

## CLEAR GLASS

RABBI YEHOShUA BERMAN

IMAGINE ALL OF THE WINDOWS IN YOUR home being solar panels instead of clear glass. While saving you much on your electricity bill, it would also make your house awfully dark and dreary, wouldn't it? That is, until researchers came up with the idea of making transparent solar cells.

"Traditional solar applications have been actively researched for over five decades," Richard Lunt, associate professor of chemical engineering and materials science at MSU, told *Newsweek* in a recent interview, "yet we have only been working on these highly transparent solar cells for about five years."

Integral to the cell's transparency was pioneering a solar technology that harvests energy from invisible light-wavelengths; thus, eliminating view-obstruction. The system uses materials that catch ultraviolet and near-infrared wavelengths that are guided to the edge of the surface and converted into electricity by thin strips of photovoltaic solar cells. Because of their ultra-thin engineering, there's potential for retrofitting them onto everything from skyscrapers to smartphones, without replacing windows and screens.

Although lagging far behind their traditional, rooftop counterparts regarding energy collection efficiency (traditional panels clock in between 15 and 18 percent whereas the transparent ultra-slits are currently orbiting somewhere around 5 percent), with an estimated 5-7 billion square meters of glass surface throughout the United States, that still translates into a potential 40 percent production of the country's entire(!) energy demand. Lunt says he expects to see a three-fold improvement in efficiency in the not-too-distant future. That would mean that these see-through ultra-slits could come close to producing 100 percent of the country's entire — yes, entire — energy demand.

Reading about this up-and-coming technology brings to mind the expression that *Chazal* use to describe the highest level of closeness with Hashem: *aspaklarya ha'meirah* — "the illuminating glass." Based on Rashi in *Sukkah* (45b), it seems that the difference between a glass which is "illuminating" and a glass which is "not illuminating" is the difference between a transparent piece of glass versus a translucent piece of glass. The greatest *tzaddikim*, who are on the highest level, see Hashem, as it were, through a transparent glass which allows Hashem's brilliance to shine upon them in all its glory, completely unobscured. *Tzaddikim* who are not quite on that level certainly still receive an abundance of Heavenly light, but it is not with the ultimate clarity of those who see with the *aspaklarya ha'meirah*. *Chazal* similarly employ this distinction between *aspaklarya ha'meirah* versus *aspaklarya she'einah meirah* to explain the difference between Moshe Rabbeinu's level of prophecy versus that of all the other *Nevi'im*. Only Moshe Rab-



beinu's prophecy was on the level of the "illuminating glass" (*Yevamos* 49b).

The fact that our absolute best bet at extracting the maximum-possible amount of energy from the sun (at least, to date) is through panels that have no color of their own, set me to pondering. We all know that Moshe Rabbeinu was the most humble person to ever walk the face of planet Earth, as the *passuk* explicitly says, "And the man Moshe was more humble than any other person" (*Behaalos'cha* 12:3). I recently heard a *shiur* in which it was explained that Moshe Rabbeinu's extreme humility was directly interrelated with his supreme level of prophecy. Because he was exposed to an awareness of Hashem — which, of course, includes the reality that everything, but everything, is completely from Him — to which no other human was ever privy, he also became humbler than anyone else. These new photovoltaics, though, got me thinking that perhaps it is true that these two characteristics of Moshe Rabbeinu were intertwined, but it was the other way around. To the degree that he nullified himself before the *Ribono shel Olam*, clearing away any "color" or "shade" of his own, Moshe Rabbeinu essentially fashioned himself into a piece of clear glass, a glass

that is fully transparent and simply allows the brilliance of the light coming from its Source to shine through. By cleansing himself of the self-centeredness that naturally challenges man, Moshe was able to perfect his glass to the point where there was nothing left to block out the light coming from Hashem.

In this sense, life is a fascinating balance. Because, on the one hand, we are supposed to have aspirations and ambitions to achieve the most we can. After all, what else have we been put here for? And, indeed, the *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 68b) tells us that, upon completing a 30-day review of all of his accumulated learning, Rav Sheishes would exclaim, "Rejoice my soul, rejoice my soul! For you have I learned *Tanach*, for you have I learned *Mishnah* and *Gemara*!" For, as *Chazal* explain, when a person sets out to learn Torah, his initial, primary motivation is the great acquisition and satisfaction that one gains from amassing Torah knowledge and wisdom. Yet, at the same time, key to our success is maintaining a cognizance of the fact that, to the extent that we manage to clean our glass by removing the self-centeredness from our hearts and thoughts, it is to that extent that we will indeed achieve our heart's greatest desire. ■

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## Use of Ritalin in The Community

I am writing in response to your article in Features section, 19<sup>th</sup> October, entitled, "Ritalin, time to pay attention."

We need to look at the issue raised in two separate avenues.

Unfortunately, Ritalin is abused worldwide. People have free will, and can choose how they wish to act, regardless of the consequences.

Ritalin has saved lives. When taken correctly it has brought a complete turnaround for those with ADD/ADHD.

ADD/ADHD is largely genetic. In the Jewish population it is almost 100% genetic. It is passed down from parent to child. Parents, you have not caused the ADD/ADHD in your children. It does not come from bad parenting. However, negative techniques to manage it, whether in school or at home, can make the ADD/ADHD symptoms worse.

The ADD/ADHD strategies are simple to implement. However, the common misconception is that

ADD/ADHD is a mental health disorder and that the person with this condition is flawed/weird/crazy. This idea stems from ignorance. The person with ADD/ADHD is the same as everyone else. In fact, ADHD is a neuro-biological condition. It stems from parts of the brain not developing fully. That is all.

Through simple strategies teachers and parents can make a huge difference in the lives of those with ADD/ADHD.

Behaviour is brain-based. If the ADD/ADHD person does not have certain areas in their brain fully developed, this will be manifest itself in certain behaviours. They will need to be taught those skills that they are lacking, from an outside, external source — an ADHD coach, who understands their challenges, and has the tools to help them handle them. People with ADD/ADHD do not need therapy, they need life skills.

Ritalin or its generic equivalents, when working in the brain, temporarily correct some of the neuro-biological deficiencies that are present in those with ADD/ADHD.

Ritalin, when used for those with ADD/ADHD is not addictive. This is a common misconception based on ignorance of the true facts.

How many children have gone off the *derech* because the parents refused face their child's ADD/ADHD, and refused to give Ritalin/learn simple techniques to help their child? How many children have been ruined because the schools refused to acknowl-

edge the problem, expelled the child, and blamed the poor parents?

It is time that schools and parents acknowledged the tragedy of untreated and unmanaged ADD/ADHD in our communities. ADD/ADHD is present in practically every family in the *frum kehillah*. It is time that families stopped pushing the problem under the carpet because they are worried for *shidduchim*.

It is time that we stand up as a community, and bravely face the challenges head on. The only way out is through.

Readers are welcome to contact our team for further clarification.

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