
THE סטאלין קארלין APPROACH TO TECHNOLOGY



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"החודש! מ'באדארף זיך באנייען" (מ'רן הרה"ק רבי יוחנן זיע"א)

The following booklet is based mainly on three shiurim given over by Rav Shimon Spitzer in 5777 (2016-17), with the personal guidance of the Rebbe Shlit”a, in which R’ Shimon clarified the מהלך of the Rebbe regarding the challenges we face with technology today. (A number of points and comments were added into the booklet by Venishmartem.com)

It is suggested to listen to the shiurim and not rely only on this summary. To download the shiurim, use the 3 links below:

- gye.org.il/ks1 – First Shiur (in Betar, Yiddish)
מצ”ש פרשת חיי שרה, תשע”ז
- gye.org.il/ks2 – Second Shiur (in U.S, Yiddish)
מוצאי עשרה בטבת, תשע”ז
- gye.org.il/ks3 –Third Shiur (in U.S, English, for Women)
מצ”ש פרשת ויגש, תשע”ז

Important Disclaimer: This booklet does not speak in the name of any other kehilah (community) but only according to what our Rebbe has stated for *our* kehila. There are kehilos with different hashkafos and different ways of thinking, and everyone should follow their kehila’s approach. This booklet can **also** be helpful for people who don't belong to any particular kehila and are struggling to find a good approach to help them contend with the challenges of technology.

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Introduction

We've all heard many times about the great dangers of technology. And yes, the matzav truly is challenging and painful.¹ In many kehilos there are attempts to prevent use of certain devices altogether. However, our Rebbe's approach is:

(1) **A Big Sakana - Yes. Treif - No:** ע"פ תורה we can only call something a חפצא דאיסורא if it's אסור מחמת עצמו (for example, *Trief* food). So while it's true that technology can be used for bad things, it's not אמת ע"פ תורה call any specific device a חפצא דאיסורא because it is also needed for many good and important things.² In any event, if there is no need for it, surely someone shouldn't have it because there definitely is a חשש מכשול (as the Gemara in בבא בתרא נז: says: רשע הוא - רשע הוא). But if someone does need it, then he must constantly be aware of the dangers and set up proper fences, as we'll discuss later in this booklet. And someone who does that can still remain an erliche and chassidish yid. A person's יראת שמים is not measured by the type of device he has, but rather by his actions.

(2) The Rebbe feels that we must learn to *contend* with technology instead of prohibiting it. Imposing bans on certain types of devices won't work and the technology will be used

¹ The Rebbe exclaimed: "*Halevai these devices were never created!*"

² ראה אגרות משה אבן העזר ח"א סימן נו בענין איכא דרכא אחריתא, where R' Moshe Feinstein writes that a חשש מכשול is not enough to prevent someone from normal day to day needs.

anyway, but with far less preparedness for--and awareness of the dangers. For example, in the early days of the internet, the frum community tried to ignore the issue or ban it altogether instead of pushing for better filtering solutions. (Many frum newspapers even refused to place ads for frum-filter companies, in fear that more people would start using the internet). But not only didn't this approach work, it caused us to lose many Neshomos! Our dependence on technology is just growing with every passing year, and this isn't a viable approach. ³

The Proper Approach to Technology

A Different Type of Battle

The Rebbe's מהלך is to view Technology as a אור וחושך בחינה of אור וחושך - משמשים בערבוביה - the dangers lurk *within* the good and useful things that we need. And we must do battle like we do with guerrilla warfare, where terrorists are hiding *within* the civilian population. We have to be fully aware of the dangers and the issues that we face and be always on the alert and prepared. It's a constant battle, and not one that we can just win and be finished with. But this approach is sustainable for the long term, since it isn't tied to any specific technological situation that we may find ourselves in.

³ The Rebbe said: "Today's smartphones are here for a very short time, it will become **a lot worse**. And many of these things will become necessities."

What can we learn from cars?

