians may act as a vocalist) or four musicians and one additional vocalist.
- A one-man band is recommended.

FLOWERS & CHUPA DECOR

- The total cost of these items for the entire wedding should not exceed \$1,800.

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The Chazon Ish זצ"ל

Fifty Years Since His Passing
15 Marcheshvan 5714

“Every *neshama* has its own unique mission.... There are those who are destined to accomplish out in the open. My lot, however, is to sit in my small room, and from there perform *chessed* for my fellow man.”

The above statement by Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Kare-litz, known as “the *Chazon Ish*” (the name of his classic, multi-volumed Talmudic work), was reflective of his modest nature. Yes, he performed countless acts of lovingkindness for his fellow man, but much of his time was devoted to kindness of another sort. As Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner taught, the continued existence of the world is dependent on Torah being studied somewhere in the world at every moment of the day and night¹ – and it was to this pursuit that the Chazon Ish devoted his life from an early age.

Almost from the day in 1933 that he set foot onto the holy soil of *Eretz Yisroel* until his passing twenty years later, he was an acknowledged leader of his people and *poseik hador* – a prime authority of *halacha* of his time. From his humble dwelling in Bnei Brak, this unassuming giant, who never held any official position, guided his generation. He rendered halachic decisions in all areas of Torah; wrote seminal works of *halacha* and *hashkafa* (Torah outlook); spearheaded the development of Bnei

Rabbi Finkelman, a *rebbe* in Yeshiva Darchei Torah, Far Rockaway, NY, is a frequent contributor to these pages, including “Rav Pam’s Special Friend” (October ’02). He is the author of several biographies published by ArtScroll Mesorah Publications, including *The Chazon Ish: The Life and Ideals of Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Kare-litz*, (’89).



Brak as a city of Torah; was intimately involved in the founding of *mikva’os*, development of religious agricultural settlements and expansion of Torah communities throughout *Eretz Yisroel*; and was available to hundreds of men and women from all walks of life who sought his sage advice, encouragement and blessings.

How did he merit all this? Rabbi Yisroel Yaakov Kanievsky זצ"ל, better known as the Steipler Gaon, was the Chazon Ish’s brother-in-law, and his successor in many ways. He once remarked: “Shortly before his [the Chazon Ish’s]

passing, it became obvious to me that he had forgotten none of his learning [despite his advanced age and failing health]. He was as fresh in what he had learned decades earlier as if he had studied it just now. I know with certainty that it was in the merit of his *tzidkus*, for he studied Torah *lishma* (for its own sake, without any ulterior motive) and he possessed the ‘forty-eight qualities [through which Torah is acquired]’” (see *Avos* II,6).

FOR ITS OWN SAKE

The opening *Beraisa* of the sixth chapter of *Avos*² enumerates the rewards of one who studies Torah *lishma*. In fact, that *Beraisa* actually describes the quintessential *gadol beYisroel*.

“... It [the Torah] makes him fit to be righteous, devout, fair and faithful.... From him people enjoy counsel and wisdom.... The Torah gives him kingship and authority, and analytical judgment...he becomes like a steady strengthening fountain [of Torah knowledge] and like an unceasing river.”

On the day when he became a bar mitzva, the Chazon Ish resolved to devote his life to the study of Torah *lishma*, his sole motive to acquire a knowledge of *Hashem*’s commandments and to strive to fulfill them. For the next forty years, he studied with unsurpassed diligence and self-sacrifice, in seclusion and as a virtual unknown. He submitted *chiddushei Torah* anonymously for publication, signing them: “איש” (an

¹ *Nefesh HaChaim* 4:13

² The final chapter of *Avos* is actually a collection of *Beraisos* (lit., *outside*), Tanaatic teachings that were not selected for inclusion in the *Mishna*.

acronym for אברהם ישעי (from Kossowa.” Even his first volume of *chiddushim*, which made waves in the Lithuanian Torah world, was published anonymously under the title *Chazon* (Vision of) *Ish*.

He engaged in *ameilus beTorah*,

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relentless toil in Torah study, to the very limits of his strength. He once remarked that when he wrote in *Sefer Chazon Ish*, “A copy of *Rashba* is not presently at hand,” this did not necessarily mean that he did not have a *Sefer HaRashba* in his possession at that time. It could have meant that at the time of that writing, he simply did not have the physical strength to rise from his chair and walk to his bookcase to take the *sefer*.

