

Halachos of shemiras einayim

Posted by davidt - 01 Feb 2024 15:18

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*The following is from the "Doeihu | Daily Halacha" email series*

## **Shemiras Einayim - Part 1**

Below is a short overview of the *halachos* of *shemiras einayim*.

1. It is forbidden for a man to **gaze** at a woman. One who does so transgresses the prohibition of “*V’nishmarta mikol davar ra*, you must guard yourself from every improper thing” (*Devarim* 23:10). In many instances, he also transgresses the prohibition of “*Lo sasuru acharei levavchem v’acharei eineichem*, you may not turn after your hearts and after your eyes” (*Bamidbar* 15:39). (*Berachos* 61a; *Shulchan Aruch* EH 21:1 and OC 75; *Mishnah Berurah* 75:17)
2. According to the letter of the law, if one merely **glances** a woman incidentally, without intention to gaze at her, he has not transgressed any prohibition. (The *poskim* write that the prohibition against looking at a woman only applies when one gazes at her, i.e., while concentrating and analyzing her features. However, if one merely glances at a woman superficially, without analyzing details or focusing on what she looks like, this is permitted according to the letter of the law. It is possible for one to know of the other person’s features after glancing at them many times. However, in this case, knowing the features is the result of glancing, rather than gazing.) (*Yam Shel Shlomo*, *Kesubos* ch. 2; *Pri Megadim* MZ 76:1; *Mishnah Berurah* 76:7; *Igros Moshe* OC 1:40; see *Chut Shani* EH p. 42)
3. From a *mussar* perspective, however, a man should avoid even glancing at a woman, certainly when that could lead to improper thoughts. (*Mishnah Berurah* 75:1 and :7; see *Chut Shani* EH p. 42)

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim

Posted by davidt - 21 Feb 2024 16:24

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## **One Must Forfeit All of His Possessions to Avoid Transgressing!**

**9.** The *Rema* (OC 656) rules that one should not spend more than one-fifth of his net worth in order to fulfill a *mitzvas aseí*. For example, if his total assets amount to \$1,000, he does not

need to spend more than \$200 to buy an *esrog*. The same applies to all other positive commandments.

However, when it comes to a *mitzvas lo sa'asei*, the *Rema* writes that **a person is required to spend all his money to avoid transgressing any prohibition, certainly one which incurs *kareis***. Even if it will cause him to lose his source of livelihood and he will have no choice other than to go begging from door to door, he is not permitted to transgress a negative commandment. (*Mishnah Berurah* *ibid*:10.)

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by davidt - 22 Feb 2024 14:29

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**A Decree of the Gedolei Hador**

**10.** The *pasuk* states: “*Lo sasur min hadavar asher yagidulecha yamin u’smol*, you may not turn away, neither right nor left, from whatever they tell you” (*Devarim* 17:11). *Chazal* learn from here that a person is obligated to obey the rulings of *gedolei Yisrael* and not to do the opposite of what they say. (There is a disagreement among the *Rishonim* if this is a Biblical law or an *asmachta* that is actually a Rabbinic law.) (*Rambam, Hilchos Mamrim* 1:2; *Sefer Hachinuch* mitzvah 496)

When the *gedolim* and Torah leaders of the generation establish decrees and guidelines to protect people from *aveiros*, we are especially obligated to obey them. Some derive this from the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 18:30) “*Ushemartem es mishmarti*, and you shall observe My charge.” (Others maintain that this is learned from the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 27:26) “*Arur asher lo yakim es divrei haTorah hazos*, cursed is he who does not uphold the words of this Torah.”)

This is so stringent that if someone swears to disobey such a decree of the *gedolim*, it is the same as if he swore not to obey a mitzvah of the Torah — which is considered a *shevuas shav*, an oath made in vain! — because we are obligated to obey the mitzvos of the Torah and have no other recourse. (*Mordechai, Shevuos* 755; *Shulchan Aruch* YD 28:33 and *Taz* :42; *Shu”t Maharam Shick* YD 5; see *Shu”t Be’er Moshe* 3:163-165)

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by davidt - 23 Feb 2024 14:18

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### **The Obligation to Guard Oneself from Spiritual Danger**

**11.** We find numerous instances where the Torah obligates us to avoid physical dangers. For example, one is required to build a railing on a roof or porch to ensure that no one falls off. Similarly, the Torah requires a person to ensure that no one is physically harmed by him or his property.