Technology can be compared to driving a car. Just as cars are dangerous and have killed many people over the years, so has technology wreaked havoc and destruction on untold millions. But in spite of the dangers, we don't ban cars. They are a necessity and make our lives so much easier. Everyone knows that driving carefully and responsibly is a matter of life and death, and the same approach needs to be applied to technology.⁴

Three things make driving safer:

1. **Safety Features:** Many features are installed in cars today to enhance safety, such as hand-brakes, seat-belts, air-bags, warning lights, etc. Do these things eliminate all dangers? Of course not, there are still many accidents. *But it helps.*
2. **Education & Awareness:** No one gets a license without first learning the laws, rules and safety precautions. And even after the initial training, we make constant campaigns about the dangers like “Don't drink and drive”, “Don't Text and Drive”, etc.

⁴ Of course, spiritual dangers are different than physical dangers. The point is only that the precautions we need to take are comparable to a car, which is a necessary tool and a fact of life.

3. **Being Licensed:** People who are underage or have lower mental capacities are not given a license to drive. And even those who *are* granted a license can **lose it** if they don't drive safely and responsibly.

Applying these strategies to technology:

1. **Technology for Safety:** We must use the best technology available to protect our devices, to the very best of our ability. This includes putting in good filters, using reporting software, and using passwords so children don't have access. These precautions are never foolproof and there are often loopholes, but devices without a filter can't be *compared* to ones with a filter!
2. **Education & Awareness:** All those who use internet and smartphones must be aware of the many risk factors (see the 12 issues below) and wage a constant battle against these problems through self-control, campaigns, awareness, and by taking responsibility for ourselves and for our future generations. (It would be advantageous if using technology would require a license, just like driving.⁵)

⁵ It is highly suggested that before someone begins using internet on their own for the first time or before getting a smartphone (after marriage), they should read this booklet thoroughly and **discuss the precautions that they will be taking** with a parent or *moreh derech*, as well as with those who understand technology well. (See the section called "Practical Help with Filters" below).

3. **Maturity & Sensibleness:** Unmarried bochurim and girls should not have access at all. And if an older person sees that they are unable to use internet in a safe, responsible and **erlich** way, they should not have it *at any cost*.⁶

GuardYourEyes.com

Regarding point #3 above, if you know someone who struggles with inappropriate internet use and wants to be helped, they should contact the GYE organization confidentially at gye.help@gmail.com or call their hotline at 646-600-8100. This organization has helped thousands of people regain control, and it's free and fully anonymous.

⁶ The Rebbe explained that filters are important because people tend to stumble when it's easy and when it doesn't take much to fall. However, he stressed that most filters are '**only as good as the person who wants to be good**'. If someone is looking for trouble, filters aren't going to stop them. And that's why technology--even *with* a filter, should only be used by those who know they can use it responsibly.

12 Risk Factors

The saying goes: “Know thy enemy”. The following are **12** risk factors that require constant awareness to contend with, for those who use technology. (The order below is not necessarily indicative of the level of risk). A few suggestions are also offered below, to help us ensure that we remain in control of the technology and that it doesn’t control *us*.

1. **ראיות אסורות**: The danger of seeing (or reading) inappropriate material. This is the greatest danger and has caused great churbanos and destroyed many lives and families.⁷ See below for practical help with installing good filters.
2. **Time wasting**: The Rebbe speaks about this *inyan* all the time. Some people give up their whole lives with emptiness and נערישקייטן as a result of technology. Time wasted never comes back!

Suggestion: Use these innovations to utilize time even more wisely, for example by downloading and listening to shiurim while traveling, etc.

3. **Loss of ריכוז**: Technology gives us the ability to be updated about every little thing, but this can make a person lose

⁷ There are chemical processes in the brain that occur from looking at certain bad things, which mirror real drug addictions. These things can pull a person into dangerous dependencies that not only destroy their ruchniyus, but also their lives and marriages.

their ability to focus and no longer be **מיושב**. People are always checking and being updated. There's a time for everything, but these things can take over our entire concentration. Studies show it takes 20 minutes to regain full concentration after being distracted. It's impossible to **ריוונו** in any area without **שטינו**.