In his eulogy of the Chazon Ish, Rabbi Aharon Kotler זצ”ל said:

He enriched the generation with his

Torah and chiddushim, for he merited to draw, reveal and propound in all areas of Torah. His being was entirely sanctified for diligent toil in Torah, without any personal inclinations or obligations....

To our teacher [the Chazon Ish], all areas of Torah were the same [i.e., many of his writings pertain to factual areas of mitzva observance such as measurements and computations, and which are not conducive for propounding dazzling chiddushim]. For all his toil in Torah was simply to know it le’amita (in its quintessential truth). When laboring in any topic, he plumbed the matter to the full extent of his capabilities.³

HIS LIGHT IS REVEALED

The Chazon Ish might have remained unknown his entire life, had Providence not arranged that he should relocate to Vilna, where he developed a relationship with the leaders of Lithuanian Jewry — Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky (the *Rav* of Vilna) and the Chofetz Chaim, who often visited Vilna to meet with Reb Chaim Ozer on *Klal* matters. These luminaries came to appreciate not only the Chazon’s *Ish*’s genius and piety, but also his proficiency as a *poseik* and his astuteness in communal matters, and they prevailed upon him to attend meetings of *rabbanim* and communal leaders.

At one such meeting, the Chofetz Chaim bemoaned the generation’s weakened spiritual plight, and he declared that the hour demanded everyone’s casting aside feelings of modesty to act for the sake of *Klal Yisroel*. He concluded, “Every *nistar* (hidden personage) is obligated to reveal himself!”

Reb Chaim Ozer, who was sitting at the Chofetz Chaim’s side, turned himself completely around to face the Chazon *Ish* and asked, “To whom do these words apply if not you?” The Chofetz Chaim then rested his gaze on the Chazon *Ish* and added, “Even I – do you

³ *Mishnas Rav Aharon, Maamarim V’Sichos Musar*, Vol. III.



Important Notice to Holocaust Survivors and Their Heirs

Claims Filing Deadline Extended to December 31, 2003

If you are a Holocaust survivor or the heir of a Holocaust victim, you may have a legitimate unpaid Holocaust era insurance claim.

You can file a claim through a Claims Resolution Process set up by the **International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC)**. The commission consists of representatives of United States insurance regulators, five European insurance companies and their subsidiaries, the State of Israel, worldwide Jewish and Holocaust survivor organizations and European regulators as Observers.

ICHEIC has managed an extensive research effort to identify potential policyholders. In total, over 470,000 names have been published representing more than 500,000 insurance policies. The list will be updated with new names in the coming weeks. However, these lists are unlikely to include all the names of Holocaust victims who had insurance policies during the relevant period. People should not be discouraged from filing claims simply because their name or the names of family members do not appear on any published lists. Anyone who believes he or she has a valid life, education or dowry policy is encouraged to present the claim to ICHEIC.

The opportunity exists for you to receive payment if you submit a claim before DECEMBER 31, 2003.

The Claims Resolution Process is a free service that provides individuals with a central source for information on, investigation into, and payment of these outstanding policies. If you or someone you know may be eligible visit the website www.icheic.org or call:

800.957.3203

hear? – even I could develop into a *gaon* were I to cast aside the yoke of communal responsibilities and dwell solely within the walls of the *beis midrash!*”

After that incident, the Chazon Ish often took the initiative in involving himself with communal issues. He worked behind the scenes, avoiding any sort of recognition or official position. He wanted desperately to remain unknown.

In the summer of 1933, his aspiration to settle in *Eretz Yisroel* was realized. Reb Chaim Ozer wrote to the rabbinic leadership in the Holy Land, informing them of the Chazon Ish’s impending arrival. “My dear friend, the outstanding *gaon*, is on his way to you. For us, it is a great loss. *Eretz Yisroel*, however, will reap great benefits from this.”

From then on, when questions were sent from *Eretz Yisroel* to Reb Chaim Ozer or his illustrious brother-in-law, Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, they would suggest that the Chazon Ish be consulted. Within a relatively short time, he was recognized as a quiet but very effective leader of the Land’s growing Torah community.