We should learn a clear lesson from this. If the Torah requires us to be so careful regarding physical danger, which is only relevant in this transient world, how much more careful must we be regarding spiritual dangers, which are relevant to the eternal world! (*Shu"t Maharam Shick* OC 207 and YD 335; see also *Bais Yosef* 590; *Pele Yoetz*, *erech Arayos*)

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by davidt - 26 Feb 2024 14:55

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### **The Prohibition of “*Lo Sikrevu*”**

**12.** The Chinuch (*Sefer Hachinuch* §188) explains that the general principle of the halachos of kreivah and hisrachkus between genders, is that one may not do anything that leads toward inappropriate thoughts, or which cultivates a sense of closeness with a member of the opposite gender (to whom one is not immediately related). This principle applies to speech, behavior, or *any* action that can lead to a relationship.

It is impossible to list every type of behavior that can lead to closeness between the genders as it depends upon the circumstances, personal natures, etc. Therefore, *Chazal* listed several universal behaviors that apply to everyone, i.e., these behaviors are always liable to lead to closeness between opposite genders. In addition, *Chazal* established boundaries for these behaviors which apply to everyone equally.

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by davidt - 27 Feb 2024 16:34

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### **Create Your Own Boundaries**

**13.** In addition to the distancing mandated by *Chazal*, every individual is obligated to establish his/her own customized boundaries to avoid inappropriate thoughts and/or closeness with a member of the opposite gender. One should establish these boundaries based on his/her unique circumstances, i.e., nature, surroundings, nature of one's relationship with the other individual, etc. (*Sefer Hachinuch* §188)

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by davidt - 28 Feb 2024 14:24

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### **“It won’t affect me...”**

**14.** Even if one believes that his *Yetzer Hara* will not overpower him in this area, and reasons that “*This behavior won’t affect me and won’t lead me to sin,*” he is nonetheless forbidden to be lenient about any boundaries that *Chazal* established. There are many who thought they could, yet unfortunately succumbed. (*Sefer Hachinuch* §188)

**15.** It is worth mentioning that in addition to serving as a practical mechanism to help distance one from sin, adhering to *Chazal's* boundaries also serves as a spiritual protection to avoid sin. (*Noam Megadim, Parshas Yisro*)

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by davidt - 29 Feb 2024 13:56

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### **All Halachos Together - Related to Technology Use**

