

Training the Heart and the Mind

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*A Psychiatrist was presenting the Rorschach inkblot test to a client. He showed him an inkblot and asked him what he saw. "Why it's a tiger attacking a deer," the client answered. The Psychiatrist then showed him a second inkblot, and the client answered, "It's two men fighting." To a third inkblot, the man responded, "It's a man beating his wife." To a fourth, "A man killed someone in a robbery." And so it went through about 15 inkblots; each time, the client saw animals or humans fighting, beating, or killing each other. In one case, he saw a man killing himself, a suicide. At the end the Psychiatrist turned to the client and said, "You seem to have a very aggressive personality. There's a lot of anger in you." To which the client responded angrily, "Me? **I'm** the one who has an aggressive personality? Who showed me all those violent pictures?"*

This fictional anecdote draws our attention to a very basic question about human behavior¹ and what motivates it. Namely, does the impetus to do wrong reside inside the person, *pushing* him to sin, or does the source of evil reside in the world outside the person, enticing him, and *pulling* or *pushing* him to sin? And, since most people will respond with "it's both," we should rephrase the question to, "Which is the *primary* source of wrongdoing and sin?"

The answer we give to this question will have very practical implications for *chinuch* and self-improvement. The answer to this question would direct the major time and energies of parents and *mechanchim* to either of two approaches:

- (a) Protecting and sheltering children from environmental influences.
- (b) Training children's minds and hearts to discern, to abhor, and to avoid and turn away from the bad.

¹ The questions I raise about negative behavior can also be raised about children's positive behaviors, actually with more far-reaching influences for the good. This article will however address itself mainly to the education and training of our children to avoid negative behavior. A big part of teaching children to avoid negative behavior involves engaging them and attracting them to positive thinking and behavior. That aspect will be discussed later in this article.

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Current practices in *chinuch* focus on protecting and sheltering children from environmental influences. We are careful to place children in schools and camps where they will meet and associate only with the *right* kind of friends. We censor what they read. We are careful about what they watch, and place filters on our computers. In comparison, little effort is expended on teaching them what kinds of material, friends, or activities they should avoid, not to speak of **why** they should want to avoid them, or **how** to avoid them when they do beckon.

Our behavior and focus as parents and *mechanchim* seem to be based on a number of interrelated assumptions.

First, we seem to believe that when children go wrong it is usually because they were enticed and pulled to do wrong by bad friends or exposure to the wrong kind of literature or entertainment; the pull or push to sin is external, it does not come from inside them.

Second, we believe that even if there is some natural internal push to sin, training a child to avoid evil is ineffective, if not impossible. And that it may even be dangerous; it will force us to talk about evil, to describe it, if ever so subtly and carefully, and thereby expose the child to things he has never even thought about, prematurely awakening and inflaming his mind with evil and lustful thoughts.

Third, we believe that once a child has been exposed to an external enticement, s/he cannot simply turn away from it, i.e., avert his or her gaze, interest, or fascination with it; the pull is just too strong.

And *finally*, we believe that once a child's interest has been ignited by an external enticement, it is almost impossible for him/her to avoid giving in to and engaging in prohibited behavior; it would seem we believe that behavioral restraint cannot be taught.

The path to *chinuch* suggested by all four assumptions is that to the maximum degree possible, we should shelter our children from all exposure to anything that may remotely awaken any forbidden desire; that way we can "head off" evil.

While sheltering children and heading off the possibility of enticement by negative stimuli is important, my question is: "Is that enough?" Does merely sheltering children offer them the protection they need in childhood? And, even more significantly, does it teach them the skills they will need as adults going through life? Alongside the emphasis on sheltering, alongside the admonitions to stay far away from that which is potentially enticing, should we not be giving at least equal time to educating and training the hearts and minds of our children? Should we not be teaching them why they should avoid so many of the world's attractions? Should we not be working on training their hearts and minds so that the world's attractions become less alluring? Should we not be training their hearts,

their minds, and their wills so that they have the inner strength, willpower, and self-control to avoid harmful and forbidden enticements?

In the following pages I hope to explore these questions with the reader. Using both Torah sources and the findings of psychological research on motivation and perception, on the training of moral values, and on self-regulation and self-control, my hope is to demonstrate to the reader the importance, the possibility, and the feasibility of educating and training children so that they understand and feel the rightness of a Torah way of life, and develop the strength to withstand temptation when they are faced with it.

It is interesting to note at this point, that when the Torah warns us to be careful of straying, it speaks not of external enticements, but rather of *internal drives*. Thus we are warned in the second *parsha* of *Kerias Shema* (דברים יא טז):

הִשָּׁמְרוּ לְכֶם פֶּן יִפְתָּה לְבַבְכֶם וְסָרְתֶם וְעַבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם.

Beware for yourselves, lest your **heart** will become foolish² and you turn astray and serve gods of others, and prostrate yourselves to them.

The Torah warns us to be careful of the foolishness of our own hearts, more so than of external seducers. It seems that if our hearts are secured, external temptations will be less of a worry.

The heart and the eye:

In the *Parsha* of *Keriat Shema* (במדבר טו לט) we are told וְלֹא תִתּוֹרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם (and do not explore (scout³) after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray). The *מוני המצוות* (i.e., the Rambam, the

² The translation follows the Stone Edition of Tanach published by ArtScroll, excepting for the translation of the words *לִבְבְכֶם*. Like the Stone edition, most translators translate *לִבְבְכֶם* as “lest your heart be *seduced*,” but, as the *חזקוני* points out, if so, it should read *יִפְתָּה*. The *חזקוני* therefore says that the proper translation should be “lest your heart become foolish.” *Targum Unkelos* translates it as—*דִּילְמָא יִטְעוּן לְכֹחֵן*—“lest your heart will err.” The Stone Edition does add a footnote to suggest that the seduction the *pasuk* speaks about is the “self-seduction” of those who are “rich in wealth but poor in sophistication (and) often succumb to temptation.” This brings their translation more in line with the *חזקוני*.

³ The translation follows that of the Stone Edition of Tanach published by ArtScroll. Rashi says the word follows the root of *לתור את הארץ* to *spy* or *scout* the land. I think that “scout the land” better captures the concept *לתור*, i.e. to scout the terrain for something that interests you, than would “spy the land.”

Smag, the *Chinuch* and the *Chareidim*) count this admonition as a לא תעשה, warning us not to follow the enticements to sin emanating from our hearts or seen by our eyes. Thus we are admonished to beware of two sources of sin; those driving us from within, and those enticing us from without.