Suggestion: Always keep the phone and notifications on "Still", and when learning or davening, turn the phone off altogether. When you want to be updated you'll look, but why do we need to be updated every few seconds with beeps and vibrations?

4. **Time for Self-growth and introspection:** By being involved 24/7 with technology we lose the ability to have time for ourselves, such as the clarity of our heads **פארען** **התבודדות**, **דאווענען**, etc. There are always messages to check and new things to see. Why should we give these precious gifts away?

Suggestion: Do we really need to go to sleep and wake up checking our phones? At the very least, let's not sleep with the phones next to our beds (alarm clocks cost just a few dollars!).

5. **Addiction:** Even without the issue of **ראיוונו אסורו**, there's a real danger of getting addicted to technology. The brain starts to crave the 'high' of being constantly stimulated with updates, news, drama and video clips. Even in the secular world this is becoming a recognized problem. How much more so for a frum Yid, where it disrupts our learning,

davening and family life in a much more significant way!

6. **כבוד בית הכנסת**: This is an area that needs a big tikkun throughout Klal Yisrael, and it bothers the Rebbe very much. For example: phones ringing during davening, or people checking their phones during learning. Even a kosher phone, if it rings in middle of shmoneh esrei it's a big zilzul! We all need to have this in mind because we're talking about the Ribono Shel Olam's Kavod! The Rebbe said once that he would like that ש"א should not take out their phones in shul at all, if not for something very important. This is an area that needs constant chizuk.

Suggestion: Set your phone ringer to 'vibrate' at all times, not just when in shul. This way, if you forget to turn off the phone for davening, at least it won't disturb anyone else.

7. **The risk of becoming shallow and empty:** The Rebbe feels very strongly about the issue of how people's general level keeps getting lower, such as the level of people's speech, jokes, etc. This happens because technology connects everyone to everyone else, often bringing the level down to the lowest denominator on the groups that we're connected with. Also, snapping pictures and taking videos of every event turns everything in to a *show*. And if we're this way, our children will be worse, c"v! This is both a personal fight and a community battle. We need to feel, "Why does our community need to be on such a low level? Why do we deserve that?"

8. **Eidelkeit:** Watching video clips and other such things can destroy our 'eidlekeit' of קדושה and makes us מטומטם. It's not good for our neshamos to see violence or to watch people laughing at other people's misfortunes, not to mention all types of רכילות and הלבנת פני חבירו. Unfortunately, these kind of video clips appear even on kosher news sites and are commonly passed around, and we have to be so careful.
9. **Chinuch:** Our children see and copy what we do. If we waste time and act נאריש with technology, they will do the same. Even if we tell them not to touch it, if they see us always busy with it, they will be just waiting to grow up and get their hands of it! In addition, they see also how we are not מרוכז and they lose their ריכוז as well. This ends up costing the parents huge amounts of money and עגמת נפש. But if our children see that we use it בכבוד ראש and not as a toy, that is the best chinuch we can give them. They will internalize that it's a סכנה and it needs to be used with care.

Suggestion: Make a גדר not to check the phone at all when together with your children, or at the *very least* during family meal times.

10. **Our Senses:** When we use our senses and feelings for נארישקייט, we lose our feelings and senses for קדושה. It's either one or the other. If we want to maintain a chiyus in a Shabbos, in a davening, a zitzung, we can lose it all when we start getting our chiyus from shtusim. The more a person uses their senses for something the more it enters into them and becomes part of them.

11. **ט'פאסט נישט**: Technology is relatively anonymous, so it takes away a lot of the normal inhibition that we naturally feel in regular life. Many things we get used to doing with technology simply don't *'pas'* for a chassidishe yungerman or woman. We need to be so careful to act online at the same level that we want to be at in real life.
12. **Attention to our children**: The Rebbe specifically asked to add this important nekudah. After a long day in Kollel or at work, we naturally want to “unwind” with technology and end up expending our attention on shtusim. But children so desperately need their parent’s attention to be emotionally healthy. Are we willing to pay the price of our children’s emotional health c”v? ⁸

This list of dangers and issues is נוגע each and every day. It would be כדאי to keep a list of these 12 concerns in our pockets just to remind ourselves what we need to hold battle against. If we don't האלט קאפ, we'll surely fail!

