

Windows of the Soul

**A MAN'S PRACTICAL GUIDE
TO MASTERING HIS EYES**

RABBI ZVI MILLER

Edited by Rabanit Yehudit Channen

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The Salant Foundation

Mussar: The Wisdom of Personal Growth

The Salant Foundation provides access to the wisdom of Mussar through publications, eMussar (our daily email lessons), distance learning and live seminars.

We are honored to present, “Our Holy Eyes,” and sincerely hope that this guidebook will significantly help you master your eyes and add holiness to your life.

Following in the footsteps of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zt”l, our vision is to help every member of Klal Yisrael study Mussar on a daily basis and strive for personal excellence.

To sign up for our eMussar series send an email to salant@netvision.net.il

Warmest blessings,

Rabbi Zvi Miller

Dean

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Last Elul, my good friend, David Ashear, conveyed to me the urgency of having a book available on the topic of “Shmirat Einayim,” i.e., protecting one’s eyes from seeing improper sights. He explained that the book must “speak to our generation and help them win this great spiritual test.” We discussed the logistics and began to plan the writing of the book. From its inception, David has been the driving force behind this book and secured all the resources needed for its production. May Hashem bless him for shepherding this book into existence.

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Zvi Miller

Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

Preface

The Zohar compares this world to a churning ocean and the body of a man to a ship in the sea. Therefore, man requires knowledge in order to guide himself on a straight course, avoiding mishap and losing his way. The ocean of life roars fearfully and continuously. The winds of challenge blow and the negative impulse rips about like a tornado with unimaginable force. All of life comprises great and endless tests, which can easily capsize the ship and sink it into the murky, nethermost depths.

Yirat Shamayim and the study of Mussar will prevent the body from sinking into the miry depths of desire and corrupt character traits.

(Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer, *Ohr Yisrael*)

INTRODUCTION:

TORAH – THE SOURCE OF HOLINESS

THE IMAGE OF HASHEM

When Shem and Yefet covered up their father's nakedness, they held a blanket and walked backwards so as not to see him. They could have walked towards him and kept their eyes lowered. Why did they feel it necessary to walk backwards?

*Since the image of Hashem is etched upon the human countenance, **simply exposing the face to improper sights** is spiritually harmful! Therefore, they walked backwards to protect their souls. (The Alsheich)*

“THIS IS THE TORAH OF ELEVATION.” (Vayikra 8:37)

Of all the treasures that Hashem bestows upon us, Torah is the greatest of them all. Since Torah is the Divine Wisdom, we might assume that our primary goal in learning Torah is to become wise. However, the Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh, commenting on the verse (Vayikra 8:37): “This is the Torah of elevation,” explains: “Whoever studies Torah will be elevated.” Apparently, the ultimate purpose of Torah study is not only to become wise but also to become “elevated,” i.e., *kadosh* (holy).

THE FIFTIETH LEVEL OF IMPURITY

When we were slaves in Egypt, we fell to the 49th level of impurity. HaShem redeemed us at that time because had we fallen to the 50th – and final level – we would have been irredeemable.

Before the final redemption, the People of Israel will fall to the 50th level of impurity. However, this time the holiness of Torah will help us to emerge from this level and attain redemption. Even more, our triumph over evil will be so sound, that all forces of impurity will be vanquished forever. (Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh)

THE DEVIOS STRATEGY

After Bilaam failed in his attempt to curse the nation of Israel, he employed a different tactic to hurt them. Knowing that immorality is the antithesis of Torah, he pierced our spiritual armor by bringing harlotry upon us. And he succeeded. We lost more Jews to the ensuing Divine wrath than we lost as a result of worshipping the “golden calf.”

Today, the forces of *tuma* (impurity) are using the same devious tactic that Bilaam employed. We face impurity in the streets, at work, in every public place and even in our own homes. We are confronted and bombarded by images so destructive that many of our great Rabbis have proclaimed that we are now surrounded by the 50th level of *tuma*.

When Israel succumbed to harlotry in the desert, Pinchas rose up and stopped the outrage and destruction by putting to death Zimri and Kozbi. Every person who learns **Windows of the Soul** takes up the spear of Pinchas and acquires powerful tools to protect himself from impurity.