Rashi commenting on this *pasuk* (based on *Chazal* in the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Midrash Raba*, and *Midrash Tanchuma*) tells us:

הלב והעינים הם מרגלים לגוף ומסרסים לו את העבירות העין רואה והלב חומד והגוף עושה את העבירה.

The heart and the eyes *scout* for the body and they procure the sins for him.

The eye sees and the heart desires and the body commits the sin

Rashi's words are taken by many (e.g., בן יהודה) to state that the origin of sin lies outside of us. In other words, the drive and the occasion to sin originates in the external images that the eye sees, with the heart following the eyes and lusting after what has been seen; followed by the limbs carrying out the actual sin.

However, (פרשת שלח פסקא ט) and the *פרק במדבר פרק* ילקוט שמעוני (במדבר פרק) point out, that if the eye leads the way with the heart following it, this sequence would be reflected in the *pasuk*. Thus the *pasuk* should read, ולא תתורו אחרי עיניכם ואחרי לבבכם, i.e., *and do not explore (scout) after your eyes and after your heart after which you stray* (rather than the other way around). Therefore, argues the ראשית חכמה, it is actually the heart and its desires that come first, setting up and readying the eyes to see what the heart desires to see. Stated directly, the eye will see that which the individual desires to see. The words of the ראשית חכמה based on the ילקוט שמעוני are illuminating and are presented below:

דבר אחר ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם, מגיד שהעינים הולכות אחר הלב. או הלב אחר העינים אמרת, והלא יש סומא שעושה את כל התועבות שבעולם, הא מה תלמוד לומר ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם, מגיד שהעינים הולכות אחר הלב. (ראשית חכמה)

Another interpretation: And you shall not scout (seek to follow) after your hearts and after your eyes; this tells us that the eyes follow the heart. Or, you might say that it is the heart after the eyes. But lo, there is the blind man who (refutes this); he commits all the abominations in the world (without having seen them). What then does this teach us? You shall not scout (seek to follow) after the heart. This tells us that the eyes follow the heart.

The Malbim and the Ha'amek Davar similarly write about the primacy of the heart in preparing or priming the eye to see what the heart desires. Thus the Malbim (במדבר טו לט) writes:

והנה דעת רבים, שהתעוררות חמדת הלב אל העברה בא מסבת החושים כמ"ש "העין רואה והלב חומד", ואמרו שאין אדם מתאוה אלא ממה שראו עיניו. אמנם חז"ל דייקו ההפך, כי בצד א' לולא קדמו ציורי התאוה למשול בלבו בדרך רע, או דרכי המינות שמשלו בלבו להסיר מפניו יראת ה' ופחדו, לא היה נפעל ממראה עיניו, ומה שנפעל ממראה עיניו אל התאוה זה אות כי כבר סללו ציורי התאוה מסלה בלבו מקודם, וכן שקדמו בלבו מחשבות און להקל ביראת ה' המשקיף על נסתריו ונגלהו.

Now popular opinion has it, that the arousal of the desire to sin is caused by the senses. As it says, "the eye sees and the heart desires." And they say that a person does not lust for anything other than that which his eyes see. However, our sages inferred the opposite. That were it not that primary images of lust came to rule over a person's heart in a bad way, or that the paths of heresy ruled over his heart to remove the awe and fear of Hashem from him, he would not be moved by what his eye sees. And the fact that he is moved to desire by what he sees, is a sign that images of lust had already paved a path in his heart. And also that wicked thoughts had taken precedence in his heart to cause him to take lightly the awe and fear of Hashem who looks down at his secret thoughts and reveals them.⁴

We should take note here⁵ that the Malbim refers not only to lust but also to "the paths of heresy" that have come afterwards to rule over a person's heart. This is based on the words of the *Sifri* in *Parshas* שלח (פיסקא ט).

ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם (ברכות יב) זו מינות ואחרי עיניכם זו זנות.

⁴ The Malbim would agree that, in cases where the heart desires and then the eyes see, that the resulting desire that is aroused by what was seen is stronger and more active than that which originally resided in the heart alone. In this vein he differentiates between the seemingly synonymous Hebrew words תאוה and חמדה. In his analysis (as described in שמות הנרדפים שבתנ"ך by Reb Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer pg. כ and also in ספר הכרמל by Reb Yosef Greenbaum pg. 357) תאוה refers to the desire that resides in the heart in relation to something that is not seen or present in a person's immediate environment, while חמדה refers to a stronger burning desire that is awakened in relation to something seen and present. The latter may lead to action. It is the latter that Hashem referred to when he commanded לא תחמוד in the עשרת הדברות—

⁵ I owe the following remarks regarding heresy, and the Rambam's assertion that לב in the Torah refers to the mind, to the editor of this journal. I gratefully acknowledge his input.

And you shall not scout (seek to follow) after your hearts—this refers to heresy, and after your eyes—this refers to promiscuity.

This is in fact how the Rambam in *ג, ב, זרה* and in *ספר* interprets the admonition not to follow the “heart,” i.e. not to allow thoughts of heresy or thoughts that may lead to heresy to enter our hearts. The Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim* writes regarding the use of the term *לב* in the Torah as referring also to the mind:

והוא שם מחשבה גם כן, ומזה הענין - "ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם" - רוצה לומר, רדיפת מחשבותיכם.

And the term (heart) refers to thoughts as well. And in this vein we have “and you shall not scout after your heart,” meaning the pursuit of your thoughts.⁶

Similarly to the Malbim, though in a slightly different vein, the Ha’amek Davar (*שמות יג טז*) writes:

ליבא ועינא תרי סרסורי דעבירה נינהו; העין רואה והלב חומד. ואע"ג שהעין רואה תחלה, מכ"מ ראייה ראשונה היא יכולה להיות פתאומית וא"א להיות נזהר בה. אלא אזהרה היא שלא יהא הלב חומד ויוסיף להביט בעבירה. אלא יסיר עיניו מראות ברע, מש"ה יש לשעבד תחלה הלב.

⁶ In Jewish thought the position is often taken that the attraction, or at least the initial attraction, of idol worship and heresy often, and perhaps most often, is not to the idol worship itself, but is rather a mask or a cover for the attraction to sin. Thus for example Chazal tell us in Sanhedrin 63b:

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב יודעין היו ישראל בעבודת כוכבים שאין בה ממש ולא עבדו עבודת כוכבים אלא להתיר להם עריות בפרהסיא

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, The Jews knew that there is no substance to idolatry, and they engaged in idolatry only in order to permit for themselves overt immorality.

