



How much must one see not to be bothered...

When discussing the topic of guarding one's eyes, there are those who retort, "I'm not sure what the big deal is. I've already been on such sites and viewed such images — they don't affect me."

To understand the fallacy of this argument, we will cite a parable shared by the famous *maggid*, Rav Sholom Shraga Paplanash *shlit"a*:

Some 600 years ago, there was a big *tzaddik* known as Reb Yom Tov of Liphauzen. Reb Yom Tov was very active in community matters and enjoyed great relationships with the kingdom that governed his region. One day, he was summoned by the king, who asked, "Tell me, is it true

that the Jews put blood in their *matzos* for Pesach?"

Reb Yom Tov immediately understood that the king was falling for the infamous blood libel and that posed a great danger. He replied to the king: "Your Majesty! I would like to ask of you, that the next time your kingdom sentences someone to death, the culprit should be executed in the center of the Jewish Quarter."

The king understood that there was an underlying wisdom in this response, so he readily agreed. Sometime later, a spy was caught by the kingdom and sentenced to death. The king kept his word and announced that the spy would be executed in the heart of the Jewish Quarter.

The morning of the execution day, all of the Jewish fathers and mothers grabbed their children, young and old, and brought them into their houses. They kept them deep inside their homes, with all the doors locked and curtains closed. They did everything to prevent their children from seeing the gory scene of execution that was about to unfold.

At the same time, a large group of non-Jews — including the king himself — arrived in the neighborhood, eager to witness the scene. The large crowd looked on and cheered as the man struggled to remain alive — and as his lifeless body ultimately was left dangling from the ropes.

Suddenly, one Yid, Reb Yom Tov, approached the king. "Your Majesty!" he exclaimed. "Do you see even one Jew among the spectators here?"

The king looked around at all sides and responded, “No. I do not see a single Jew.”

“Why?” Reb Yom Tov replied. “Where are all the Jewish residents of this area?”

“I don’t know,” the king conceded. “You are a Jew. Please explain it to me.”

“My Master, I have one question for you,” Reb Yom Tov replied. “When the king sees such a scene – the execution of a person – what are your thoughts at the time?”

“What I think is,” the king explained, “that this is such a welcome scene to witness, as my enemies are being obliterated from the world.”

“Was such a scene always so pleasurable for you?” Reb Yom Tov asked.

“No,” the king conceded. “It was not always a pleasure. I remember back when I was a five-year-old child, the first time I witnessed a deer being hunted. I couldn’t sleep all night from the trauma of the bloody scene. I was troubled as well during several subsequent occasions when I witnessed a murder, until I got used to it... At that point, not only was I not disturbed by such scenes, I derived pleasure from them!”

Reb Yom Tov concluded: “Your Majesty, if it were true that the Jews held

a ritual slaughter of a Christian child each year, they would have been assembled at this execution, after watching such scenes time and time again. You would've seen thousands of Jews here!

“So why were there no Jews here? Because they’ve never seen such scenes and they’d be disturbed to see a murder! Are you still wondering whether Jews use blood for *matzah*?!”

Back to our topic. If one sees an inappropriate image and claims, “It doesn’t bother me,” that is typically not the result of being so refined that such imagery won’t affect him. On the contrary, this is usually the result of having seen so much imagery so often that he has acquired a tolerance for it.

When a Yid once told the Satmar Rebbe *zt”l*, the Divrei Yoel, a similar excuse – “It doesn’t affect me” – the Rebbe replied, “How many such images have you already seen that they don’t bother you anymore?!”