THE FORTY-EIGHT QUALITIES

As mentioned above, the Steipler stated that the Chazon Ish possessed “the forty-eight qualities.” He was referring to another *Beraisa* in the sixth chapter of *Avos* which lists forty-eight qualities that the student of Torah must develop within himself to truly attain his potential in Torah study and make it part of his very essence. The *Beraisa* refers to these qualities as *kinyanim*, literally translated as *methods of acquisition*, a term usually associated with the mechanism through which the *halacha* makes it possible for one to acquire a given item.

Rabbi Aharon Kotler wrote:

It is well known that Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner taught: one’s attainment of Torah knowledge is in exact proportion to his prior efforts in developing the forty-eight qualities through which Torah is acquired. This means that just as with the Torah’s monetary laws of

*acquisition, a given item can be acquired [only] through its designated kinyan and no other, so it is with Torah.... To attempt to acquire Torah without these qualities... accomplishes nothing. This applies to all the qualities listed, even those that seem to have no direct connection to Torah knowledge.*⁴

Below are a few of the forty-eight qualities, and illustrations of how the Chazon Ish embodied them:

A Good Heart

One Erev Pesach, the Chazon Ish asked a young married man to conduct a Seder for a group of girls who had been orphaned in the Holocaust. The young man replied that he and his wife were

looking forward to spending the Seder with family. The Chazon Ish responded, “A great mitzva has come your way. One cannot imagine the pain those girls will suffer if they will have to conduct a Seder by themselves. If you will not join them, I will!” The young couple heeded the Chazon Ish’s request.

*One Yom Tov, he was walking in Bnei Brak when he chanced upon a man weeping openly. The man explained that he was a *ger tzeddek*, and he felt that others looked down upon him and treated him like an outcast.*

The Chazon Ish asked the man to sing a niggun, and as he sang, the Chazon Ish danced in front of him as one would before a bride and groom. The man’s spirits were revived.

⁴ *Mishnas R’ Aharon*, Vol. I, p. 62.

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Happy With One's Lot

From the time that he arrived in Eretz Yisroel, the Chazon Ish subsisted on the meager income from the sale of his sefarim. His apartment had the very barest of furnishings. He refused many offers of assistance from grateful visitors who benefited from his counsel, concern and blessings.

He would discourage individuals from purchasing his sefarim if he felt that the person would not make use of the sefer. "I want buyers who are bnei Torah, not benefactors who seek roundabout ways to support me. This is not the proper way."

To Love Hashem

His love of Hashem was evident in his self-sacrifice for a mitzva.

Shortly before Succos during the First World War, he found himself in a town where there was not one set of arba minnim (lulav, esrog, etc.) Travel was fraught with danger, but this did not stop the Chazon Ish from heading for Minsk, where he succeeded in procuring the species. When someone asked him why he had gone to such lengths when the halacha clearly freed him of his obligation, he replied, "If you found yourself without matza before Pesach, would you resign yourself to not eating on Yom Tov?" Mitzvos are food for the neshama, and the Chazon Ish could not live without them.

Purity, Limited Physical Pleasure

He once remarked that he never felt a need for food. He relied on those who prepared his food to decide when and what he should eat.

Once when his meal was interrupted by visitors a number of times, he said that apparently he was better off not eating at that time, and he put the food aside. It was later discovered that the food had not been properly tithed (as required of produce grown in Eretz Yisroel). His sister, Reb-betzin Miriam Kanievsky, testified that similar incidents occurred many times.

He once remarked, "I wish to learn Torah lishma, therefore I am extremely careful as to what enters my mouth."

Sharing Another's Burden

A few days before his passing, when he was alarmingly weak, his confidants attempted to turn away those who came to his door seeking his help. They asked him, "How can one accept visitors under such conditions?" to which he replied, "How can I turn away those who come to me with broken hearts?"

It is noteworthy that in his *Emuna U'Vitachon*, the Chazon Ish explains that character refinement impacts not only on one's success in Torah study, but on his fulfillment of all mitzvos bein adam laMakom (between man and Hashem):

...There is a misconception that a person can be wholesome in his per-

formance in mitzvos relating to G-d alone, though his middos are wanting and he is deficient in his dealings with others.