Our derech is to wage a strong and *constant* battle against these problems. And someone who has technology and is very careful, is a tremendous עובר השם. And there are b”h many, many erliche Yungeleit like that in our community (we may not know because they almost never take out their phones).

⁸ This also applies to the attention we should be giving our spouses, which is vital to maintaining a healthy marriage. It's tragic to see spouses today sitting together at the table while totally ignoring each other, each one engrossed in their smartphone.

Filters

The number one guideline before anything else is filters.⁹ There is no heter to have any device without a very good filter which blocks all מראות אסורות and anything that a person shouldn't see. This applies no matter the age, and no matter what kind of device it is (computer or phone). For anyone who is part of the chassidus and goes with the Rebbe's derech, there is no such thing as having a device *even one day* without a filter.¹⁰ And it should be a good filter that was made with frum yidden in mind (examples: Gentech, Netspark, NativUSA) and not a filter made by goyim that isn't worth much.

The michshol of having open internet is so big that it's embarrassing that we even need to mention the importance of

⁹ When I asked the Rebbe about setting up guidelines for the אנ"ש in תשע"ו, he said: *"We just need to be good Jews! Whoever doesn't need it shouldn't get it, and whoever gets it should get it with a good filter."*

¹⁰ In תשע"ו there were rumors going around in the street that the Rebbe allows his chassidim to use internet and smartphones without filters. This bothered the Rebbe very much on a personal level, and on שבת פרשת החדש תשע"ו the Rebbe asked that the following announcement be made in all shuls of אנ"ש:

”דער רבי'ן זאל זיין געזונט האט געהייסן איבער געבן פארן גאנצען עולם בשמו, אז קיין איינער זאל זיך נישט ניצען מיט די מכשירים, א מחשב אדער א 'טלפון נייד' מיט אינטערנעט, אויב ס'איז נישט מסודר אין דעם גאר א גוטן סינון. און ס'טוט וויי דעם רבי'ן זייער שטארק וואס מען זאגט בשמו אז ער האלט אז מ'דארף נישט קיין סינון.”

Translation: “The Rebbe—may he be *gezunt*—asked to give over to the entire *oilam* in his name that no one should use devices, a computer or a cellphone with internet access if it doesn't have a very good filter installed in it. And it pains the Rebbe very much that they say over in his name that he holds that we don't need any filters.

filters. But this inyan needs constant chizuk for two reasons:

- It's easy not to find the time to "get around to it" or we just upgraded our device and didn't put it back on yet (and then we forget to). Some people say they are sure they won't be nichshal, so they push off putting on a filter.
- No filters are perfect and have everything we want open, open, and everything we want closed, closed. Filters can be bothersome and are never foolproof (although they are getting better all the time). So yes, it may be a bother, it may cost money, and they won't be perfect. But consider the hefshed against the schar. Filters are a fence against שאול תחתית ממש!

Practical help with filters.

1) TAG (Technology Awareness Group) assists people with filters in their offices around the world. TAG's Main Hotline: 718-CALL-TAG (718-225-5824). You can also visit: venishmartem.com for a list of all TAG offices around the world.

Here are the TAG offices in the main areas that ש"א live in:

- **TAG Borough Park** 5316 New Utrecht Ave
718-437-1824 ext. 500
- **TAG Flatbush** 1622 Coney Island Ave.
347-878-1824 x 108 | tagflatbush.com

- **TAG Monsey** 19 Main St.
845-371-1824 ext. 125
- **TAG Lakewood** 1221 Madison Avenue
732-730-1824 ext. 104

2) venishmartem.com is an excellent resource for filtering advice: They have a “Filter-Wizard” on their homepage that makes it easy to find the best solutions for any device. Venishmartem also lists information on all TAG offices around the world. It is preferable to go to a TAG office rather than relying on Venishmartem for advice, so they can help you setup the filter to suit your precise needs, and also hold the passwords or control the account for you if necessary.