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## Shemiras Einayim

Below is a short overview of the *halachos* of *shemiras einayim*

1. It is forbidden for a man to **gaze** at a woman. One who does so transgresses the prohibition of “*V’nishmarta mikol davar ra*, you must guard yourself from every improper thing” (*Devarim* 23:10). In many instances, he also transgresses the prohibition of “*Lo sasuru acharei levavchem v’acharei eineichem*, you may not turn after your hearts and after your eyes” (*Bamidbar* 15:39). (*Berachos* 61a; *Shulchan Aruch* EH 21:1 and OC 75; *Mishnah Berurah* 75:17)
2. According to the letter of the law, if one merely glances a woman incidentally, without intention to gaze at her, he has not transgressed any prohibition. (The *poskim* write that the prohibition against looking at a woman only applies when one gazes at her, i.e., while concentrating and analyzing her features. However, if one merely glances at a woman superficially, without analyzing details or focusing on what she looks like, this is permitted according to the letter of the law. It is possible for one to know of the other person’s features after glancing at them many times. However, in this case, knowing the features is the result of glancing, rather than gazing.) (*Yam Shel Shlomo*, *Kesubos* ch. 2; *Pri Megadim* MZ 76:1; *Mishnah Berurah* 76:7; *Igros Moshe* OC 1:40; see *Chut Shani* EH p. 42)
3. From a *mussar* perspective, however, a man should avoid even glancing at a woman, certainly when that could lead to improper thoughts. (*Mishnah Berurah* 75:1 and :7; see *Chut Shani* EH p. 42)
4. Furthermore, an “*adam chashuv*” should act stringently and refrain from even “glancing” at women. (*ibid.*)
5. It is forbidden to “glance,” and certainly to gaze, at any part of a woman’s body that is normally covered. It is certainly forbidden to even glance at a woman who is dressed immodestly. (*Mishnah Berurah* 75:1 and :7; *Igros Moshe* OC 1:40 and EH 3:13; see *Chut Shani* EH p. 42)
6. Women also must guard their eyes to avoid looking at inappropriate things. In certain cases, there is an *issur d’Oraysa* for a woman to look at men or at indecent things, just as there is for men (as discussed at length in previous emails). (*Sefer Hachinuch*, *Mitzvah* 363; *Shevet Halevi* vol. 5, 197:2, *Igros Moshe* EH 1:69; *Chut Shani* EH p. 43; *Shu”t Az Nidberu* 12:39; see *Shu”t Be’er Moshe* vol. 4, 147:23)
7. If a person saw a forbidden sight inadvertently, it is not considered an *aveirah*; however, he must look away immediately. (See *Tur* OC 1:1)

## Shemiras Einayim on a Screen

1. All of the *halachos* of *shemiras einayim* also apply to sights that one sees in pictures, on a video, etc. What a person is forbidden to gaze or glance at in real life is also forbidden to be viewed on a screen. (*Shevet Halevi* 2:2; *Minchas Yitzchok* vol. 2, 84:9; see also *Shu"t Divrei Malkiel* 3:58; *Rav Berachos* by the *Ben Ish Chai*, *maareches Tzadi*; *Shu"t Be'er Moshe* vol. 3, 154 and vol. 4, 147:21; *Shu"t Emek Hateshuvah* 96:34; *Yisrael Kedoshim* 86)

**Seeing pictures or watching videos on a screen can be even worse than seeing things in real life.**

- The *poskim* say (see *Minchas Shlomo* 91:23) that one reason for the very strict prohibition of walking behind a woman — “*achorei israh*” — is because when one stands face-to-face, there is a natural sense of embarrassment to stare directly at the other person; therefore, one will usually refrain from doing so. On the other hand, when someone is behind someone else, the person in front won't realize if the person behind them is staring at them and the person in back will lack the natural tendency to look away. The same logic applies to looking at images in a picture or on a screen. One who views such images does not have the natural embarrassment that stops him from looking at the woman that he sees.
- The *poskim* also explain (see *Chazon Ish* OC 16:7) that the reason it is forbidden to even glance at an immodestly dressed woman, even without “gazing” at her, is because even just glancing can lead a person to intentionally gaze at them. The same applies to pictures, and all the more so to videos, which naturally attract a person's attention and cause him to gaze at them. One who watches a video is even drawn to look at things which, were he to see them in real life, he would merely glance at them and immediately look away or continue on his way. Therefore, this concept — that merely glancing at inappropriate things leads to deliberately gazing at them — certainly applies to images on a screen.

## Thoughts

1. Below is a short overview of the *halachos* of *hirhur* (forbidden thoughts), which were discussed at length in previous emails:
  1. It is forbidden for a man or woman to think sinful or inappropriate thoughts about a member of the opposite gender. If one consciously does think such thoughts, he or she transgresses the prohibition of “*Lo sasuru acharei levavchem v'acharei eineichem*, you shall not turn after your hearts and after your eyes.” (*Berachos* 12b; *Shulchan Aruch* EH 23:2 and 25:1; *Igros Moshe* EH 1:69)
  2. Similarly, it is forbidden for a man to think any thoughts that could lead him to pitfalls. If he does think such thoughts, he transgresses the prohibition of “*V'nishmarta mikol davar ra*, you shall guard yourself from every improper thing.” (*Shulchan Aruch* EH 21:1,

