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השיבה שפטינו כבראשונה - We ask in *Shemoneh Esrei*, "Return our judges as they were at first." As we are in exile, the power of true judgment is lost from us, and so we ask that it be returned to us.

Chazal teach us that our soul consists of a "*Nefesh*", a "*Ruach*", and a "*Neshamah*", and that the *Nefesh* is found in our liver, the *Ruach* is found in our heart, and the *Neshamah* is found in one's mind.

The *Nefesh* is in our physical body, and the *Ruach* is in our heart - but most people's hearts are hidden from them, and therefore most people do not access their *Ruach*. When a person has bad *middos*, besides for the problem of negative character, he also is being blocked from his *Ruach*.

Every person has a *Ruach* - a certain force of spirituality - but it is hidden from most people; it is usually concealed from one's consciousness. It is being concealed by a person's unrefined *middos*.

This is also why "*Derech erez precedes Torah*" - without *derech erez*, without good *middos*, a person cannot have genuine Torah. Many people learn Torah with much dedication, but because most people haven't yet refined their *middos*, they haven't revealed yet their *Ruach*, and accordingly, they don't reach genuine Torah understanding in their learning.

The Vilna Gaon says that "only a stubborn person is successful" - in other words, only someone who has stubbornly worked on breaking his *middos* will be successful.

The *Neshamah*, which is in one's brain, is not either revealed by most people. People think all day about many various thoughts that go through their minds, and this actually conceals the *Neshamah*, even if they are permissible thoughts. The problem is that people don't realize what their thinking process is supposed to be like. Our thoughts are supposed to be constantly filled with thoughts of Torah, not constant thoughts about worldly matters.

When people receive their thoughts from outer sources, they never learn how to develop their own thoughts.

A person might be someone who learns a lot of Torah, and maybe he even learns Torah "*lishmah*" (for the sake of learning alone), but he also reads the newspapers, and he reads all the opinions of all these people who are writing the articles, and he thinks that these writers must be smarter people, that these are people who know more about what's going on in the world - while in reality, these writers are attached to worldly matters, gleaning all their opinions from an impure source.

We aren't even speaking about reading forbidden material; even permissible material is a problem.

When a person reads so many newspaper\magazine articles, he absorbs thousands of pages of the opinions of this person and that person; a *mabul* (flood) of information enters his head. It's a real *mabul*! All this information comes and confuses a person and ruins his mind.

A person thinks into, let's say, what the army general is thinking. He thinks into what this secular person thinks and into what that secular person thinks (by the way, these people are people who are committing the three cardinal sins, and the reader is thinking into what's going on in their minds...!). If people read and read all these articles, can they ever hope that the Torah they learn will ever enter them?! How will their *Neshamah* ever reveal its light with all this knowledge flooding into the person's mind, where the *Neshamah* resides?

The flood of information entering people's heads today is in enormous amounts. We are asking Hashem to "*Return our judges as they were at first*" because the judges of old were able to take the words of Torah and see reality through the lens of the Torah. But when people read so much of what's going on in worldly matters, how will he ever see through the lens of the Torah, when their minds have been affected so much by all the opinions of so many people? Even if someone reads articles written by *frum* people, it still affects him negatively, because all the words are being drawn from an original secular source.

Even if a person is always learning Torah, he won't see reality through the perspective of the Torah if he's always reading newspaper articles, because the holiness of his mind has been tainted by all that he's reading. There is much Torah today, but there isn't much holy thought going on.

What we must do is cut ourselves off from any connection to the media. Sadly, only a few people today are really cut off from worldly matters and can see the truth about reality in the Torah.

The Jewish judge (*shofet*) in the past was able to see reality through the perspective of the Torah. There are very few like that today, and that is why we daven that Hashem return us our judges.

There is a lot of confusion going on today - so many different opinions going on all at once. People read all this and become very confused. Even to read *chareidi* newspapers, on a regular basis, is very detrimental. It doesn't let you learn Torah or *daven* properly.

For anyone who wants to read an internal kind of life - a life of holiness and purity - know that there are two worlds going on in front of you. There is the outside world (*reshus harabim*), and there is the inside world (*reshus hayachid*). In today's times, there is almost no more *reshus hayachid*, because the outside world has almost totally infiltrated the inside, sheltered world we used to live in. That is one great problem of our times: that there is almost no place today that is totally clean from the outside influence.

A second great problem of our times is that what was on our inside, private world has entered the outside! In other words, people have "gone out" to the outside world and they have left their inner world. People "go out" to the world, and they think that they have to learn how the outside, secular world thinks...

People "go out" to the world for a very good reason; either it is too hard for one to sit and learn, or because he has to go to work to support his family. Everyone has their reasons. But the problem is that people have "gone out" to the outside world and they have learned how "the world" thinks, which is the terrible situation of this exile. There are even people (in the most extreme situations) who go to learn secular law, just to see how they think.

People are learning about matters in the outside world that are rooted in the opposite of Torah, the opposite of the holiness of the Jewish soul.

If a Jew wants to gain the true perspective on things in life, he has to have a pure mind. He has to cut off from all secular media, and from those who are connected to them and their thinking.

השיבה שופטינו כבראשונה - *"Return our judges as they were at first..."*

May we merit to disconnect from all the impurity of the world, and instead merit the light of the holy Torah.

Source: <http://bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-093-media-influence>