There is a story told about the Chasam Sofer who had a student who had strayed from the path of Torah. Once while the Chasam Sofer disparagingly spoke of this former student, the former *chavrusa* of the student tried to soften the Chasam Sofer’s anger by saying, “He is not that bad, he had many questions (about *emunah*) tormenting him.” To this the Chasam Sofer retorted, “Questions? No, he had excuses.” In other words, the “questions of faith” were seen as excuses for wanton behavior and desires, ways to rationalize such behaviors and desires so as to render them less base and more philosophical, and hence more “respectable.” Others speak of heresy as attractive for those whose *גאווה*, haughtiness, does not permit them to subjugate their will to that of a higher being, and to those who need to feel that it *כחי ועוצם ידי*, their own strength and prowess, that allowed them to achieve what they did in life, rather than G-d making it possible. At the same time, however, we find Chazal seeing heresy to be dangerously attractive in its own right, as Chazal say in *Avodah Zarah* 27a, heresy is different for it attracts, שאני מינות דמשכא.

The heart and the eye are two mediators of sin: the eye sees and the heart desires.

However, even though the eye sees first, still, the first observation (of something prohibited) could happen suddenly, and it is impossible to protect against it. But the admonition is **that the heart should not lust and cause the person to continue to look at the sinful.**

But rather, he should avert his eyes from looking at the bad. **Therefore, it is necessary to first subjugate the heart.**

Thus whereas the Malbim and those preceding him address a person's ability to avoid seeing a negative stimulus in the first place, the Ha'amek Davar is addressing a person's ability to turn away from that which has already caught his attention.

In the sefer *Admorei Belz* (Part 4 pg. 39) this idea is taken a step further. Thus it is told that on the day of the chupa of the future Rebbe Aron Rokeach of Belz זצוק"ל the local governor had expressed his wish to come and congratulate the *chossan* and his family. *The chossan* was distraught at having to meet and greet this non-Jewish governor on such a holy day. His father the Rebbe Yissochor Dov זצוק"ל calmed him. He quoted the words לא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם pointing out that the *pasuk* gives precedence to the heart, and said, "The eyes see only what the heart desires. If your heart does not desire it, your eyes will not see. **It is possible to look and not see.**"

A parallel discussion: "eye and brain"

A discussion that very much parallels the above, and essentially arrives at the same conclusions, has been going on for years in the burgeoning field of cognitive science.^{7,8} The scientific discussion centers on the nature of

⁷ This research to be described goes back to the 1940s and was part of a research approach called the "New Look" in Perception. It focused on how our needs, motives, expectations, and goals influenced perception. Many of the findings at the time were criticized, primarily by the assertion that the findings could be explained away and handled by alternative theories. At the time it was not yet possible technologically to measure and decide between competing explanations. More recently technological advances have allowed for more precise measurements and the early findings have been largely validated. My description is based mostly on the more current research. Please see the bibliography for a fuller listing of studies in this area.

⁸ The scientific discussion differs semantically, in that it is the relation between "eye and brain" rather than between "eye and heart" that is discussed. But the question is essentially the same, especially when the scientific discussion addresses the effect of "emotion and motivation" on perception (as opposed to

perception (the study of how we see the world), and explores the relationship between eye and brain in determining *what* we see—*how quickly* and *how likely* we are to notice something that enters our field of vision, whether we see it at all without the brain being engaged—and *how we interpret* what we see.

The bulk of the research has shown that seeing (or, for that matter, perceiving with any of the five senses) is not a passive activity. Rather, it involves an active perceiver whose brain, its expectations, and motives greatly influence what he sees. It has been said that seeing involves “more of what the brain tells the eye than what the eye tells the brain.”

From amongst the many findings in cognitive science there are a number of conclusions that I find most relevant to our discussion of “eye and heart.” Thus it has been found ...

1. That because, at any moment in time, the amount of environmental stimulation (sights, sounds, smells, etc.) that bombards our senses is greater than what we can process, we are forced to choose what to focus on and what to ignore. We use selective attention to focus on information that is relevant to us.
2. Having paid attention to only some parts of our environment and not others, we will then perceive and become aware only of information that we attended to.
3. Whilst our mind is engaged and we are paying attention to something, we will very likely miss and not see something else, even when it is directly in front of us.
4. There is an exception to the above statements. Namely, that even when our mind is engaged and we are paying attention to something, and failing to see most other stimuli, we *will* likely notice and see objects or things that we are prepared (or “primed”) to see, i.e. objects that are highly familiar, expected, very important, or desirable to us.
5. That our perception of the world—what we see, whether we see it, how quickly we see it, how well we see it, and how we interpret it—is strongly influenced by our needs and motives; i.e. an individual’s internal states can influence his or her perceptions of the external world.

only “cognition”). This is also borne out, with even greater clarity, by the Rambam in the *Moreh Nevuchim* (cited above) that the word לֵב, heart in Torah writings, may often refer to the mind.

The intelligent reader will rightly ask for evidence for the above assertions. In the following paragraphs we will present examples of the findings that support the above.

1. We attend only to some of the information around us.
2. And that is all that we become aware of.

Laboratory studies (Broadbent 1958) had participants wear stereo headsets with different messages coming into each ear (e.g. an auditory string of letters being heard by the right ear and an auditory string of numbers being heard by the left ear). The participants were asked to, while they were listening, repeat (a.k.a., to “shadow”) what they were hearing in each ear. So long as the input was slow, people were able to switch from ear to ear and report all they heard. However, when the pace of presentation picked up and reached a rate so quick that a person could not switch attention from ear to ear in time to catch both messages, the participants were forced to choose to pay attention to the information flow from one ear only, and reported only the information from the chosen ear. Amazingly, when the presentation was stopped in the middle and they were asked to repeat what they had heard in the unattended ear, the participants could remember virtually none of the information that had entered the unattended ear. Thus they had “heard” and could remember only what they had paid attention to.

This phenomenon should be familiar to the reader. It is apparent in our daily experience. People can sit in a room for many hours over many weeks and then, when asked about the position or even the existence of a particular sign or light switch in that room, not be able to remember having seen it. Since it was not relevant to them, they paid no attention to it, and even if their eyes flitted over it, something that almost certainly happened, they didn’t notice it.

