

PURITY IN SIGHT

Viewing the world from a better place



TASTE THE *sweetness*

of a Life with Shemiras Einayim

*Gain Tranquility and
Simchas Hachaim by
Guarding your Eyes*

Burden or Benefit?

In Parshas Shelach, we are taught the mitzvah of shemiras einayim. The pasuk says: ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ולא תתורו אחרי עיניכם—You shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you are going astray (Bamidbar 15:39). The Torah is telling us outright that we must keep away from even the slightest visual temptation.

Our initial reaction to these halachos may be negative. What a heavy burden Hashem has placed on us! Are we to be restricted from all pleasures?

Of course, we believe in reward and punishment. We assure ourselves that the reward we will receive is well worth the sweat and toil of our efforts, and remind ourselves that if we don't keep up our guard, the consequences will be serious. But perhaps we look wistfully at those who are not encumbered by the burden of shemiras einayim. They go where they want, look where they want, and do what they want. No pressure, no restrictions, just a

carefree life of casual pleasure.

Such a perspective does nothing for our happiness; it only makes us feel constricted, or even depressed. If shemiras einayim is viewed as a set of cumbersome rules—don't go there, don't look here, don't think that—then we will resent the burden and become disillusioned.

It's Sweet!

This attitude couldn't be further from the truth. While it is true that the ultimate reward for shemiras einayim is in Olam Haba, the tremendous benefit begins here and now.

Shlomo Hamelech writes in Mishlei (3:17): דרכיה דרכי נעם וכל נתיבותיה שלום—The ways [of the Torah] are sweet and bring peace.

The Ralbag comments: All the commandments of the Torah are intensely pleasant and sweet for man, for the Torah did not load us with difficult burdens. Rather, everything in the Torah—the mitzvos aseh and

mitzvos lo sa'aseh—are sweet and desirable. This is contrary to other religions that demand difficult and unfulfilling tasks of their adherents. All the ways of the Torah are wholesome for the body and neshamah.

In a similar vein, the Chasam Sofer writes: Even if the Torah would be a difficult burden for us, we would still have the obligation to adhere to it and suffer the difficulties. However, the truth is that the Torah is by no means a heavy burden, for it brings much happiness and joy. We need to rejoice that we are not among the foolish, who waste their lives with emptiness and false pleasures; rather, we live with a higher purpose by being constantly connected to Hashem. How fortunate and pleasant is our lot!

Through shemiras einayim, we don't only keep our hearts and minds pure to serve Hashem. We also gain great personal benefit—true simchas hachaim, genuine satisfaction in life, a feeling of contentment with all the good that Hashem gives us.

A Balanced Soul

Shemiras einayim is key to a true feeling of fulfillment and happiness, because it helps develop self-control, which cultivates a settled, balanced

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mindset. This, in turn, leads one to a calm and settled life. Self-control—in this and all areas—clears the way for us to focus on our spiritual goals, achieve them, and be productive overall.

It follows that those who do not keep their eyes under control will struggle with self-control in other areas of life as well. A general lack of self-control can have many negative effects, such as being unsettled, lacking focus, and having difficulty following through on goals. In extreme cases, it can even interfere with the ability to lead a normal life. When a person lacks the control to refrain from self-destructive behaviors that interfere with relationships and responsibilities, it creates issues that can spiral into unhappiness or even depression.

Exercising shemiras einayim trains us to develop the invaluable skill of self-control, which saves us from such negativity, and empowers us to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives.

Shlomo Hamelech, the wisest of all men, teaches in Koheles (7:29): עֲשָׂה הַאֲלֹקִים אֶת הַיָּשָׁר וְהֵמָּה בִקְשׁוּ חֲשִׁבֹנוֹת רַבִּים—Hashem made man upright, but they pursued many calculations. Man has a tendency to veer off of the naturally straight path, and try to find alternative, counterfeit gratification.

The default is a state of self-control. We were created wholesome, with a clear mind, pure heart, and unsullied soul—the handiwork of Hashem! Our work is to maintain this level of purity, to retain the innocence of youth, and to not dirty our neshamah with negative and worthless baggage. If we maintain this purity, we also maintain control, and we will achieve serenity and satisfaction. But, if we wander after our desires, we throw off our natural state of self-control, and become subjected to the influence of temptations.

The Rambam writes in Hilchos Dei'os (2:1) that people may suffer from a physical illness that causes bitter foods to taste sweet, and sweet foods to taste bitter. A person may find himself craving sand and coal, and being repulsed by normal foods. This is paralleled to people who have a spiritual illness that creates cravings and desires for unhealthy ideas, and pushes

EDITOR'S *preface*



Baruch Shehecheyanu, V'kiymanu, V'higiyanu Laz'man Haze!