WINDOWS OF THE SOUL

Windows of the Soul is a practical Torah guide for controlling what we see. This thirty-day program presents a concise method for preserving the sanctity of our eyes which are known to be the windows of the soul. **Windows of the Soul** is designed to bring solace, encouragement and wisdom to the people of this generation. Following the holy teachings of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, of blessed memory, we will ascend a clear and sure path to mastering our eyes.

This thirty day program incorporates Mussar lessons and Halachic rulings, as well as practical advice, in order to formulate a solid strategy for success.

May Hashem inspire us with the wisdom to apply these principles so that we merit seeing the holiness of the Shechinah upon us and all Klal Yisrael. As the Prophet said (*Zachariah* 14:9): "And Hashem will be King over the entire world – on that day Hashem will be One and His Name will be One."

Day One

Mastery of the Self

The Talmud (*Tamid 32b*) tells us that when Alexander the Great reached the gate of Gan Eden, he called out, *“Open the gate for me!” They responded to him, “This is the gate to HaShem, let the righteous come and enter.”*

Alexander said, “I am a king of great renown. Since you refuse to open that gate, at least give me something from Gan Eden.”

So they gave him an eyeball. He returned to his place and weighed it. He stacked all of his gold and silver on one side of the scale and the eyeball on the other. Nevertheless, the eyeball outweighed the gold and silver.

He asked the wise men for an explanation and they said, “This is the eyeball of a human being. The human eye is never satisfied with what it sees; it always wants to see more. For everything in the world is like nothing in a person’s eyes and therefore he craves more and more. In fact, his eyes are not satisfied until the day he dies and his eyes are covered with earth.” Alexander asked, “Can this be true?”

The wise men said to him, “Cover the eye with a little earth and immediately the true weight of the gold will reverse the scale.”

Is there an attainable method to master over the strong desire of the eye?
--

Hashem denied Alexander access to Gan Eden because of his greed and obsession for power. His desires were inflamed beyond all reason, that is, he was bent on conquering the entire world. Therefore, they gave him an eyeball because the eye is the source of desire. Just as his desire was out of control, so too, the weight of the eyeball was completely out of proportion.

Alexander was perplexed by the mysterious power of the eyeball. Heaven was hinting to him about the futility of chasing after earthly desires which can never be satisfied. However, he lacked the wisdom of Torah to perceive the truth. Since he was following the desire of his eyes, he could not see anything beyond his own ego and self-gratification. Alexander conquered most of the world. Yet this mighty warrior was not able to conquer his own eyes.

In contrast, our Avot – Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov – were focused on spiritual pursuits and used their Torah knowledge to attain purity and closeness to Hashem. Throughout the ages, the People of Israel have aspired to follow on the path of our ancestors, which brings eternal joy and gratification to the soul.

DIVINE ASSISTANCE TO ATTAIN PURITY

The Mishneh (Avot 4:1) teaches, “Who is the strong man? The one who conquers his passions.” Strength is defined by the mastery of one’s desires. Alexander, undefeated in battle, was one of the greatest military leaders in the history of the world. He was also a highly educated man, taught by Aristotle. Yet, he lacked the strength and wisdom to master his own eyes and desires.

Our Avot were true kings, because they mastered themselves. We, the People of Israel, have the spiritual genes and dignified stature of Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov. The awareness of our intrinsic worthiness – and our royal lineage – inspires us with the confidence that we can rule over the lesser part of ourselves. The Torah gives us the wisdom to master our eyes and our passions.

Our Sages teach us the following axiom, “A person who comes to purify himself will receive Divine assistance to attain purity.” The yearning for purity burns in the heart of every Jew. Once we begin to strive for purity, Hashem will help us gain control of our eyes. In turn, control of our eyes will give us the key to control our thoughts and actions. We will sanctify ourselves and the world we live in.

TODAY: Know that if you sincerely wish to elevate yourself, Hashem will assist you in your endeavors.

Practical Application of Chapter 1: “Mastery of the Self”

Steve walks through midtown with his friend, Dave, on his way to the office. “Visual challenges” confront them from every direction.

“It’s so hard to deal with the immodest sights in the city – they are everywhere. I have been struggling to gain control of my eyes for a long time, but truthfully I haven’t made much progress,” said Steve.