We also find this all but explicitly articulated in Halacha. We are told in the Gemara in *Chulin* (3b) that a person who slaughtered an animal and was aware of the importance of not making a *שהייה*—of not hesitating in the midst of a *shechita* movement—is believed, *after the fact*, to say that he did not hesitate when he performed the *שהיטה*, and that therefore the meat is kosher. However a person who was not a priori aware of the relevance of not making a *שהייה*, but was informed about it only later, after the *שהיטה*, is not believed to say that he did not hesitate when he slaughtered the animal, and the meat cannot be deemed kosher. The Ritva explains that this is so because, not having been aware of its relevance, the person would not have been aware when he did hesitate (Ritva on *Chulin* 3b). In other words, we do not notice something we do not deem relevant. We are not primed to notice it. The Ritva cites, as support, the Gemoro that

states twice in Tractate *Shavuos* (לד ע"ב, מא ע"ב): מילתא דלא רמיא עליה דאיניש: עביד לה ולא אדעתיה—something that a person doesn't need to pay attention to can be done by the person without his being aware that he did it. Thus, generally, we see and hear only that which we attend to.

3. When preoccupied with or focusing on one thing we will not see other things even when we are looking directly at them.

A related phenomenon, known in the Psychological literature as “inattentive blindness,” has been demonstrated in studies going back to 1979, when in one of several experiments, Neisser asked people to view a video of two superimposed ball-passing games in which one group of players wore white uniforms and the other wore black uniforms. Participants were asked to count the number of times members of the white team passed the ball to each other. In the midst of this game a woman unexpectedly strolled through this game (in full view, center screen) carrying an open umbrella. When the participants were subsequently asked to report on how many times the white team had passed the ball, they were also asked whether they had seen the woman. Having been preoccupied counting ball-passes, only 21% of participants reported seeing the woman! Seventy-nine percent of the people viewing the film failed to see someone who appeared clearly at center stage of a film they were watching intently because they were preoccupied with a different aspect of the film.

Subsequent studies, both those done in the laboratory (e.g. Mack and Rock 1998), and more ecologically natural studies, have tested and repeatedly replicated this phenomenon. Thus Mack (2004) in a review article of the phenomenon concludes that “with rare exceptions, *observers generally do not see what they are looking directly at when they are attending to something else.*” This phenomenon has also been demonstrated for modalities other than vision, as for example when we don't hear what we are not listening to, even though our open ears are clearly exposed to the sounds. *When our mind is engaged and we are paying attention to something, we will very likely not see something else, even when it is directly in front of us.*

4. Even when preoccupied we will perceive that which is highly familiar, important, or expected.

There are, however, some stimuli that intrude into our awareness even when we are engaged with other stimuli. Thus for example in the aforementioned laboratory studies (Broadbent 1958) in which participants wearing stereo headsets with different messages coming into each ear remained unaware of information entering their un-attended ear, if the un-

attended ear heard a bit of information that was relevant or especially familiar to the listener (e.g. his/her name), s/he will be aware of having heard that word even though he can remember little or nothing else of what the unattended ear heard. This occurs because his mind is “ready” (or *primed*) to hear and respond to the relevant information.

Being primed (or prepared) for a particular event or thought will also effect higher cognitive processes. It will influence how we interpret ambiguous stimuli. If, for example, you have just been talking about food, you are more likely to interpret the word “jam” as marmalade than as a word referring to traffic patterns.

There is a saying in Yiddish that “*Yeder na’ar farsbteit zich zeyn sbtetel*,” meaning, that even a simpleton, one who generally grasps only that which is evident, and generally fails to recognize information that is only indirectly relevant to a situation, a person who normally makes no inferences and understands no subtleties, nevertheless quickly senses even very indirectly relevant information—making even complex inferences and understanding subtleties—when dealing with information involving something that is directly relevant to himself and could threaten his own well-being. Thus when something is relevant to us we understand and grasp it with a simple immediacy; we are primed for such information.^{9, 10}

5. To a great extent: We see what we want to see!

Although we generally assume that we see the surrounding environment as it truly is, much research has shown that our perception of the environment is dependent upon our internal goal states. In other words, if we are hungry we are more likely to notice objects or pictures (or even words) that are related to food (Radel and Clement-Guillotin 2012). Similarly, if we are thirsty we will more quickly notice thirst-related stimuli, because they are related to our need (Aarts et al 2001). Research has further shown that even more subtle and abstract factors, namely, attitudes, cognitive

⁹ The Piazcener Rebbe in his *Sefer Derech HaMelech* (Parshas VaYetze) makes this point in regard to Avodas Hashem. He asserts that if the service of Hashem was felt by us as much as we feel our material needs, we could not forget to do anything required for that service.

¹⁰ Information held in our memory stores are of two kinds: (1) the passive or inactive memories that lie dormant until sought out when needed, (2) “active memories”—memories of ideas or events that we have recently been conscious of, that are highly important and relevant to us because of interest or motivation. Active memories will guide our percepts and make it more likely for newly incoming information that is relevant to their interests to be noticed, noticed more quickly, and also interpreted in a specific way that fits with it.

needs or biases, will influence what we notice, what we see, and how we perceive it to be (Balciotis and Dunning 2006, 2007, 2010). In the words of the researchers, “We see what we want to see.”

The findings above represent two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, the findings show that we do not perceive that which we are not paying attention to. On the other hand, the findings show that that which we really care about and want, will assert itself even when we distract ourselves and focus on a different set of stimuli.

These findings have relevance and important and interesting implications for the question we started this article with: the question of the relationships between the individual and the stimuli that entice to wrongdoing, and the respective roles of the heart and the mind in avoiding enticement by forbidden stimulation. The implications are threefold.

- **First**, we need to remember that a mind that is preoccupied is less likely to notice signals and cues in the environment that are not related to that which preoccupies him. Thus it is important to focus and occupy our minds with the good and the positive, so that we are less likely to take notice of that which is bad.¹¹
- **Second**, we need to understand and remember that a mind and heart that are looking out for or even yearning for some pleasure, forbidden or not, will tend to notice cues that signal the availability of that pleasure, even when preoccupied, and even when those cues are slight, vague, and camouflaged. Thus we must find ways to diminish our interest in that which is negative and bad so that it does not break through and insert itself into our awareness, i.e. so that we are not *primed* to receive it.
- And **third**, we must work to protect and shield our senses from being enticed by potentially negative influences, and learn to avert them in the face of such influences and to reject those influences. This last point is something we have not yet addressed, but we will do so below.