3) Filtering Help in Eretz Yisrael:

- **Technology Advice Hotline** - היעוץ המקצועי שעל ידי ועידת הרבנים לביצור חומת הדת: A country-wide hotline which specializes in finding filtering solutions in Israel. Tel: 1599-550-330 (Press 8 for English)
- **OutNet**: A country-wide organization with trained technicians to help you block or limit internet access, free of charge. Call their hotline 0722-613-613 and choose the options relevant to you, or visit www.out-net.org. This will lead you a technician in your area that will assist you. If the technician does not answer, you can leave him a message and he will get back to you.

After Filters: Understanding the Rebbe's מהלך

We must always remember that technology is here to serve **us** and help us live according to **our** values, and not ח"ו that we should become slaves **to** technology.

To understand the Rebbe's derech in the more 'grey-areas', it's important to understand the nature of technology. Technology has two objectives. One is to make life easier, such as using Waze to get places faster or using banking apps to deposit checks without having to wait in line at the bank, or using Whatsapp to stay in touch with family or work colleagues. However, the second purpose of technology is to entertain, to help people have fun and get excited. All technology and all apps fit in to at least one of these categories, and many times into both of them.

The Rebbe's derech is that technology should be used for the first purpose only, in other words, for what's needed and for what can help make life easier, but not for entertainment purposes, or to get excited and become פארומוען (busy) with it. Understanding this basic yesod will answer most questions that come up.

Can teenagers have phones or use internet?

The Rebbe feels that bochurim and girls have no need for phones at all, even without internet access. And if they are older (in kibutz or end of seminary) and do need a phone, the Rebbe made it clear that as long as they're not married they should not have SMS (texting), nor should they have access to the internet at all. Even if they want to use it just for email, or for divrei Torah or other good things, and even if they have a good filter or the browser is blocked, the Rebbe feels that bochurim and girls should not use apps that require internet access such as email or Whatsapp. (There can be exceptions, such as an older girl who works, but one would need to ask).

Can I get a smartphone?

Those who don't need it surely shouldn't get it.¹¹ And just because someone gets married, doesn't mean they should get a smartphone right away. The younger a person is, the easier it is for them to get excited, and therefore the risks are greater. A 19-21-year-old is not as **מישוב** as an older person who has slowly gotten more involved in day-to-day needs and it has become more necessary for them, in which case it's Ok. But for those who just want it for little things, **why would we put ourselves into unnecessary temptation and possible downfalls?** (אי דאיכא דרכא אחריו... וכו')

¹¹ **The Rebbe once quipped:** “Anyone who wants to get a smartphone has to prove that he's smart himself first. And the **גף** (bar) is very high. Most will fail, so they shouldn't dare try.”

What is the Geder of 'needing it'?

There are no clear answers as to what's the geder of needing it and at what exact age a person can get a smartphone. Every person should use their own sechel¹² to know if they need it or not, and **how much** access they really need (and which apps are necessary). Each one of us needs to think very well and weigh the potential benefits against the potential loss. For example, a person could want a smartphone because he thinks he will save 5-10 minutes a day by having Waze, but meanwhile he ends up burning 3 hours a day because of the rest of the technology that he introduced now into his life!

Can we read news?

The Rebbe feels that kollel yungerleit don't need to have access to news on their phones¹³. But someone who already has a more open phone or computer for other needs can check kosher news sites occasionally to know what's going on. But one should not spend more than a few minutes a day on it and surely not become פארוומען (busy) with it.

¹² The Rebbe remarked that this is quite a *frightening proposition*'.

¹³ He quipped: *"They hear enough in Kollel and in the mikvah"*.

Can children watch things on the phone or computer?

Again, there are no clear answers to this question. When we understand the issues, we can honestly ask ourselves “is it כדאי or not?” In general, children should not be using technology for entertainment at all, but it could be Ok to show them something kosher a few times a year, such as during vacations or chol hamoed with the parent’s supervision. History has shown that children who grow up in a home where technology is used only for what’s needed, and once in a while--at special times--they are shown something on the computer, they actually turn out more healthy than children who didn’t have any exposure whatsoever to technology at home, but needed it later in life. (That is not to say one should get involved in technology just for this, but the point is clear).