“Look, there is nothing we can do about it. I just don’t let it effect me,” replied Dave.

“But there is something we can do about it,” says Steve. “Since we come from Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaacov, it is our heritage to strive for spiritual goals. And there is a Torah formula that says if we try to purify ourselves, Hashem will help us to succeed. I realize this is going to take much study and practice. However, I know the more I desire to purify myself, the more Hashem will help me. That’s what encourages me to take on the goal of mastering my eyes.”

“You may have a point there,” says Dave.

Day Two

The Cornerstone of a Successful Marriage

The source of the prohibition to not look at a woman if she is immodestly dressed is the verse (*Bamidbar 15:39*): **“Do not stray after your eyes.”**

What is so bad about admiring women?

The Torah’s purpose is not to deny us the joy of a meaningful relationship with a woman. In fact, one of the most important Mitzvot in the Torah is to have children, in keeping with the verse (*Bereishit 1:28*): “And Elokim blessed them and Elokim said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’”

Rather, the purpose of the Torah’s laws is to help us give our full love and attention to our wives. The awareness that your wife is the only woman permitted to you strengthens the unique and special bond of love between husband and wife.

Once we understand the benefits of the laws, we realize that they are not restrictions but reinforcements. **We cherish these holy laws because they are the cornerstone of a successful marriage and the foundation for a healthy family.**

Men, in general, have a strong natural desire for women. Therefore, the Torah gives us guidelines so that these inclinations do not rule our lives. Compliance with these guidelines saves us from distraction and even destruction.

The Rambam says (*Hilchot Teshuvah*, Chapter 4, Law 4): “There are some transgressions for which a person is not motivated to repent because he considers them trivial and of no real consequence. Amongst them is the transgression of looking at women. A man who looks at a woman asks himself, “Did I have relations with her?” Did I get close to her?” He doesn’t realize that gazing at women who are forbidden to him is a transgression because it leads him to inappropriate conduct, as the verse says, ‘Do not stray after your heart and after your eyes.’”

INADVERTENT SEEING

You might be wondering: how can a man live in the world without seeing immodestly dressed women? Isn't it inevitable that every time a man steps into public he will sin?

The answer is that a person is required to avoid looking at immodest images and to develop an aversion to looking. As long as he follows these two stipulations, then even if he inadvertently sees an immodest sight, he is not culpable. However, after inadvertently seeing the immodest sight, he must turn his eyes away. If he continues looking or takes a second look, he commits the sin of “straying after his eyes.”

THE MOST POWERFUL PREVENTATIVE

Controlling our eyes from looking at women is the most powerful preventative against promiscuity. Loving parents place restrictions on children for their own safety. Their strictness is a manifestation of their desire to protect them from harm. Likewise, the Torah instructs us not to look at women for our own spiritual and physical wellbeing.

TODAY: *Enhance your relationship with your wife by practicing the laws of Shmirat Einayim, (i.e., Guarding Your Eyes).*

Practical Application of Chapter 2: “The Cornerstone of a Successful Marriage”

Steve arrived at his client’s office for an important meeting. The secretary, who was immodestly dressed, greeted Steve and said, “Mr. Lawrence is expecting you. Let me show you to his office.”

*Steve was caught off guard and struggled to control his eyes, as he walked with her down the long corridor. He then remembered learning that the fulfillment of the Mitzvah ‘Do not stay after your eyes,’ is **one of the six constant Mitzvot (Bi’ur Halacha, Chapter 1)**.*

That means this Mitzvah applies in every situation. Each second a person controls his eyes he is fulfilling one of the most important Mitzvot of the Torah!

By reflecting on this important Torah principle, Steve was able to control his eyes to the best degree possible under these circumstances.

Day Three

Make a New Beginning

If we have not properly guarded our eyes in the past, we can change our behavior and Hashem will help us to improve our ways.

In fact, Hashem sent us an uplifting and encouraging message through Yechezkel HaNavi: **“Throw off all of your aveirot and make a new heart and a new spirit for yourselves.”** (Based on *Yechezkel 18:30*)

I sincerely want to change my behavior and follow the Torah rules regarding *Shmirat Einayim* – Guarding the Eyes. However, I feel burdened by my past conduct. It's hard for me to believe that Hashem will forgive me.