23:3, and 25:1; *Bais Shmuel* ibid:2)

3. Included in this prohibition is the rule that **one is forbidden to do any type of action that could lead him to have improper thoughts**. If a person knows that doing a certain thing or going to a certain place will lead him to have such thoughts, he may not do so. (*Sefer Hachinuch*, mitzvah 188; see also *Shulchan Aruch* EH 21:1, 23:3, and 25:1; *Chut Shani* EH 21:7; *Igros Moshe* EH 1:69)
4. If an improper thought enters a person's mind unintentionally, it is not considered an *aveirah*. However, he should immediately divert his thoughts elsewhere in order to stop thinking the inappropriate thoughts. (*Ezer M'Kodesh* EH 23:3; *Derech Pikudecha*, mitzvah 35, see also *Rabbeinu Bechayei*, *Devarim* 29:18)

## **Darka Acharina**

1. Below is a short overview of the *halachos* of "darka acharina" (problematic situations where another option exists), which were discussed at length in previous emails:
  1. As mentioned in the past, it is forbidden for a person to place himself in a situation where he knows that he will be faced with spiritual challenges. *Chazal* (*Bava Basra* 57b) give the example of a person who has to travel to a certain location and can choose one of two roads to get there. On one of the routes, he will be exposed to forbidden sights, whereas the other is free of temptation. If the person chooses to take the road which poses spiritual challenges, he is referred to as a *rasha*.
  2. If there is no other road to his destination (or no other way to do the specific thing he needs to do), he is permitted to take that road; however, he must be very careful to guard his eyes and thoughts in order to avoid seeing or thinking anything forbidden. (*Rashbam*, *Bava Basra* 57b; *Shu"t Az Nidberu* 6:75; *Chut Shani* EH page ; *Shu"t Meishiv Nevonim* 6:48)

## **When there is No Other Option**

1. Even when no other option exists, one is only permitted to take the road that presents spiritual challenges if he is confident in himself and knows that he can guard his eyes and thoughts from sin. However, if he knows for certain that he is not strong enough to withstand the temptation and he will look at forbidden sights or think forbidden thoughts, or even if there is a larger probability that he will transgress than not, it is forbidden for him to take that road even though there is no other option. (*Sefer Hachinuch*, mitzvah 188; *Igros Moshe* 1:56; *Chut Shani* EH 21:5; *Yisrael Kedoshimperek* 4)

Similarly, the *poskim* write that it is only permitted to **pass through** a road that contains spiritual challenges (such as immodestly dressed women) if one is simply traveling through the area and there is no other way to reach his destination. It is never permitted to **position oneself** in a setting that contains such challenges. Therefore, for instance, it is prohibited to go to and loiter at a place frequented by immodestly dressed women. One who goes to such a place is called a *rasha* (See *Shu"t Vayaan Dovid* 6:15 quoting Rav Shmuel Vosner *zt"l*; see also *Shu"t*

*Yechaveh Daas* 5:63)

## The Prohibition of “*Lo Savi So’eivah el Beisecha*”

4. Below are the *halachos* that relate to the prohibition of “*Lo savi so’eivah el beisecha*, you shall not bring an abomination into your home” (*Devarim* 7:26).

A. It is forbidden to bring anything that is considered a *to’eivah* (abomination) into one’s domain. This includes possessing any written material or images that contain idolatry or heretical ideas. Furthermore, one may not possess books, magazines, or catalogues that are specifically intended for immorality or immodesty. If one does bring such things into his possession, even if he does not look at the pictures or use these things for improper purposes, he transgresses this prohibition. (*Sefer HaChinuch*, mitzvah 429; *Rema* OC 90:23; *Taz, Gra*, and *Mishnah Berurah* ad loc.; *Kovetz Maamarim* of Rav Elchonon Wasserman zt”l, p. 27)

B. The *Shulchan Aruch* rules that one may not daven while in the proximity of items that are in the category of “*to’eivah*.” (*Rema* and commentaries *ibid.*)