Can we use Whatsapp?

The Rebbe feels that apps like Whatsapp should not be used by unmarried bochurim or girls.¹⁴ But for married people who want to use it, we should understand the מהלך and make sure to use it only for good things. There are terrible stories, רכילות, שפיכת דמים, problems of צניעות between men and women, מראות, אסורות, etc. But on the other hand, it can be used for so many important and useful things, as well as mitzvos and chessed.

¹⁴ He mentioned that Whatsapp “brings a lot of tzarus”.

Work groups and family groups are Ok to join on Whatsapp, but stam groups of friends where jokes, pictures and videos are sent around is not Ok. Once we start using these things as a toy and game, we become shallow and it takes our whole level down. These guidelines are hard to put into words, but we need to understand the issues.¹⁵ Once we start slipping in these areas, we can't know how far down we can end up, c"v. If you have a question whether to send something or not on the groups, it just doesn't pay. The farther back we keep the fence to protect the level of the groups, the less chance there is of slipping. Don't be ashamed to leave a group that has become shallow, even if they laugh at you! We have to be strong and maintain a high standard.

Suggestion: Every family group should have someone older and more מיושב who helps keeps the level of the group on a higher level.

Can we shop online?

If there are מכשולות then for sure not. But in general, we need to use our heads. There are no clear answers such as מותר or אסור, we need to ask ourselves if it's כדאי. For example, is it כדאי to shop in pritzusdik Manhattan just to save a few minutes or a few dollars? If we have a real sheilah, we can ask Rabbanim or the Rebbe, but mostly we just need to use our heads.

¹⁵ Dovid Hamelech says "ובמושב לצים לא ישר". The Rebbe asked, "Is this not a מושב לצים?"

Special Notes for Women

When it comes to Yiddishkeit issues, men and women have an equal אחריות. The battle with technology needs to be fought by the women just as much as by the men. But there are a number of נקודות where the women have an even bigger אחריות:

- The רוח of the home is set by the mother. The children see the mother more than the father, and they can smell very well (much more than we think) what is truly important in the home by observing the mother and seeing what gives her excitement and chiyus.
- The attention that all children desperately need (see #12 above) is even more important from the mother, since she spends the most time with the children. Without this personal attention, children grow up abnormal. Such children can be spotted in an instant. If we are busy with our phones and checking our messages and news even when our children need us, they don't feel they are important to us. And these things come out later on in many bad ways, c"v. No money is worth more than a mother's attention to a child! Focus on your children, play games with them, and don't give this precious attention away to a machine.
- ששני כרצונו – By nature, women are more connected to Hashem, and they have a special koach of communication, which they can use to communicate with Hashem. But it's so easy to lose our פנימיות when we are involved in these

things. Women have it already if it's only not ruined. What a shame that it should be lost to shtusim! When we're busy communicating 24/7 with apps and constantly getting messages and alerts that make it exciting, we lose being in touch with ourselves and with Hashem.

In Conclusion

The Rebbe says that we are all one חבורה and we need to constantly be מחוק one another. By being aware of the issues that we are up against, we can all be מחוק each other to stay strong and maintain a high standard as a community.¹⁶

¹⁶ This booklet was only an attempt to give some הגדרות and הסברה on this challenging topic. For more detailed questions and issues, we have a Rebbe, we have a ועד הרבנים, and there are Poskim and other big people who should be consulted.

**יהי רצון שבזכות התחזקות החבורה ביחד, ובזכות כ"ק
אדמו"ר שליט"א ורבותינו הקוה"ט למעלה בקודש, לא ייצא
דבר תקלה מתחת ידינו ונזכה לעמוד בחוזק ובחוסן בניסיונות
הזמן בקדושה וטהרה על דרך החסידות הצרופה עד ביאת
גואל צדק בב"א.**