One who sees to the core of this matter perceives the hollowness of this belief. A Jew who has not refined his middos... is in the clutches of his evil inclination. As such, it is inconceivable that he will be wholesome in matters between man and G-d. The fact that he fulfills these mitzvos in grand fashion is only because their observance does not run counter to his negative traits. When such conflict does occur, however, his yiras Shamayim will not be enough to weather the storm.⁵

HIS POWERFUL FAITH

Emuna, faith in Hashem, was deeply ingrained in the Chazon Ish's soul from his early youth. He wrote that already in his youth he had evaluated the circumstances of his life through the lens of the Thirteen Principles of Faith as formulated by Rambam. He added that his constant awareness of these principles infused him with a boundless love of Torah.

His confidant, Rabbi Shlomo Kohen, wrote:

"And a tzaddik lives by his faith" (*Chavakuk* 2,4). Our master's strength and power were rooted in his pure

⁵ Chazon Ish, *Emuna U'Vitachon* 4:5.

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emuna. This man was weak and afflicted with serious illnesses and conditions – whence did he draw such powerful determination and decisiveness? From where did he acquire the broad shoulders needed to bear the burden of thousands of communal and personal matters, to involve himself with all sorts of dilemmas, as if the responsibility for the entire generation rested upon him alone? Not once did he seek to remove himself from a problem or ease his load....

Without a doubt, it was his pure *emuna* that enabled him to attain what he did. It was this that uplifted him to his sublime level of service of *Hashem*.

SHEMITTA

An area where the Chazon Ish's faith found great expression and influence was *Shemitta* observance. Almost from the time that he arrived in *Eretz Yisroel*, four years before *Shemitta* of 5698 (1938), he was engaged in monumental efforts to restore this *mitzva* to its original glory.

In 1937, he published *Sefer Chazon Ish* on the laws of *Shemitta*, and in it he elucidated his firm opposition to selling land in *Eretz Yisroel* to non-Jews as a means of circumventing *Shemitta* requirements. At the same time, he directed the legendary Reb Yaakov Halpren of Bnei Brak to found the *Keren HaShemitta* fund to raise money for farmers who would let their land lie fallow during the *Shemitta* year. And he inspired religious farmers to commit themselves to faithful observance of this *mitzva*.

In succeeding *Shemitta* years, the Chazon Ish continued to seek every means for spreading and facilitating observance of *Shemitta*. During *Shemitta* of 5705 (1945) and 5712 (1952), it became extremely difficult to procure Arab and foreign-grown produce for consumption. The Chazon Ish conceived and implemented the idea of opening stores in every community that would market *Shemitta*-grown produce in a halachically acceptable way. He detailed instructions on how the stores would

operate, and wrote the text of a halachic document that was the basis for the stores' functioning within the parameters of *halacha*.

He rarely participated in public gatherings. In 1945, however, he participated in a gathering held at Bnei Brak's Ponovezher Yeshiva for the benefit of *Shemitta*-observant farmers. The Ponovezher Rav implored the Chazon Ish to address the assemblage and he obliged with three words: *עצמותי תאמרנה כל*, *All my limbs will say* ["Hashem, who is like You?"] (*Tehillim* 35:10).

With every fiber of his being, a Jew must sing *Hashem's* praises. The Chazon Ish was saying that the farmers had accomplished this, by demonstrating their firm *emuna* and *bitachon* that *Hashem* would not forsake them as their fields lay fallow.

ALL-ENCOMPASSING TORAH

“Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it, for everything is in it” (*Avos* 5:26). All the world's true wisdoms are hidden in the Torah, the “blueprint” of the world. But this can be perceived only by the most exalted *tzaddikim*, who have refined their spiritual vision through a lifetime dedicated to service of *Hashem* and especially to relentless toiling in Torah.

The Chazon Ish's knowledge of medicine and his counsel in health-related matters was truly incredible. He was as familiar with the human anatomy and its remedies as any professor of medicine, and he routinely rendered medical decisions in cases where the patient's life hung in the balance.