## Heretical Thoughts

5. Below is a short overview of the *halachos* of thinking heretical thoughts.

1. It is forbidden to think thoughts of heresy. We learn this from the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 19:4) “*V’lo sasuru acharei levavchem v’acharei eineichem*, you shall not turn after your hearts and your eyes.” (*Berachos* 12b)
2. Included in this prohibition is one being forbidden to direct his mind to thoughts that run contrary to *daas Torah*, as this can lead to heretical thoughts. (*Sefer HaChinuch*, mitzvah 387)
3. Also included is the reading of books that contain heretical ideas. (*Rambam, Hilchos Avodah Zarah* 2:2-3; *Rema* YD 246)
4. One also may not read books or articles written by a heretic or a person who is a proponent of ‘foreign’ ideas. Even if this particular book or article does not contain anything heretical or blasphemous one should not read it because the author’s corrupt ideas and beliefs will inevitably be infused in his writing and will affect the reader’s spiritual state. (*Kovetz Igros Chazon Ish* 2:46; *Teshuvos V’hanhagos* 1:547; *Maggid Devarav L’Yaakov* of the *Maggid* of Mezritch, os 65; *Maayan Ganim* of the *Bnei Yissaschor*, 16:7)

## Arousing the Yetzer Hara



1. There is a prohibition to arouse one's *yetzer hara*. This means that one may not do things that arouse his desire to sin. (*Shulchan Aruch* OC 307:16; *Mishnah Berurah* :59; *Derech Pikudecha, mitzvas aseil* 53)

## **Profanity**

1. Below is a brief review of the laws of *nivul peh*, inappropriate language, which were discussed at length in previous emails.
  1. It is forbidden to speak words of *nivul peh*. (*Kesubos* 8a; *Shabbos* 33a; *Rishonim* ad loc.; *Charedim* 24:49; *Shulchan Aruch* OC 407:16 and EH 25:1)
  2. The prohibition against speaking *nivul peh* is not limited to inappropriate language. It also dictates that the topics a person speaks about must be refined. (ibid.; see also *Pele Yoetz, erech Dibbur*)
  3. Even if someone uses refined words, if it is evident that he is hinting to vulgar things or immodest matters, he has violated the prohibition against speaking *nivul peh*. (ibid.)
  4. It is similarly forbidden to listen to, read, or write vulgarities. (ibid.)
  5. *Chazal* use very strong terms when discussing this prohibition and say that the sin of *nivul peh* is the cause of many misfortunes. (*Shabbos* 33a; *Kesubos* 8b)

## **“Moshav Leitzim” – Wasting Time**

1. There is a prohibition called “*moshav leitzim*” (a gathering of scoffers) which is derived from the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 19:4) “*Lo sifnu el ha’elilim.*” This means that one may not engage in mockery of serious matters, a behavior which leads a person astray from Torah and *emunah*. The prohibition also includes squandering one’s time by speaking about worthless matters, doing pointless things, or viewing or reading material that contains no benefit or purpose.

Certainly, a person may engage in conversation with others or spend time reading if this benefits his health and frame of mind. Every person’s needs in this area are different, and a person should reach his own conclusion to determine the amount of time he needs to spend engaged in such activities. However, if a conversation or action provides a person with absolutely no benefit and is simply a nonsensical waste of time that could have been used for constructive purposes, it leads the person astray from Torah and pure *emunah*, and is prohibited. (*Avodah Zarah* 18b; *Shulchan Aruch* OC 307:16 and 338:21; *Mishnah Berurah* 307:59 and 338:21; *Maharal, Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Haleitzanus; Even Ha’azel, Hilchos Melachim* 3:5-6; *Shu”t Meishiv Nevonim* 2:61)

## **One Must Forfeit All of His Possessions to Avoid Transgressing!**

1. The *Rema* (OC 656) rules that one should not spend more than one-fifth of his net worth in order to fulfill a *mitzvas ase*. For example, if his total assets amount to \$1,000, he does not need to spend more than \$200 to buy an *esrog*. The same applies to all other positive commandments.