Rabenu Yona (*Yesod HaTeshuvah*) illuminates the path of return to Hashem: *“If a person has acted improperly and wants to take shelter beneath the “Wings of the Shechinah” and enter into the gates of repentance, I will show him the way to proceed.*

On the day that you lift your heart to return to Hashem, throw off all of your aveirot as if they never were. Consider yourself as a newborn child, having neither merit nor culpability. Today is the beginning of your deeds. Today you will reflect on all of your ways so that you do not stray from the good path. This outlook will facilitate your complete return to Hashem because you will be unburdened from the weight of all of your aveirot.

Do not be hindered by thoughts that hold you back from returning to Hashem. For you might feel, ‘How can I have the nerve to return to Hashem, after I acted so inappropriately so many times? How can I come in front of Hashem? I feel embarrassed, like a thief who was caught in the act of stealing. How can I enter His courtyards; how can I observe His Mitzvot?’

Do not allow these negative thoughts to enter your heart! These feelings of despair are the influence of the negative impulse.

Rather, know the attribute of our merciful Creator is that “His arms are always open to welcome those that return to Him.”

Even more, He releases us from the psychological barriers to repentance by urging us to “throw off our misdeeds.” Therefore, Hashem grants each one of us the opportunity to rectify our ways, regardless of our past conduct. He lets us renew ourselves and gives us a fresh start.

TODAY: *Throw off the burden of your aveirot and start over. Hashem gives everyone another chance!*

Practical Application of Chapter 3: "Make A New Beginning"

Steve steps into a crowded elevator and concentrates on keeping his eyes in check. At first he is happy with himself but then a disturbing thought occurs to him – "What about last month, when I was in this same elevator and I lost control of my eyes." Thoughts of guilt start to enter Steve's mind. These types of unproductive thoughts have occurred to all of us, at one time or another.

He changes his thought pattern by reminding himself of Rabenu Yonah's powerful message. The knowledge that Hashem permits us to "throw away the sins" counters his negative thoughts. Steve knows that Hashem will give him a new start and forgive his past. Sincere repentance will actually convert his past sins into merits. These ideas dispel his doubts, and fill his heart with happiness and love of Hashem.

He is back on track, and ready to win the battle of the eyes.

Day Four

The Holiness of Klal Israel

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying," Speak to all the community of the Children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I Hashem your G-d, am holy."
(Vayikra 19:2)

How can a human being, who has a physical body and earthly desires, become "holy"?

At Mount Sinai, HaShem gave the Torah to Am Yisrael and conferred the status of Kedushat Yisrael upon us. That is, He transmitted a unique and permanent holiness upon every Jewish soul.

Whenever a person is tempted to act in a way that is against the Torah and he controls himself, he elevates himself spiritually and fulfills the mitzvah of "You shall be Holy." Since, his control is a fulfillment of a Mitzvah he is rewarded, just as HaShem rewards him for all the other Mitzvot that he performs.

Now we understand how we increase our holiness. By resisting our base impulses, we perform a Mitzvah and sanctify ourselves.

THE HOLY COMMUNITY

Now you might think that just because you withhold yourself from sinning, you aren't really holy and this verse is not referring to you. However, the verse says, "Speak to **all** the Children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy..." **The Torah is teaching us that holiness is not exclusively reserved for Tzaddikim, but for any Jew who attempts to elevate himself.** (Ohr HaChaim)

This is an incredible concept! Control of our eyes is not just an inner battle between desire and restraint. We master ourselves countless times during the day and therefore, in Hashem's eyes, we have the highest status – we are holy!

Once we understand this concept, we have the method and the motivation to gain control of our eyes. Every time we succeed, we increase our own personal holiness as well as the holiness of the entire world.

When we realize that we are holy in Hashem's eyes, we feel happy with ourselves and are inspired to reach new heights in Torah and Mitzvot.

TODAY: *Each time you control your eyes from looking at an improper site, tell yourself, "I am holy!"*

Practical Application of Chapter 4 "The Holiness of Klal Yisrael"

As Steve was waiting for the bus, an immodestly dressed woman came and stood at the bus stop. Steve thought to himself, "Here is a chance for me to increase my own spirituality." He did his best to avert his eyes by lowering his gaze while casually moving to the other side.

