

At 01:11 PM 3/21/2005, you wrote:

Dear Rabbi Lamm:

My name is Evan Lyman. I am a sophomore here at Yeshiva University, and I am enrolled at Sy Syms School of Business. Last year I learned at Reishit Yerushalayim in Beit Shemesh.

For an English class this semester, I have to write a research report on a topic of my choice. I am writing on the question of, can a Jew learn secular studies, and of course your book *Torah Umadda* was a primary source. However, even after my research, I am left with one point that still requires some

clarification. If you do not mind, and have the time to answer (even *al regel achat*), can you answer me the following question?

When a Jew's learning of a secular topic, like science, will increase his *Yiras Shamayim*, than the study is not only excepted but encouraged. Like yourself, I am sure you saw God everywhere during your advanced scientific studies you pursued at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn. If a Jew studies secular topics to aid him in his occupation, to earn a *parnusa*, again, that learning is encouraged. However, my question is; what if the learning of a particular topic does neither? Not for *parnusa*, *dâ€™vachus la Hashem* or *Yiras Shamayim*? An answer I thought of was: perhaps something that seems unimportant now will be used in the future to connect to a lost soul and be helpful in *Kiruv*, or *parnusa*, or *Yirat shamayim*. That answer did not satisfy me since there is no line to be drawn, no list of Liberal Arts subjects a Jew should study. The idea of..."just learn anything and maybe it will come to use" sounds like it would not be a good idea, after going through the sources. Instead of studying random topics for knowledge not *Leâ€™maysa*, shouldn't that Jew be studying Torah? If I chose to write my research report on a topic that has no connection to Torah or *parnusa*, or *Yirat Shamayim*, would that be *mutar* when I could be using those hours of research to read and write on a Torah subject?

I understand that you are probably being pulled in a million directions and if you do not have the time to respond I will have no hard feelings. I greatly appreciate any time you dedicate towards a return note.

Sincerely,

Evan Lyman

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