However, when it comes to a *mitzvas lo sa'asei*, the *Rema* writes that **a person is required to spend all his money to avoid transgressing any prohibition, certainly one which incurs *kareis***. Even if it will cause him to lose his source of livelihood and he will have no choice other than to go begging from door to door, he is not permitted to transgress a negative commandment. (*Mishnah Berurah* *ibid*:10.)

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by davidt - 04 Mar 2024 15:30

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**Internet with a Filter**

1. If someone needs to use the internet, he is obligated **according to the letter of the law** to install a "good filter". He must do so even if it costs money. (All of the prohibitions previously discussed and explained in the fundamental *halachos* apply to internet usage. This is especially true because all of the Gedolei Yisrael from all sects have ruled accordingly and we are obligated to obey them, as previously explained.)

2. A "good" filter means the best filter that a person can install that will fit his needs (that conform with the basic standards and requirements of a filter). (As explained in the laws of "*darka acharina*.")

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by Heeling - 06 Mar 2024 03:00

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Thank you very much @davidt for provider this service. I just read through most of the thread (hope to finish tomorrow) and its amazing. I was always looking for clear cut guidance, i very much like that you include the *Mara M'komis*.

May it be a zechus for you,

PS: I'm sure there are many silent readers who are benefiting from you posting. Keep it up.

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by Heeling - 06 Mar 2024 03:02

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[davidt wrote on 21 Feb 2024 16:24:](#)

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This is a big *chizuk* for me as I pay for my own filter on my work computer when really my boss should.

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by davidt - 06 Mar 2024 14:01

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[Heeling wrote on 06 Mar 2024 03:00:](#)

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May it be a *zechus* for you,

PS: I'm sure there are many silent readers who are benefiting from you posting. Keep it up.

Your feedback is very very appreciated.

I felt that this thread might be not so much needed here but the right approach is:

**even if one person benefits from it one time, the whole effort is worth it!**

**THANK YOU!!**

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by davidt - 06 Mar 2024 14:01

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### **A Woman's Obligation**

**3.** Women are also obligated to install proper filters on their internet-capable devices. This is both because the *halachos* of *shemiras einyaim* and improper thoughts are also relevant to them, and because they have to protect themselves from the generally improper and corrupt ideas that are found in abundance on the internet

### **Immediately Installing a Filter**

**4.** If someone purchases a computer, tablet, etc., that has (or is capable of having) internet access, **he is obligated to immediately install a good filter.** He should not use the device before installing the filter.

This is both because of the prohibition to own an improper item (as discussed previously) and

because of *Chazal's* statement (*Kesuvos* 13b; *Chullin* 11a; *Niddah* 30b), "*Ein apitropos l'arayos*," which means that no one is guaranteed to emerge unscathed when it comes to matters of indecency. In several places, *Chazal* describe how a person must distance himself from a spiritual challenge as much as possible. When someone owns such a device, it is certain that he is facing such a challenge.

The facts show that when a filter is not immediately installed on a device, time can drag on before one is installed and, sometimes, it never gets done and no filter is ever put on. Even when a filter is eventually installed, it is often too late, as the individual already had a downfall while his device was unfiltered, and he has reached a level where the filter will not be able to help him. (See *Shu"t Chasam Sofer* YD 75)

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by notezy - 06 Mar 2024 15:45

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Curious about what the halach says about AI generated stuff... if that counts as a women if it's not a specific women I guess it falls into the same categories a video game or cartoon charcter would right?

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Re: Halachos of shemiras einayim  
Posted by redfaced - 06 Mar 2024 15:53

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[notezy wrote on 06 Mar 2024 15:45:](#)

Curious about what the halach says about AI generated stuff... if that counts as a women if it's not a specific women I guess it falls into the same categories a video game or cartoon charcter would right?

Based on the assumption that only true images a re a problem - Art focuses on drawing nudes very often . Should that be fine?

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