Rambam writes:

יפנה עצמו ומחשבתו לדברי תורה, וירחיב דעתו בחכמה, שאין מחשבת עריות מתגברת אלא בלב פנוי מן החכמה. (הלכות איסורי ביאה פרק כב סעיף כא)

¹¹ As my editor points out, this may underlie the suggestion by Chazal that אם פגע זה בך מנוול זה—if you find yourself already engaged with the *yetzer ha’ra*—it is because your mind was not properly preoccupied. The remedy for this mistake, and the way to extricate yourself, is by engaging and occupying your mind in Torah. Chazal therefore suggest משכהו לבית המדרש—drag him (the *yetzer ha’ra*) to the house of study and fill your mind with Torah.

A person should turn his mind to words of Torah, and he should broaden his mind in wisdom, for lustful thoughts will dominate only the mind that is empty of wisdom.

Rambam's advice is certainly good, but it will work only if a person, while escaping the bad and focusing on the good, is not looking over his shoulder to see whether the bad is catching up to him to sneak into his awareness, and maybe even hoping that it does.

It is told that a *chasid* complained to his Rebbe that he was being plagued by *מהשבות זרות*, "foreign thoughts." The Rebbe replied, "I'm afraid that they may not be so foreign to you. Unfortunately, they may be your own thoughts."

To be sure, in addition to informing the mind and engaging the heart to abhor what's bad and harmful, there is also a need to teach and habituate children in the practice of self-control and to teach them strategies that will enhance their ability to exercise self-control. In a study known as the marshmallow experiment (reviewed in Mischel, Walter 2014)—a test of children's ability to delay gratification (keep themselves from eating a marshmallow now, so as to gain another marshmallow in ten minutes)—it was found that amongst the different strategies that children used to keep from eating the marshmallow, the strategy that worked best was covering their eyes or averting their gaze from the marshmallow. Thus this is a strategy that could be taught to children. One should not however conclude from this that, if so, all we need to do is teach our young to avert their eyes (or close off access to that which they should not see). It should be noted that the children in the marshmallow studies were motivated to avoid eating the marshmallow. Given that motivation, the children actually came up with a working strategy on their own. The strategy would not have worked, or even if imposed upon them, would not even have been used, had they not been given a reason to stay away from the marshmallow (for now). It is primarily once someone is already motivated to avoid the bad that strategies for how to do so become useful and effective. In an article to follow this one, I will address the issue of strategies for training and strengthening self-control. The question I am addressing here is, Are we providing our children with the motivation, the reason, or the WHY for avoiding that which is bad for them? Or are we merely giving strategies to avoid that which we feel they should avoid, but that they nevertheless desire?

In contemporary *chinuch* practices, are we doing all we can to educate and train our youth?

As we saw above, both Torah sources and scientific research point to the importance of our thoughts and motives in influencing and guiding what our eyes will see. Both underscore the importance of teaching, training, and inspiring the minds and hearts of our children to understand and be motivated by the need to do what's good and avoid the bad. In spite of this, most efforts in the contemporary world of *chinuch* are dedicated to protecting the eyes of our children, i.e., blocking and preventing any view of that which would entice them to the bad. While this is important, it is shortsighted and misses the point. We need to understand and to realize that the source of sin or desire lies not outside of us, but in our own very human natures. We also need to realize that so long as a young person's heart burns with desire for the forbidden and he is allowed to remain ignorant and undisciplined—lacking understanding of good and evil from the Torah's perspective, and unconvinced of the need to avoid that which is bad in the eyes of Hashem—external eye protectors will be of little help; the filth will seep through the strongest external protectors and filters, as our children will perceive that which their hearts desire. In the education of our children, we desperately need to work on capturing and inspiring their minds and hearts, and training them in self-control and self-discipline if they are to abstain from that which is harmful. And this must begin years before the difficult years of emerging adolescence. We need to head off the *Yetzer HoRah*.

As the ראשית חכמה mentioned above continues, citing the ילקוט שמעוני on the *Pasuk* in *Mishlei* (23,26),:

תנה בני לבך לי ועיניך דרכי תצורנה. א"ר יצחק לבא ועינא תרין סרסורין דחטאה שנאמר ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם, א"ר יצחק אמר הקב"ה אי יהבת לי לבך ועינך אנא ידעית דאת דילי:
הרי מבואר היות הלב מקור לכל המדות, אם לטוב אם להפכו, ולכן הפסוק מקדים הלב לעינים, לא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחר כך אחרי עיניכם, וכן (משלי כג, כו) תנה בני לבך לי ועיניך דרכי תרצנה.....

My child, give your heart to me, and your eyes will desire my ways. Rav Yitzchok said, the heart and the eyes are the two mediators of sin, as it says, *And you shall not scout (follow after) your hearts and your eyes*, Rav Yitzchak said Hashem said, If you give me your heart and your eyes, I will know that you are mine.

It has thus been made clear that the heart is the source of all the traits, be they good or the opposite, and therefore that the *pasuk* gives precedence to the heart over the eyes: *And you shall not scout (seek*

to follow) after your hearts and afterward and after your eyes; and so too when the *pasuk* says (Mishlei 23, 26), My child, give your heart to me, and your eyes will desire my ways....

It is only by capturing the minds and hearts of our children that we can get their eyes to look for what's good, and to wish to avoid the bad. It is only then that we can have some assurance that they belong to Ha-shem.

What must we do? What are our obligations as parents and mechanchim?

The first place to look to when asking what we are to do is the Torah. What does the Torah obligate us to do for the *chinuch* of our children?

Allow me to take the reader on an ever-so-brief excursion of our obligations in the *chinuch* of our children, stopping here and there to elaborate on and illustrate the practical implications and applications of one point or another, and what we could do to improve things.

Briefly, we have three mitzvos that pertain to the education and training of our children:¹²

1. The mitzvah דאורייתא of *Talmud Torah*. This mitzvah has three components to it:
 - a. Teaching Torah and understanding its logic.
 - b. Teaching the why and the how of the practical fulfillment of mitzvos.
 - c. Teaching עקרי אמונה ויראת שמים.¹³
2. The mitzvah דרבנן of *chinuch*.
 - a. This involves training children to assume the regular on-going obligation of doing מצוות that they are, by Torah law, not yet obligated to do, e.g. making *brachos*, sitting in

¹² Some of the obligations in *talmud Torah* and *chinuch* in the following presentation are well known to most readers, and I will not cite references for them. I will cite references to those obligations of *chinuch* that seem to be less well known, and certainly less practiced. For a full treatment of the obligations of *chinuch* I would refer the reader to the following *seforim*: ספר חנוך לנער לרבי יעקב ישעיה בלוי, ספר חנוך לנער לרבי יעקב ישעיה בלוי, ספר מלאכת ה' ספר ובתורתו יהגה, ספר מלאכת ה' *seforim* will be separately referenced.