Besiyata Dishmaya we have the great Z'chus to present the first edition of "Purity In Sight", on the topic of Shmiras Einayim. This newsletter is designed as a guide for all aspects of the struggle, with positive Chizuk, tried-and-true practical suggestions, and relevant Halachos of Shmiras Einayim.

One may ask, "Do we really need such a public and thorough discussion on this topic?" It has been noted that the Gedolim from the previous generations did not address the details of Shmiras Einayim in this way. Rather, their main focus was that the mind should be absorbed in Torah study and that we should simply distance ourselves from all temptations of the outside world.

This is all very true, fortunate and blessed are the people whose heart and soul are focused on Torah to the point that they are protected from any unholy and tempting situations, and we must all strive to achieve this level. But the current situation demands attention. The reality is that our generation is facing many great nisyonos, more pervasive and powerful than ever before. Secular culture is becoming increasingly perverse, technology provides- and peddles- constant and unlimited opportunity to pursue temptations, and the power of our Limud HaTorah is not at the same level as in previous generations. We no longer have the strength to face all the nisyonos as before, our generation needs help- attention, encouragement and comprehensive guidance.

Addressing the topic of Shmiras Einayim with the correct perspective requires much wisdom and understanding. A Torah-true approach must incorporate both the strict Halacha as to what is and is not permissible, and a clear 'hashkafa' - the Torah view on what is proper and healthy. Additionally, a successful approach can only be developed with a deep understanding of the mindset of our generation, and a comprehensive knowledge of today's nisyonos.

Boruch Hashem the "Tehor Einayim" newsletter has, in recent years, helped thousands of Yidden from all over the world by providing rich material on these subjects in various languages, including stories and advice directly from others who are involved in the struggle which have provided significant encouragement. We received many requests to share this world of Chizzuk with the English-speaking population. It is our great Z'chus and privilege to present this newsletter, "Purity in Sight", as the answer to that request. It is our fervent hope that this publication will be a valuable tool for all who are looking for help, and that, together, we will be able to strengthen and elevate ourselves.

The Editors

them to reject the natural and healthy path of life.

If we don't exercise self-control in shemiras einayim, we can impair our natural balance and become unable to enjoy Hashem's gift of wholesome goodness. Inappropriate viewing wreaks havoc, replacing peaceful fulfillment with darkness and negativity.

No Peace of Mind

The path of desire is endless; there is no finish line, no pinnacle, no true and final satisfaction. A person who pursues his every desire can never reach fulfillment. After following one object of attraction, he will simply be drawn to another, and then another. He is a slave to his own desires, compelled to follow an endless string of ephemeral physical pleasures that lead nowhere.

This is comparable to someone who tries to quench his thirst by drinking saltwater. When he realizes that he is even thirstier than before, he takes another drink of the same saltwater. Instead of quenching his thirst, each drink creates a greater and greater thirst. He is never satiated, the saltwater only increases his discomfort, and even leads to dehydration and serious internal damage.

The Sefer Hachinuch illustrates this concept in his discussion of the mitzvah of ולא תתורו ואחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם.

כֹּל אִישׁ בְּהִרְגִילוֹ בְּתַאוּוֹת וּבְהִתְמַיְדוּ בְּהוֹ, יִחַזַּק עָלָיו יִצְרוֹ הַרַע יוֹם יוֹם, וּבְהִמְנַעֵו מֵהֶם, יִשְׂמַח בְּחִלְקוֹ תַמִּיד כֹּל הַיּוֹם, וְיִרְאֶה כִּי עֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִמָּה בְּקִשּׁוֹ, חֲשָׁבוֹנוֹת רַבִּים לֵלֵא תוֹעֵלֶת שֶׁל כָּלוּם.

As a person habituates himself in desires and engages regularly in them, his evil inclination will grow stronger in him day by day. But by refraining from them, he will constantly rejoice in his lot, and see that Hashem has made man upright and [that] they pursued many calculations without any benefit at all.

