



**“There is an international scourge attacking the Jewish People which threatens to tear apart the fabric of Jewish life. It has spared no class of Jews: from teenagers to kollel members, from office workers to rabbis, and from single to married men. Guard Your Eyes is the only weapon we have at our disposal”**

— *Rabbi Aharon Feldman*

*Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of America*

## WWW.GUARDYOUYES.COM

**YOU HAVE NOW READ** the most important public service announcement ever likely to appear in Outlook. The above site provides tools for those dealing with attractions to the darker areas of the Internet — ranging from those who have slipped occasionally to those with full-blown Internet addictions.

I will not belabor the dangers of the Internet. In recent years, that subject has been widely discussed in the Orthodox media. Nevertheless, a very high percentage of Orthodox Jews who use the Internet continue to do so without proper filters, or with filters that are easily evaded, and the danger of cell phones with Internet connectivity continues to be virtually ignored in America.

My goal is not to discuss prevention, but to provide hope for those who are already ensnared. At a recent meeting chaired by Agudath Israel's Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, one of America's foremost addiction experts, stated flatly that no addiction can be cured without a support group. And until now, the one support group impossible to assemble was for Orthodox Jews addicted to the Internet and Internet-related behaviors. Religious support groups exist for overeaters, alcoholics, and gamblers. These are weaknesses, and most of us have some weakness. But Internet addiction is different. It seemingly marks one as a total hypocrite, living one life in public and another subterranean life, hidden from everyone else, above all the person to whom one is closest — his or her spouse. No one living such a double life, especially a respected communal figure, could ever risk being exposed at a meeting of others similarly addicted.

Just listening to the testimony of such Jews is a wrenching experience. Last week I read through about fifty pages of testimonials from those helped by the Guard Your Eyes organization, and listened to the personal testimony of a young husband and father describing what it is like to be in the throes of this addiction, delivered at the aforementioned meeting. (Rabbi Aharon Feldman gave an impassioned address about the unprecedented threat to *kedushas Yisrael* from the Internet.) The testimonies completely destroyed my hasty assumption that the victims are primarily drawn from the ranks of teenagers or “adults at risk.” Not at all. Most of the letters expressed anguish over the author's former close relationship with Hashem from which he or she now feels severed. Among the writers were rabbis, marriage counselors, and respected teachers.

Dr. Twerski said that until very recently, he had absolutely nothing to recommend to those caught in an Internet addiction or related behaviors. Now he does. The Guard Your Eyes site offers the possibility of joining a support group for Internet addicts, with complete anonymity. Participants never see one another.

For those in need, the required support group is now available.