¹³ See, ספר חנוך לנער לרבי יעקב ישעיה בלוי פרק ה' דף יח. ספר מלאכת השם דף טז=טז ומה, שמביא מספר חומת הדת להחפץ חיים.

a סוכה, eating מצה, shaking a לולב, wearing ציצית etc. The goal is to habituate them in the doing of mitzvos.

3. The mitzvah of ¹⁴חינוך לקדושה: This involves readying children and training them in the capabilities, i.e. the strength of character, the *midos*, the spirit, and the *emunah*, that they will need for keeping *mitzvos* when they reach the age of obligation. As Rambam writes regarding מאכלות אסורות, which a minor is not enjoined from eating on his own, nor is בית דין obligated to stop him from eating it (nor does it involve training the child in the actual practice of a mitzvah),

אף על פי שאין בית דין מצווין להפריש את הקטן מצוה על אביו לגעור בו ולהפרישו כדי להנכו בקדושה שנאמר חנוך לנער על פי דרכו וגו'

Even though the *Beis Din* is not obligated to separate a minor from eating forbidden foods, his father is obligated to admonish his in order to train him to holiness.

As the *pasuk* says: Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old, he will not depart from it. This in turn can be divided into three separate areas:

- a. Keeping children from doing wrong (i.e. transgressing actual prohibitions like eating *treif*, being *mechalel shabbos*, making vows, cursing etc.), in order to keep them from habituating to those specific negative behaviors.
- b. Imbuing children with a love for Hashem and his Torah, an understanding of that which is morally and ethically wrong, with a love for the good and an abhorrence for the bad.
- c. Training children in **self-control** in the *midos* (character traits) that are necessary for and enable one to grow in observance. As the Tosfos HaRosh writes in *Mesechet Nazir* 28a that one aspect of *chinuch*, and it serves as the reason for a father taking a Nazarite vow for his son, is to habituate the child to *prishus*, i.e. restraint and self-control (as translated by the ArtScroll Mesorah commentary on *Mesechet Nazir*).

¹⁴ The sources for this aspect of Chinuch as well as their implications for practice will be addressed at length in a future article (as mentioned above). The interested reader may wish to look at some of the following sources: משנה וגמרא נזיר, שו"ת מנחת אליהו סימן כ כה ע"ב – כט ע"א ובפירושו הרא"ש שם, מהר"ץ חיות שם, See also ברוך רקובסקי הקטן והלכותיו פרק ב אות א ובהערות א' וה' שם.

It is my observation that contemporary parents and schools do some of the above, but that we fall short in some. I will address each of these areas in turn.

Regarding our first obligation, the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*, we spend much time on teaching children Torah and helping them understand its logic. We could probably do a little better in instructing them in the practical fulfillment of the mitzvos (and that means improving with hands-on classes in the making of *tefillin* and *tzitzis*). I would however suggest that we spend much too little time and effort on teaching עקרי אמונה ויראת שמים. It is true that we demand יראת שמים. It is also true that we sometimes even demonstrate and model it, and this is of utmost importance. However, we do not *teach* it nearly enough. And as for עקרי אמונה, we are afraid to touch the subject. As a result, many of our children live in confusion. They are not sure what they are supposed to believe, not to speak of why they should believe it. They know only that as *Frum Yidden* they are prohibited from doing this, that, and the other; but they know not why. They do not understand why they should deny themselves the attractions of what looks like a glittering, inviting world! Living in an open world, they know that there are many who believe differently than we do, and they wonder, “How do we know we’re right?”

I can hear the reader at this point fretting and protesting that philosophical discussions—with those whose primary motivation for asking questions is so that they can satisfy their lusts and desires—will lead nowhere and are fruitless. And, to an extent, I will agree.

It is told that an irreligious person once approached the late Rav Noach Weinberg *Zatz”al* of Aish HaTorah and said, “Rabbi, prove to me that there is a G-d.” Rav Weinberg told him, “I can do that, but only on one condition.” What’s that?” asked the man. “Promise me,” Rav Weinberg said, that if I prove to you that there is a G-d, you will change nothing in your life.” “What do you mean, Rabbi?” the man protested, “if there is a G-d, then there is much in my life that I need to change!” “Yes,” said Rav Weinberg, “but as long as you believe that you have to make changes, I will not be able to prove to you that there is a G-d.”

Thus philosophical discussions are often just that, sophistry without an end in sight. However, it is not philosophical or theological debates of the kind found in חובת הלבבות שער אמונה ובטחון that I believe we are missing. It is not debates about the theological concepts of Godliness, of the origins and the age of the universe, of the big-bang theory, about the theory of evolution of the species, and the like, that our children crave for or need. (Though some do, and at least a cursory understanding of what we

believe in these areas, and why some theories are misguided and wrong from our perspective, would help many.¹⁵) We are failing to tell our children more-basic things. We are failing to teach them what we believe as Jews (the 13 basic מאמין). Somehow we think these ideas come with the genes that our children inherited. They don't. Even more basically we are failing to teach them why they should strive to be spiritual persons, why they should not be content with merely following what is טוב למאכל, ותאווה לעינים ונהמך להשפיל, that which is good to eat, a delight to the eyes, and desirable to contemplate. "Why indeed?" they ask. Why should they not go after that which looks good? So long as that is what their heart desires, no amount of sheltering will help. Their eyes will continually seek out that which their heart desires.

On the other hand, were our children to understand why they should live a Torah life, if they would understand why they should "deny themselves" many of the world's "pleasures," our children would rarely if ever be troubled by philosophical questions, and if yes, the questions will come as honestly curious questions, rather than as antagonistic battering rams used to break barriers to the forbidden. Additionally, their eyes will follow their hearts and seek out the *good*. Immersed in and feeling the rightness of an ethical, moral, Torah way of life, they will, like the well-known Graf Potovsky who was converted by the Vilna Gaon, not have "questions." Our responsibility is to immerse them in this tradition and explain to them why they should want to live as Jews.