The Chinuch teaches us that when a person does not guard his eyes, but pursues all his desires, his temptation will grow more and more powerful. He will never be satisfied with what he does have, because he is overwhelmed with desire

storyTIME

Even the President of Belgium Knows

ורוממתנו מכל הלשונות



Of course, we don't need proof from outside sources to the validity of our mesorah, which teaches us that the Torah is a "wellspring of life." However, it is interesting to note how many of today's non-Jewish "experts" have concluded that the modern immoral lifestyle is terribly detrimental to society. The once cherished model of family life is now completely destroyed, and people are suffering through numerous issues due to their liberal and promiscuous lifestyles. *

A prominent posek from Belgium related the following story:

I teach a daily shiur in halachah, with participants from many backgrounds and all walks of life. At one point, we were learning the practical halachos of distancing ourselves from inappropriate contact with women, particularly in the business setting. The topic was very well received, drawing noticeable interest from the listeners, who displayed motivation for attentiveness in this area.

After the shiur one day, a Lubavitcher chassid, who was a regular attendee, came over and told me that he had an eye-opening personal story that had taught him how the benefits of kedushah are recognizable even to non-Jews.

He recounted that some time before, he and his wife had the opportunity to meet with the President of Belgium. The meeting was to take place in public, with numerous onlookers. At that time, the president was under media scrutiny, and the reporters would be watching carefully for any faux-pas they could sensationalize.

As such, the chassid was concerned that the President would inevitably offer a handshake to his wife. If she would refuse, it would be terribly embarrassing, create an unpleasant scene, and leave a negative impact. He decided to be proactive, and notified the President's staff that their religion does not allow contact between genders, and asked that the President refrain from extending his hand to his wife.

Yet, despite being assured that the President would be appraised of the situation, when the meeting took place, the President did stretch out his hand toward his wife. Feeling the tension, she apologized and excused herself, explaining that Jewish women avoid contact with other men.

To everyone's amazement, the President smiled, and said with admiration: "If we would learn this from the Jewish people, we would have many fewer problems in our society!"

for renewed cravings. However, those who do work on controlling these desires will always be happy and satisfied. Their own experience shows them that Hashem has placed them on a “straight path”—and that those who have wandered off, have not encountered anything of value.

The Chinuch further explains that this can be likened to a drunkard who cannot part from alcohol. In his mind, only drinking can bring him happiness. Of course, this is the furthest from the truth. More drinking will simply increase his dependency on alcohol, which will exacerbate his suffering. If he would realize the damage his drinking causes and commit to curbing his habits, within a relatively short time, he would stop craving the drink. This requires much hard work, as breaking an ingrained habit is a daunting task, but the benefits and pleasure of the self-control make it well worth the effort ●

Afterword

This first issue will b'ezras Hashem be the beginning of a series of valuable and informative publications on the topic of shemiras einayim. This is a huge project, and we need your help! If you have a personal story, chizuk thought, or piece of advice that can help others, please share it with us and the world!

Additionally, we would love to hear ideas on how to lay out the newsletter, or any other comments and suggestions. We could also use your help with distribution in Jewish communities, financial support, and writing work.

Anyone who is willing and able to help, or to receive this newsletter by email monthly, please reach out to Tehor Einayim, at office@tahoreineyim.org or call 732-532-2242.

Thank You!



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storyTIME



I Also Want That Life!

A few years ago, one of the gedolim in Eretz Yisrael was maspid a well-known baal teshuvah. The gadol repeated that he had heard from the niftar what it was that had caused him to leave all the worldly pleasures that he had been exposed to, and how he discovered the authentic pleasure of a Torah life. The man had shared the following story:

I was once passing a storefront that showcased highly inappropriate images. As I stood there, I saw a religious man pass by without glancing even momentarily at the pictures. This was beyond my comprehension. I thought to myself, “The fact that he wears a kippah—that has nothing to do with him. His mother put it on when he was three years old, and that was that. But to not look? Not even for a second, when nobody would know? Where does he get the will, the strength to do that?”

I thought it over, and I realized that he must have some other source of pleasure that is greater than these crude pleasures, something so meaningful that it gives him such joy and satisfaction making it worthwhile to forgo such strong temptations.

I thought, “Why shouldn’t I have a chance to experience that greater pleasure, that fulfillment that this religious man lives with? Why shouldn’t I have a chance at true happiness?”

A few days after that incident, for the first time in my life, I entered a yeshivah and started my journey to discover the true sweetness that life has to offer.

Kedushas Hachaim – Hakdamah

The Shevet Halevi, Rav Shmuel Vosner zt”l, once described the great satisfaction that comes with shmiras einayim:

“A person should remind himself of the sweetness and purity that he felt when he did guard his eyes and heart properly. This will give him the strength to be able to overcome difficult nisyonos!”

מלחמת קודש דף רכב ששמע מפיו

SHORTSPARKS