Steve felt encouraged knowing that by standing up to the test he enhanced his personal level of holiness.

Torah Study – The First Line of Defense

Let's now turn towards the writings of Rav Yisrael Salanter, who will map out a wise counsel for success to master eyes.

***“Without Mussar study, Divine Service cannot be established.”
(Ohr Yisrael, Letter Three)***

Why is that? Why do I need Mussar to serve G-d?

Avodat Hashem – Divine Service – is a general term that embraces a wide range and many levels of Torah observance. For our purposes, we are defining “Divine Service” as compliance with Torah Law (the *Halachah*) and Torah Ethics (Mussar). In this light, Divine Service encompasses the fulfillment of the Mitzvot (the positive commandments), and the avoidance of Aveirot (the prohibitions).

Therefore, an observant Jew performs Divine Service by observing the Torah to the best of his or her ability.

THE HOLY SOUL

A person's real essence is his good and holy soul. But because the soul is contained within a body, its light becomes dimmed. By performing the Mitzvot (Divine Service), the soul is able to express itself through good character traits and good deeds. A tzaddik is often described as having a shining countenance because his soul is so developed and radiant. However, if we do not observe the Mitzvot, the bodily forces gain the upper hand and we witness the emergence of improper deeds and base character traits.

“My son, give Me your heart and let your eyes observe My ways.” (*Mishlei* 23:26) The Midrash explains that Hashem is saying, “If you give me your heart and eyes, then you are My children. Whereas, if you do not give Me your heart and eyes, you are not Mine.” **Meaning, control of one's heart and eyes is the major criteria for being close to Hashem.**

A FIERY ELEMENT

Viewing improper images is one of the most detrimental forces to our spiritual equilibrium. It has the power to undo our entire spiritual foundation. How is that? Our soul is a fiery element. Just as water extinguishes a blazing fire, the impurity of improper

images extinguishes our spiritual powers. Even worse, since the eyes are connected to the brain, the images that we see remain lodged within our mind, causing lingering ill effects. Just as actual vision is impaired when the physical eye is injured, spiritual vision is impaired when the eyes are exposed to impure sights. This damage diminishes our ability to perceive the truth and to connect to Hashem.

FIRST STEP SOLUTION

The first line of defense for controlling our eyes and heart is Torah study. The Rambam explains that the heart only occupies itself with one thought at a time. If a man's heart is left to its own meanderings, it invariably gravitates towards impure thoughts. However, if the heart is occupied with Torah, it will be filled with holy thoughts. Therefore, Torah study is indispensable to gaining mastery over improper inclinations.

The positive thoughts stimulated by Torah study will empower us with the capability to serve Hashem.

TODAY: Dedicate daily time to Torah study and set up the first line of defense to mastering your eyes.

Practical Application of Chapter 5: "Torah Study – The First Line of Defense"

Steve is excited about the progress he is making in controlling his eyes and he knows there are many more tools and techniques that will help him even more.

"Rabbi Levy is starting a new class on Pirkei Avot right after Shacharit. It last for twenty minutes and is geared for businessmen who have a full day ahead of them. I am going to start attending – this will help me focus on Torah thoughts throughout my day."

Day Six

Transformation Through Torah Law

“The way to utilize the healing powers of Torah is to continually study the laws relevant to the particular transgression.”

“We know that transformation of human nature is generated by Torah study and the repeated practice of a desired good conduct or character trait. This method of study causes a strong alteration within one’s soul. Indeed, one’s character will gradually change so that the transgression is naturally distant from him.”

(Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, Igeres HaMussar)

How can study of Torah law help me control my negative impulse?

“Torah study in general is like preventive medicine that blocks the negative impulse, as our Sages said, “All the time that a person studies Torah, the Torah protects him.” Even if the Torah topic he is studying does not pertain to a particular sin, the spirituality of the Torah will protect him.

However, the development of Yirat Shamayim (i.e., the awareness of Hashem) and the study of the relevant laws is a primary remedy. A person needs to relate to a spiritual malady in the same manner as he does with physical illness. The strength and dosage of the remedy is proportionate to the severity of the illness. As long as the negative impulse is activated, there is a need to increase contemplation of Yirat Shamayim and the study of the appropriate laws. If a person does not use this primary remedy, then the general study of Torah will not have much influence over the negative impulse.”

(Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, Igeres HaMussar)

The combination of Mussar study with the study of Halachah is a powerful tool for combating our physical desires. In addition, the study of Halachah will enhance our observance of the Mitzvot, even if we are deficient in Yirat Shamayim.

If a person will sincerely and carefully study the laws regarding the eyes, a character transformation will take place. Learning what is forbidden and permitted to look at will effectively guard you from seeing improper sights.

Even though it can be hard in the beginning, don’t give up! The tremendous desire of the eyes and the prevalent practices of modern society make this a very difficult test. However, studying the Halachot is so powerful that you will soon develop new habits that will stay with you forever.

TODAY: Be encouraged by knowing that through Halachah study we have the means to master our eyes and change old habits.

Practical Application of Chapter 6: “Transformation Through Torah Study”

Steve attends a weekly Halachah class on the Laws of Shabbat, but he didn't realize there were also specific laws concerning Shmirat Einayim. He is interested to know these guidelines for his eyes and is setting up a weekly study session with his friend.

Day Seven

Know the Laws of Shmirat Einayim (Guarding One's Eyes)

Just as there are Torah laws that regulate our speech, there are Torah laws that regulate our sight. When we are first introduced to the laws of *Shmirat HaLoshon*, we might feel overwhelmed. However, with study and practice, we learn how to guard ourselves from evil speech and we reap both spiritual and emotional benefits.

When we first learn the laws about regulating our eyes we also think, “This is impossible! There's no way I can be this careful.” However, the more we understand the wisdom of these laws, the more fulfillment we will derive from their observance and the more motivated we will become.

The Four Primary Laws Pertaining to Looking and Thinking about Women: (Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer, Chapter 21, Law 1)

For the sake of clarity and implementation, we have summarized these rulings. By familiarizing ourselves with these laws, we will have a ready and practical guide to live by:

1. It is forbidden to look at a woman if she is dressed immodestly. (There are different laws regarding one's wife.)

2. A. If we know of an area where immodestly dressed women are present, it is forbidden to enter this area. An alternative route must be taken.

B. However, if it is necessary to pass this route and there no alternative route, or the alternative route is impractical or costly, a person is permitted to pass through an area of immodestly dressed women, providing he makes every reasonable effort to avoid seeing the immodest sights.

3. It is forbidden to have thoughts of desire for any woman (There are different laws regarding one's wife).

4. It is forbidden to derive pleasure from looking at the beauty of a woman, even if she is modestly dressed (There are different laws regarding one's wife).

Clearly, these laws are not easy to apply in situations where women cannot be avoided, such as a work setting. The upcoming segments will deal with specific advice and techniques regarding various scenarios.

Does the Torah think men are angels? How can any man realistically fulfill these laws?

It is very true that controlling the eyes is a tremendous challenge. However with sincere motivation you will ultimately prevail. The Torah does not expect that we will instantaneously master our eyes. Changing ourselves requires study and the persistent practice of new behavior until it becomes second nature. By studying this guidebook and applying its principles, we will eventually be able to fulfill the Torah's laws regarding our eyes.

TODAY: Make a periodic review of these laws in order to strengthen their observance.

Practical Application of Chapter 7: "Know the Laws of Shmirat Einayim"

"At first, these laws are a little overwhelming," thinks Steve. "However, I can handle them knowing that we don't have to change overnight. By reviewing the laws on a timely basis, I will little by little integrate them into my life."

After studying these laws a few times, Steve put his knowledge into action. This morning he walked into the conference room for a business meeting. Three of the six people in the room were women, two were dressed immodestly. Because the laws were fresh in his mind, he immediately was conscious of guarding his eyes. He was very careful where he looked – and it made a great difference in his control.