His nephew, the late Rabbi Shemaryahu Karelitz of Brooklyn, lived with the Chazon Ish in Bnei Brak for a number of years. He testified that the Chazon Ish never read medical books of any sort; all his knowledge came from Torah. Rabbi Karelitz recalled the following incident:

After undergoing major surgery, a boy did not regain consciousness for some time. The doctor said that if twenty-four hours would elapse without the patient's regaining consciousness, all hope would be lost. After hearing all the details of the case, the Chazon Ish declared that the doctor's ominous prognosis would be true only if a seventy-two hour period of unconsciousness would pass.

The boy awoke after twenty-four hours, but before seventy-two hours. In response to someone's inquiry, the Chazon Ish explained, “I knew it from a Mishna in Maseches Oholos.” No one but the Chazon Ish saw any connection between that Mishna and medicine.

In an interview with biographer Rabbi Aharon Sorasky, a renowned

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Israeli neurosurgeon, Doctor Hadran Askenazi, related:

"I was always profoundly impressed by the Chazon Ish's inquiries. They revealed a clarity of mind, a penetrating insight into the human anatomy and its cures. Brain surgery was often our topic of discussion. His questions were always on the mark and properly formulated. He attacked the heart of the matter, shedding new light on the situation — causing me, in many instances, to alter my opinion.

"In the world of medicine, there are

always new problems to resolve. Day after day, I am faced with decisions upon which a patient's future hinges. It is many years since the Chazon Ish's death; yet, when faced with difficulties, I still often think: if only I could discuss this with the Chazon Ish...."

THE STATE

The Chazon Ish lived for five years following the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. His presence during that period was crucial in

molding a Torah stance toward the secularist government and its policies, for his and future generations.

The very creation of the State caused a wave of confusion among religious Jews. How was a Jew faithful to Torah to understand this earth-shattering event? The Chazon Ish's opinion was unequivocal: "We are not witnessing the *as'chalta dege'ula* (beginnings of the Redemption), but the conclusion of the *galus*." On another occasion he remarked, "Perhaps this [the State] is the final test before *Moshiach*."

Torah education was among a number of major issues in the State's early years.⁶ The Chazon Ish was not opposed to *yeshivos* accepting government funding — as long as the government had absolutely no say in formulating school policies. But this could only happen if the religious schools would not rely solely on government money. Thus, the *Chinuch Atzmai* (lit., Autonomous Education) school system came into being and developed into an ever-growing, highly successful network of *yeshivos* and Bais Yaakovs. To Rabbi Aharon Kotler, founding *Nasi* (President) of *Chinuch Atzmai*, the Chazon Ish remarked, "Without *Chinuch Atzmai*, it would be impossible to live in the Land."

BEN GURION'S VISIT

In the fall of 1952, Prime Minister David Ben Gurion asked to visit the Chazon Ish at his home in Bnei Brak. Ben Gurion was well aware of the Chazon Ish's leadership role within the Torah community, and he thought that his visit would achieve a better relationship between his government and its religious adversaries.

While many viewed their meeting as a momentous occasion, the Chazon Ish placed little hope in it. He made it clear to Ben Gurion that there was

⁶ Other major issues included: religious freedom for soldiers, draft deferments for full-time *yeshiva* students, and exemption for religious women from compulsory national service. The Chazon Ish was deeply involved in resolving these issues, particularly the last one, until his final day.



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THE Jewish OBSERVER

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no room for compromise on any of the issues affecting Torah life. In a well-known exchange, Ben Gurion asked, "The majority of our country's people are irreligious. You are in the minority. Who should conform to whom?"

The Chazon Ish replied by citing the Talmudic law (*Sanhedrin* 32b) that when two ships, one laden with cargo and the other completely empty, travel towards each other down a strait scarcely wide enough for one, the empty ship must back up and allow for the full one to pass. The Chazon Ish continued, "Our ship is laden with three thousand years of history, heritage and tradition. Yours, however, is empty, devoid of any real substance. Confrontations are inevitable. Who, then, should step back for whom?"

