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## NEWS

### Gedolei Yisroel Condemn Rabbi Nosson Slifkin's Books

By **G. Safran**  
 (Revised 3/30)

To see letters issued in Kislev, 5766 by HaRav Shmuel Kamenetsky, HaRav Aharon Shechter, and the Novominsker Rebbe, click [here](#).

*Gedolei Yisroel* have issued an open letter against books by Rabbi Nosson Slifkin (also known as "the Zoo Rabbi") such as *The Science of Torah* and *Mysterious Creatures*, which are filled with heretical ideas on the fundamentals of *emunoh* formed by the former yeshiva student himself.

When these books reached the hands of English-speaking *talmidei chachomim* they were shocked and dismayed at the contents. Several months ago HaRav Yitzchok Sheiner, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Kamenitz and a member of Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah, wrote a letter to *gedolei hador* in which he said, "As one who knows the English language I hereby testify before you that a *talmid chochom* concerned for the honor of Torah and *emunoh* came to me and showed me books written by an individual by the name of Nosson Slifkin, which are hair-raising to read. Perhaps I transgressed the obligation to tear *kria* when confronted with things that appear to be complete heresy, against all that is accepted and known according to our faith ever since the Torah was given on Mt. Sinai. He believes that the world is millions of years old—all nonsense!—and many other things that should not be heard and certainly not believed. In short these books cannot be brought into the home of one who believes in Hashem and His Torah."

To this letter HaRav Elya Ber Wachtfogel, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas South Fallsberg, adds, "And he also writes that Chazal Hakedoshim can err *chas vesholom* in worldly matters *chas vesholom* and therefore [they can err] in halochah as well *chas vesholom*, as he wrongly proves from *maseches Horayos*—all nonsense! And the whole book is filled with similar instances of total heresy. And even regarding the parts that are not total heresy, he who reads them and accepts his writings will eventually become a total heretic. And furthermore, even what is not heretical is expressed in a way only a heretic would speak."

The books' publication unleashed a great storm due to the stumbling-block they contain, especially since the author presents them as Torah-based works. One Rov who gave his *haskomoh* to the book retracted his approbation in a letter. "We deeply regret the stumbling-block we were responsible for and warn that every reader who has the slightest trace of *yiras Shomayim* should distance himself from the above book and similar works, for beyond the danger in the actual words is the far greater danger from the spirit that prevails between the lines of the book. May Hashem the Good atone for our deeds and may *Hashem Yisborach* enlighten us and send a spirit of purity from Above."

HaRav Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz writes, "I was approached by HaGaon Hatzaddik R' Yisroel Eliyoh Weintraub, who expressed his great pain over the great stumbling-block in the books written in English by Nossan Slifkin, which are full of heresy, misrepresentation of Chazal's words and disparagement for the foundations of *emunoh*, *Rachmono litzlan*.

"Since the person in question studied at a holy yeshiva he claims he writes in such a manner as a means of outreach . . . therefore there is a danger his words will be accepted and have a negative influence. As such I hereby state that these books must be kept at a distance and may not be possessed or distributed according to the *din* regarding heretical books, and their author should not be permitted to engage in outreach in order to avoid causing others to stumble in apostasy, *chas vesholom*. And no excuses or explanations can justify himself or his writings.

"May *Hashem Yisborach* take pity on us and place a spirit of purity upon us and may the world be filled with knowledge of Hashem.

"I sign with heartache, and in the hope that the one who spreads ideas of heresy and *minnuse* will burn all his writings and declare in public that he recants everything."

In addition to HaRav Aharon Leib Shteinman, HaRav Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg, HaRav Shmuel Auerbach, HaRav Yitzchok Sheiner, HaRav Shmuel Birnbaum and HaRav Avrohom Chaim Levine, the letter was signed by Maran HaRav Eliashiv who wrote, "I hereby join in the above."

Rosh yeshivas from the US who also signed the letter include HaRav Shmuel Avigdor Feivelson of Yeshivas Beis Medrash LeTorah, HaRav Eliyoh Simchah Shustal of Yeshivas Beis Binyomin, HaRav Yisroel Perkovsky of Yeshivas Beis HaTalmud, HaRav Elya Ber Wachtfogel of rosh yeshivas South Fallsberg, HaRav Chaim Stein of yeshivas Telz, HaRav Aryeh Malkiel Kotler of Yeshivas Beis Medrash Govoha, HaRav Meir Hershkowitz of Yeshivas Beis Binyomin, HaRav Yosef Rosenbloom of Shaarei Yosher, HaRav Refoel Halevy Schorr a rosh yeshiva in Monsey, HaRav Mattisyahu Salomon, *menahel ruchani* of Yeshivas Lakewood and HaRav Dovid Feinstein of Yeshivas Tiferes Yerushalayim.

*Marbitzei Torah veyiroh* from Eretz Hakodesh also signed, among them HaRav Don Zeev Halevy Segal, HaRav Moshe Shapira of Bayit Vegan, HaRav Yehuda Adess and HaRav Yaakov Hillel, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Ahavat Sholom and who reads English, who added, "I too join the *gedolei hador* above in their words of warning and protest and add that the proofs brought from books by *mekubolim* according to [the author's] erroneous understanding, constitute an instance of *megaleh ponim beTorah shelo kehalochoh* and not like the true *kabboloh* and distort the words of the Living G-d to suit his unacceptable opinion."

In 5760 and 5761 Rabbi Slifkin wrote a number of articles for the English edition of *Yated Ne'eman*, which were fully edited and approved by the representative of the Vaada Ruchanit. Since then he has not written for us, and certainly in the future we will conduct ourselves only in the full spirit of the *psak* of the letter.

At one point Rabbi Slifkin was offered a chance to meet with the *gedolei harabbonim* who signed the letter to discuss his views, but he declined.

As a result of various rumors that were being passed around the English *Yated* verified that HaRav Eliashiv did sign the letter and unreservedly supports it.



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