Day Eight

Understand the Relevancy of Shmirat Einayim

“When B’nai Yisrael went down to Egypt, they conducted themselves with modesty – each person living within in his own tent, as the verse says (Shemot 1): “Each man and his household came.’ Reuven did not look at Shimon’s wife, nor did Shimon look at Reuven’s wife. Rather each man dwelt modestly within his own tent. Even when the population of men numbered 600,000 in the Midbar, not one man placed the opening of his tent opposite the opening of his friend’s tent.”
(Yalkut Shimoni, Balak)

In ancient days people were different and life was different too. In the modern world, we are so used to seeing women in public that we have grown somewhat ‘immune’ to them. Therefore, shouldn’t we modify these laws and teachings?

Yes, times have changed. Consequently, there are some leniencies in the fine details of some of these laws. Please consult your Rabbi for specific questions and rulings. However, the four laws that we learned in Day Seven are *d’oraitah* and immutable. Perhaps the following story will shed light on your question.

THE WEDDING

One of the greatest Ba’alie Mussar, was Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian, who taught Torah for over seventy years in Eretz Yisrael. One of his students was invited to a wedding in the U.S. where the laws of modesty would not be observed. He asked Rabbi Lopian if he could attend the wedding. The Rabbi asked what he would do about the immodest sights. The student told his Rabbi that the sight of immodest women does not affect him. At that point Rabbi Lopian took a book of Tehillim and started praying. “Rabbi, what are you doing?” asked the student.

Rabbi Lopian responded, “I am 86 years old and blind in one eye. Nevertheless, I am still affected by human nature. You are young and in the prime of your life. If you are not affected by immodest sights, then perhaps you have an illness. Therefore, I am saying Tehillim for your recovery!”

KING SOLOMON

King Solomon was the wisest of men. He knew that the Torah placed a limit on how many wives a king was permitted to have. However, he thought to himself, “The Torah’s restriction is for an average king. Since I am so wise, the Torah’s law does not apply to me.” He increased his number of wives beyond the maximum allowed by the Torah. As a

result: “He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines ...when he was old his wives turned his heart away.”

King Solomon, a pure and holy Tzadik, was the son of Dovid HaMelech. He was the Gadol HaDor and the wisest man who ever lived. He had Ruach HaKodesh and composed the holy books of Shir HaShirim, Mishlei, and Kohellet. Despite his unfathomable greatness, he was not immune to being influenced by an aspect of desire. Therefore, how much more so should we, who are far from his level, take every precaution to fulfill these Halachot. **Even if we don’t fully understand the relevancy of the laws, we should observe them so that we will be under the protective shadow of the Torah.**

TODAY: Defer to the wisdom of the Torah regarding the laws of the eyes and guard the holiness of your soul.

Practical Application of Chapter 8: “Understand the Relevancy of Shmirat Einayim”

“This answers an important question for me,” says Steve. “Sometimes I am invited to events where the laws of modesty are not observed. However, I felt that it was impolite not to attend. Now I understand I should not compromise on Torah values. There are ways I could express my congratulations while upholding the Halacha. For instance, if it is a wedding, in some situations I might attend the Chupah and then leave before the celebration; or I could give a nice gift and write a note explaining that I was not able to attend.”

Day Nine

Listen to Your Soul

Physical desires urge a man to call the impure, “Pure!” However, at the time of his final judgment before Hashem, his corrupt conduct and improper indulgences will be called “Impure!” And he will be recompensed accordingly. (Ohr Yisrael, Letter Four)

What does it mean that we are urged by our desires to call the impure, “Pure!”?

Physical desire in our generation is like a fire out of control. It is a nearly uncontrollable force of great strength and danger. Like a salesman with an “I won’t take no for an answer” attitude, it is relentless in its effort to sell us a slick catalogue of goodies with

every imaginable inappropriate desire. But the lofty soul objects, saying, “This is an *aveirah* (a transgression).”

Shouldn't the objection of the intelligent and sensitive soul suffice to stop the momentum of desire? Yet we often act in ways that are against our better judgment. Think about the abuse of alcohol, cigarettes, food and money. Consider the consequences of anger, jealousy, and greed. How can we explain the fact that people often fail to control themselves even when they know they should?

THE FURTHEST DISTANCE

Desire silences intelligence by intensifying itself until it extinguishes the objections of the soul. That is, passion blinds a person from thinking rationally. As Rav Yisrael said, “The distance between the mind and the heart is as far as the distance from the earth to the heavens.” What we know is not necessarily, what we feel, nor does it govern our behavior.