Just as his condemnation of secularist Zionism was total, so was his love and compassion for the individual who had been led astray. In his writings, the Chazon Ish clearly differentiates between secularism as a movement and as a way of life for the *tinok shenishba*, the Jew whose environment has caused him to reject Torah. Of our wayward brethren, he writes, "It is incumbent upon us to draw them to us with bonds of love, so that the light of truth will illuminate their ways to whatever degree possible."⁷

We conclude with a quote from the Chazon Ish's brother-in-law, Rabbi Shmuel Greineman זצ"ל:

The Chofetz Chaim would say that the answer to every problem lies in Torah. However, one must know where in Torah to find a given answer and then approach the matter with a pure Torah outlook, which is absolutely free of any foreign attitudes or personal interest.... It is for this reason that so many, including scores of roshei yeshiva, sought the Chazon Ish's counsel. Always, they came away with the definitive Torah viewpoint.

He sought to conceal his awesome ways. He revealed an inch and concealed two. So much remains hidden

forever. Who will replace his countless acts of charity? At the funeral, one yeshiva administrator wept, saying that without the Chazon Ish he sees no way to maintain his institution. The Chazon Ish's deeds were so concealed that even those closest to him were often unaware of them.

Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner once compared his *rebbe*, the Vilna Gaon, to the Rishonim who lived centuries earlier. Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman asked the Chofetz Chaim why Heaven decreed that a soul such as the Gaon's should descend to a generations in which it did not belong. The Chofetz Chaim explained as follows: In every generation, the presence of Torah leaders serves to impede that generation's spiritual decline.

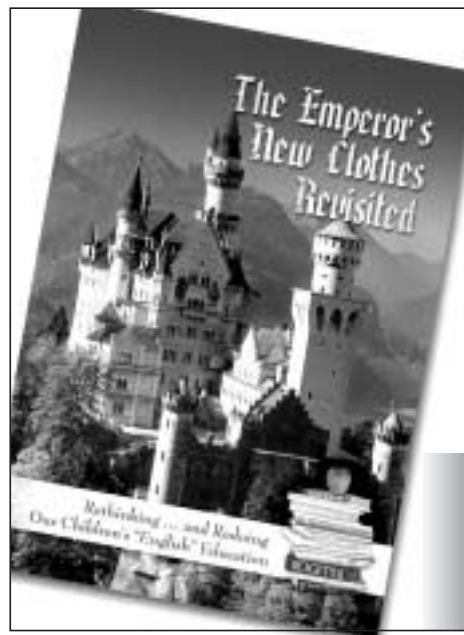
In certain generations, however, the risks of spiritual decadence are greater than usual. Heaven may then deem it necessary to send to this world a soul that actually belongs to an earlier, more sublime period. Such a soul can single-handedly uplift an entire generation and raise its spiritual heights.

Such was the Chazon Ish. A soul that belonged to an earlier generation was sent to preserve Torah life in our time. He planted the seeds of Torah throughout the Holy Land, combated ignorance and secularism, illuminated the world with his Torah wisdom,

and raised the sights of an entire generation.

It is incumbent upon us all to strive to emulate his ways in at least some small way. May his merit shield us from Above, just as it did during his years on this world. May *Hashem* have mercy on the remnants of our nation and may we soon merit the Redemption, *Amein*. ■

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⁷ Chazon Ish, *Yoreh De'ah* ch. 13.

Answering the Call



In this land of unlimited personal freedom, the invasion of our collective privacy by telemarketers has inspired a backlash of total annoyance. Finally, in response to public outcry, legislation has been enacted making it illegal for a telemarketer to call anyone whose name appears on the special “Do Not Call” registry.

Within a month and a half of its availability, more than fifty million homes had joined the list and telemarketing industry analysts predict that most of the nation will sign on before too long. It would seem that no longer will you be disturbed during dinner by cable TV salespeople or be interrupted from learning with your children to hear a pitch extolling the praises of yet another long-distance telephone carrier.

Forgotten amidst the celebration of our newfound freedom is the fact that charities will still be allowed to make telephone solicitations. One can only imagine the reception these legitimate telemarketers will be receiving now that the public has become so militantly protective of their privacy.

We all know that many of our *Mosdos Torah V'Chessed* rely on maintaining

Avi Menashe is the *nom-de-plume* of the director of one of the leading *tzeddaka* organizations in America. His byline appears often in the American *Yated Ne'eman*.

a steady link with the general public to keep themselves financially viable. Let us take a moment to consider what options for fundraising are available for our institutions and what severing the telephone link will mean to them...and us.

