

What is so influential about what we see, anyway?

Posted by TheJester - 19 Jan 2012 10:35

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Whilst walking, "surfing" on line or even driving down the street, we're assailed by all manner of sights - some which we notice, and some that we are so used to, we barely notice anymore (if we ever did). So it is obvious that when we encounter something that makes us double-take, we have been affected. But what about all those subtle things that no longer affect us? Are we immune?

A little while ago, I caught my son holding up his pinkie towards the *Sefer Torah*, at *Vezos HaTorah* - a custom that I happen not to follow. I looked around, and sure enough, about 30% of the people were doing it. I asked him later why he did - he shrugged and said "I dunno, it's just something I do". Now, I am not objecting to the practice at all, but it is very interesting that I see people (say, 2nd generation not *frum*) who keep a small proportion of *Mitzvos* "choosing" this one; a relatively minor custom with only one commentator as a source (*Me'am Loez*). I did ask a couple of people in the *Shul* what it was all about, and they had a similar answer to my son. Grown men. Young and old.

It is interesting that when we hold up the *Torah* at this point, it is specifically to "see" it, and to be somehow permeated with *Kedusha* just through the act of seeing (paraphrased from the *Arizal*). Some might ask, "what is the value of seeing something from the other side of the *shul* - how can it affect me?". I'll tell you what the power of sight does: it makes generation upon generation of person perform an almost involuntary action, with no (known to them) rhyme or reason, from the oldest to the youngest. It is powerful, it is insidious, and it is undeniable.

The implications for the application of this observation are far-reaching, and address (I believe), the original question: Are we affected by the minor things that we see? Just because something is so small, or too minor to consciously notice, we must believe that it will affect us, either in a way of *Kedusha* or, R"L in a way apart from *Kedusha*.

Sources:

Arizal: Sha'ar Hakavanos (*Sefer Torah*, *Drush 1*)

Rav Ya'akov Culi: Me'am Lo'ez (*Devarim*, 27:26)

Further reading:

[Confusion about this](#)

[Answering the questions about this](#)

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