In regard to our second obligation, the mitzvah of *chinuch*, of training our children and habituating them in the doing of mitzvos, I would say that we are meeting our obligations. Thus all parents have their children eat matzos on Pesach; sit, eat, and even sleep in a *succah*; and shake *lulav* and *esbrog* (and we are affluent enough so that many buy their children a kosher *chinuch* set of the *Arba Minim*, something that my parent's generation could not do).

In regard to our third obligation, that of *chinuch likdusha*, we are quite conscientious about not allowing our children to become habituated to eating non-kosher food. And our children do imbibe a feeling of disgust for non-kosher (*treif*) food, and an almost palpable fear and tendency to recoil from *muktza* items on Shabbos. However, we do not imbue them with similar feelings for *chutzpa* (to their parents and elders), לשון הרע, or even גזילה וגניבה. We could and should invest more in developing positive feelings in our children for that which is good, and in developing negative feelings for that which is bad, in the spirit of אהבי השם שנאה רע. We should

¹⁵ And as I related in an earlier article in this Journal, Rebbe Yaakov Kaminetzky Zatz"l felt it should be taught to children. (See *Hakirah*, Vol. 4, p. 41.)

understand and remember that the flip side of the statement “We see what we want to see” is “What we don’t want to see, we don’t (or are less likely to) see.” Thus we must train children to abhor the bad, not to want to see it. Only then will they avert their eyes or learn to ignore that which is bad. Only then, when our children don’t want the evil, when they have negative feelings about the bad, will sheltering them help them.

And, for the most part, we do precious little if anything to train our children how to withstand bad when they are already in its presence. We fail to train them in the art of self-control.¹⁶ We fail to work on exercising and strengthening their ability to practice self-control. There is a body of emerging scientific research that shows that self-control can be exercised and thereby enhanced and strengthened in people. And there are sources in the Rishonim and Achronim that state that we are obligated as parents and *mechanchim* to work on that training. As I wrote above, I will address this aspect of *chinuch*, its Torah sources, the psychological research that informs it, and the habits and strategies that need to be taught to our children to enhance it, in a separate article. Here, in this article, I need to narrow my scope to addressing the need to train the heart and mind so that they want and seek the good, the wholesome, and the pure, and do not instead goad, push, and incite the eyes to scout the terrain for them to seek out that which is bad and wrong.

Two lines of approach: The mind and the heart (with some practical suggestions):

To help our children develop we must win over both their minds and their hearts. We need to make them understand what’s right and what’s wrong, and also to develop intuitive feelings for what’s right and wrong. I will in the following lines briefly address both approaches to the mind and to the heart.

Informing the mind:

Children from an early age need to be imbued with and come to understand and appreciate the fundamental and basic ideas that should inform their self-image and self-definition as human beings. They need to be made aware and conscious of themselves as having been created as dual beings: a synthesis of body and soul, a being who is מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע

¹⁶ And this is a primary מדה. The Chazon Ish in א אות א פרק ד ובטחון writes that self-control is actually the *only* מדה—all the other מדות spoken of in the *sifrei mussar* are simply expanding on how self-control should be applied in the various areas of חסד וכי, כעס, צניעות, ענווה, זריזות, ענווה, צניעות, כעס, חסד וכי.

השמימה, i.e., *who has his feet firmly planted on earth but whose mind can reach the lofty heavens*. They must come to appreciate that they can be, need to be, and therefore *must* be spiritual beings. As human beings they cannot hope to feel content until they are spiritual beings, until they actualize their potential.

Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua Twerski has written a wonderful book on “Spirituality.” The book carries in it the most fundamental and basic ideas a person needs to begin his journey to becoming a true spiritual person, an “*ehrlicher yid*.” I believe it contains the “*Derech Eretz Shekadma LaTorah*,” the basic concepts about the human condition that a person needs to know and feel as he embarks on a life of Torah, the life of the spirit. Obviously, I cannot reproduce the whole book here. I will, however, outline the basic concepts of each chapter. The full richness of the convincing logic of each step and how it leads to the next can be gotten only from the book itself (or from a tape of a lecture that Dr. Twerski has given on the topic. Sometimes, not incorrectly, the talk is billed as a talk on “How to achieve happiness.” True contentment and happiness for a human being is achieved only in the pursuit of a spiritual life). If the concepts in this book were taught and internalized by our children they would be light years ahead of where they are today in abhorring and avoiding evil influences. The children would come to understand the *מותר האדם מן הבהמה*, how humans are different from animals: by having the ability to choose, to make commitments to self-betterment, to becoming better human beings, to reflect, to think about the future, to delay gratification, and to elevate themselves spiritually. Properly taught, our children will come to feel how special they are as humans and will accept responsibilities, namely, to feel and express gratitude, to control anger, to respect others, to respect time, to respect honesty, and to submit to the will of Hashem and to want to follow in His ways.

I would suggest that the basic concepts in this book be distilled and taught to young children, perhaps from 5th grade and up, with some concepts being taught even earlier. It can serve as the outline for a spiritual curriculum for our *Talmudei Torah*, yeshivos, and Bais Yaakov schools. Clearly much work needs to be done to outline approaches and create lesson plans for teaching these concepts to children. There are models of methodology and lesson plans for teaching similar concepts in the secular literature. It will require work, but it is effort that in the long run will be well worth it.

Winning over the heart:

There is an ancient custom in Klal Yisroel, cited by the Ba'al Hamaor, of introducing the three-year-old child to the Alef-Bais by having him lick

honey off the letters, or by baking cakes in the form of the letters. The purpose of this custom was to have the child associate the letters and the Torah that he will learn through them with the sweetness of the honey. There has been much written in Torah literature about the importance of filling the experience of mitzvos with sweetness and joy. Currently some psychologists (Haidt 2001, Danovitch and Bloom 2009) thinking about the development of morality and ethics have been arguing that most of our moral decisions about right and wrong are made, not intellectually, deliberately, and logically as one would think, but rather quickly and intuitively, based on feelings of right and wrong. These felt intuitions accrue to us through a “web of experiences” at an early age that leave us with feelings that some things are “yummy” and good, while others are “yucky” i.e. dirty and bad. These feelings are held very deeply and have staying power. We need to make use of this knowledge.

I once asked a boy in the fourth grade of a *cheder* the following question: “Imagine that you are very hungry and you are in a room alone. On the table is a delicious-looking non-kosher hamburger. If nobody could see you or ever find out, would you take a bite of that hamburger?” The boy answered, “No way, *fech (yuk)*.”