A Fundraising Perspective

Perhaps while growing up, some decades ago, you lived in one of the major Jewish population centers. If so, you might recall the following scenario.

It is evening at your house and a knock on the door heralds the arrival of an honored visitor. His white beard and black attire underscore the image of the Orthodox Jewish institution he represents.

He was the “Pushka Man” and his bi-annual appearance was as much a harbinger of the passing seasons as the first snow of winter or the blooming of the crocuses in Spring.

Clearly in awe of her distinguished guest, Mama would quickly retrieve the pushka from its special spot. On the way back to the dining room a few more pennies would be hastily added as the “Pushka Man,” squinting through thick lenses, surveyed his record book for the total amount retrieved when he visited last.

The tally was duly recorded, the coins swept into the leather bag, and the parting ritual began. With a solemn handshake for Poppa and a stream of blessings for Mama, the “Pushka Man” bid farewell and made his way to the next house on his list.

Eventually, the meager sums collected and long hours of work ate away at the cost-effectiveness of this system and rendered it obsolete.

Tzeddaka Value

– Are We Getting Bang For Our Buck?

Today’s high cost of living calls for methods of fundraising that will produce substantially more money per man-hour than *pushka* collections. Professionalism and graphics are the hallmark of the new *tzeddaka* world of today. We have witnessed a giant leap in sophistication and a concurrent skyrocketing of fundraising expenses. The question of how that money is being spent is more relevant than ever and it behooves us all to demand greater respect for our *tzeddaka* dollar.

Obviously, in every fund raising effort, the individuals and *mosdos* involved have done their arithmetic. It’s worth it for them. But again, the question remains; is it worth it for us?

The Telemarketing Solution

The fact is that we are rarely self-motivated to support an institution. If not for all the various methods of getting our attention and holding it for a few minutes, many a *mosad* would have to close its doors.

Mailings yield a notoriously low return (4% is considered good!) and are no alternative to the personal touch. One of the more cost-effective ways of individually reaching a large donor base is through legitimate telemarketing. A carefully planned campaign will maximize the time spent and even one caller can speak to twenty-five potential donors in the space of just one hour.

The best firms in this field have this down to a science. They take a flat fee per caller hour and pay their callers by the hour. With no commissions on pledges, there is no incentive for a caller to fabricate pledges where they don't exist.

"We monitor our callers to ensure that the people on the other end of the line are not hassled," says the head of a prominent Brooklyn telemarketing company. "If the time is inconvenient, the caller politely asks as to when they might call back. We have a double responsibility toward the institutions we represent. We must maximize their income and maintain their positive relationship with the public."

Another respected fundraising consultant interviewed for this article concurs. "We never forget that as far as the giving public is concerned, we are the voice of the Yeshiva or charity we are calling for," he declared. "That is an *achrayus* we don't take lightly."

Thanks to firms like these, we can hear a pitch, respond immediately, or just ask for some literature in the mail, all within a minute. No caterers, no expensive prizes or advertising campaigns; just a quick call and a statement in the mail within a day or two. Neat, pleasant, and above all, cost-effective.

You don't have to pick up the phone during dinner, and even when the expectation of an important call prompts you to answer, you can ask the telemarketer to call back later. Indeed,

if you just wish to say No, no one is stopping you and it will have cost the organization less than a dollar to ascertain that you are not a candidate. No mail, no gifts, no guilt. There is no reason to get upset, the caller is just trying to help our *mosdos* and deserves a civil response for performing this unenjoyable task.

Naturally, human error being what it is, there will be mistakes and misunderstandings. A negative response might result erroneously in a bill; a pledge of \$18 may be recorded as \$50; and so on. The proper response is to inform the *mosad* of the mistake immediately and

not allow them to churn out reminder statements needlessly. If a caller comes across as a bit too aggressive, let the organization know. They cannot correct a troublesome situation without your input.

So let us not allow ourselves to be swept away by the euphoria of the anti-telemarketing movement. The few seconds you will graciously spend on the phone will make a great difference. Your parents treated the "Pushka Man" like visiting royalty. The least you can do is treat the telemarketer like a human being. ■

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