I then asked the same boy, “Now imagine that you are alone in a room. On the table there is a pile of hundred-dollar bills. They have not been counted yet. Nobody would ever know if you took a hundred-dollar bill from the pile. Would you take one?” The boy answered, “No!”

I pointed out to the boy, “But regarding the money, you didn’t say “*fech (yuk)*.” After a moment’s hesitation in which he grasped the point I was making, the boy recovered and argued, “But it’s true, *treif* is *yukky*; stealing money is *assur*, but it’s not *yukky*!”

And therein lies my point. As I have mentioned above, we are successful in bringing our children to feel positive about some mitzvos and negative about some *aveiros*, but we need to expand our efforts in this area. We need to win over our children’s hearts to Torah. Children need to feel that *treif* is yucky,¹⁷ but they also need to feel that coarse language is

¹⁷ Chazal conclude that our attitude to Torah prohibitions like not eating pork should not be that of “yucky,” but rather we should say אִפְשֵׁי וְאִפְשֵׁי “I would want to eat it but what can I do, my Creator has forbidden it!” (*Yalkut Shmoni, Vayikra Perek 20, remez 626*) The Rambam (*Shemona Prakim, Perek 6*) contends, however, that this attitude is meant to be held only in regard to *chukim* like pork, but not to ethically comprehensible prohibitions like stealing and killing. And given these positions, the reader may accept and understand my recommendation for teaching children to feel stealing is *yukky*, but wonder why I would recommend teaching children also to feel that *treif* is yucky. However I believe that the Chazal and the Rambam’s differentiation are applicable to older children,

yukky, that lewdness and promiscuity are yukky, and that chilul Shabbos is abhorrent. More importantly even, they need to feel that Shabbos is beautiful and *tznius* is majestic, and that when you lose them you lose some of your beauty and majesty.

Parents, *rabbeyim*, and teachers need to focus on making that which is good, wholesome, psychologically and spiritually healthy and holy, to also have a positive effect on our children. We need to focus on making Shabbos and Yom Tov pleasant and positive experiences, and much has been written about that. But we must go further than that. We must imbue daily mundane practices, *davening*, giving *tzedakah*, helping the poor, *tznius*, with purpose, with meaning, and with pride and joy. We must focus not on the limiting aspects of the Torah's commandments and strictures, but on their beauty. An illustrative anecdote comes to mind:

Years ago I worked with a yeshiva high school student who was extremely bright, but was driving his *rabbeyim* and *roshei yeshivos* to desperation. He refused to come to minyan on time, wasn't learning, and disturbed the *davening* and the classes. He was also continually and loudly critical of the yeshiva's policies and was fostering rebellion amongst others in the student body. He was not functioning at any level, and he worried both his teachers and his parents. In the end, after much had been tried to no avail, in consultation with his parents and a *rosh yeshiva*, it was decided to send him to a non-Jewish private prep school with a military-like culture. The thinking was that this particular young man, being outside the yeshiva, would want to prove that he is just as *frum* as those on the inside and would actually do better. To keep him in Torah learning, I offered to teach him Gemara each afternoon after school. And this arrangement, radical as it was, did work! One day this boy told me. "Rabbi Fried, you should see this school I go to. **This** is a real school! You know, we have to line up each morning for inspection. We have to wear jackets, dress shirts, and ties, and they even check to see whether our shoes are polished!" I was surprised by his newly found love for

adolescents and adults. Young children cannot make these fine distinctions. Young children need to be taught that all that is prohibited is yucky. In support of this thesis I would refer the reader to a wonderful piece by Rav Shlomo Wolbe (הבאר ע"י ישיבת באר יעקב כ"ה אלול תשל"ז חוברת ט"ו) called *Al Frumkeit* (ובקיצור בעלי שור חלק ב פרק רביעי דף קנב). In this piece Rav Wolbe explicitly states that younger children should be taught an "instinctive" approach to Torah and Yiddishkeit, and as they grow older, their minds should be progressively more engaged, bringing them to a more rational and intellectual understanding.

structure and discipline, and I asked him, “But David,¹⁸ I don’t understand! When you were in yeshiva and your *rabbeyim* tried to get you to wear a jacket to *davening* you rebelled and created havoc! Why do you suddenly seem to like and respect similar demands of your new school?” My *talmid* looked at me with almost pitying eyes. And he said, “You don’t get it Rebbe! In the yeshiva they wanted me to wear a jacket because they wanted me to be like them. In this school they want me to wear a jacket for my own self-respect!”

Yes, we need to make our children aware of the real reasons we teach them Torah, and of the real reason that we encourage them to avoid the pull of worldly attractions outside Torah. We do this for *their* self-respect. We do this to enhance *their* spirituality, *their* feeling that they were created *beTzelem Elokim!* When we succeed in giving them this message, they will love the good and despise the bad. Their hearts and minds will belong to Hashem. They will have inner filters for avoiding the bad and they will, of their own accord, adopt and welcome external filters that will help them in their quest for the good.

Self-respect cannot be imbued by coercion, and all the external filters in the world will not succeed if we do not work on capturing the hearts of our children. In ending, the words of the ראשית חכמה mentioned above bear repetition:

תנה בני לבך לי ועיניך דרכי תצורנה. א"ר יצחק לבא ועינא תרין סרסורין דחטאה
 שנאמר ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם, א"ר יצחק אמר הקב"ה אי יהבת
 לי לבך ועיניך אנא ידעית דאת דילי:
 הרי מבואר היות הלב מקור לכל המדות, אם לטוב אם להפכו, ולכן הפסוק מקדים
 הלב לעינים, לא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחר כך אחרי עיניכם, וכן (משלי כג, כו)
 תנה בני לבך לי ועיניך דרכי תרצנה...

My child, give your heart to me, and your eyes will desire my ways. Rav Yitzchok said, the heart and the eyes are the two mediators of sin, as it says, *And you shall not scout (follow after) your hearts and your eyes*, Rav Yitzchak said Hashem said, If you give me your heart and your eyes, I will know that you are mine.

It has thus been made clear that the heart is the source of all the traits, be they good or the opposite, and therefore that the *pasuk* gives precedence to the heart over the eyes—*And you shall not scout (seek to follow) after your hearts* and afterward *and after your eyes*—and so too when the *pasuk* says (*Mishlei* 23, 26), *My child, give your heart to me, and your eyes will desire my ways....* ❧

¹⁸ Not the student’s real name. David went to yeshiva in Israel for the next school year. He is today still fully *shomer mitzvos* and heads a beautiful *frum* family.

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