Earthly desires are so powerful that they can short-circuit our own value system. We might end up doing something that we ourselves consider inappropriate and immoral.

For instance, when a person sees an improper image his **desire** is awakened to look more closely. Immediately his **soul** objects saying, “This is an *aveirah*.” The desire then counters by intensifying itself and drowning out our reason.

The wisdom of Mussar helps us understand what is taking place so we can protect ourselves. Knowing that our desire will try to stifle our soul gives us the means to control our eyes. **With our new wisdom of Mussar, we have the sensitivity to listen to our intellect.** Now we have a chance to win!

TODAY: Remember that desire will intensify in order to drown out the voice of reason. Understand that and listen closely to your soul.

Practical Application of Chapter 9: “Listen to Your Soul”

At the office, Steve sits next to Larry. Steve could not help noticing that Larry was viewing an improper image on his screen. Steve immediately turned away so that the image would not catch his eye.

“This is a battle between my soul and my body. If I follow the whims of desire, I will ruin my spirituality. If I follow my wise soul I will enhance my spiritual powers.”

Day Ten

A Balanced Approach: Treat Women with Respect

**“Elokim created man in His image; in the image of Elokim He created him.”
“Common courtesy precedes Torah.”**

The laws about controlling our eyes seem very extreme. And in some cases not looking at a woman could be construed as rudeness.

Yes, there are certain situations that could be uncomfortable and awkward. Naturally every situation requires tact and common sense. The law does not expect us to treat modestly dressed women as if they do not exist. The following story shows us the balance between controlling our eyes and treating women respectfully.

RABBI SIMCHA ZISSEL ZIV

Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv, one of the greatest sages of Mussar, came into a restaurant accompanied by a colleague. The owner of the restaurant was delighted that two great Rabbis came to eat in her restaurant. She prepared a lavish meal and served them herself with respect and joy.

During the course of the meal, in her excitement over hosting such important guests, she told them many details about her food preparation and the running of her business. Rabbi Simcha Zissel listened attentively, responding and asking questions whereas the other Rabbi studied a book and paid no attention to the woman's conversation.

When the guests came to pay for the meal, she refused to accept their money. “Should I lose the merit of this Mitzvah,” she explained, “for a few coins?”

Afterwards, Rabbi Simcha Zissel turned to his friend and said, “Aren't you concerned that you ate and drank without paying?”

"What do you mean?" his companion replied, "She refused any payment!"

"You're right," said Rabbi Simcha Zissel, "She didn't want any money. But she wanted very much to speak with us and you completely ignored her. Therefore you benefited from her meal without giving her any compensation."

Rabbi Simcha Zissel was very considerate of the woman. **He maintained the halachot of guarding his eyes without compromising the Torah axiom to show appreciation to others.** We learn from his example that each situation requires good judgment. When women are dressed modestly, we are able to observe the Torah's laws regarding the eyes and at the same time give them the proper respect.

TODAY: Use a balanced approach – observe the laws of Shmirat Einayim and treat women with the proper respect.

Practical Application of Chapter 10: “A Balanced Approach: Treat Women with Respect”

Tonight Steve is attending Shevah Brachot at the Cohen’s house. Before reading this chapter, Steve wasn’t sure what the proper “Torah etiquette” is – should he thank the hostess or is it better not to say anything?

Based on today’s lesson, Steve cordially greets Mrs. Cohen when he arrives. Then he sat with a friend and participated in the festive meal and Shevah Brachot. Afterwards, he thanks Mrs. Cohen for inviting him and preparing such a delicious meal. He felt that she appreciated his compliments.

Day Eleven

The Remedy – The Study of Mussar

“Who will show us the straight path? Yirat Shamayim rules over everything. Awareness of Hashem has the power to curb desire, so that it will not overstep its bounds.” (Ohr Yisrael, Letter Four)

Awareness of Hashem is hard to achieve in today’s lifestyle. Can’t we succeed in our spiritual quest without attaining Awareness of Hashem?

King Solomon explained that Awareness of Hashem is the sole antidote for the negative impulse. The Awareness of Hashem is the awareness that:

- (1) Hashem sees our actions and knows our thoughts.
- (2) Hashem judges all of our deeds and metes out the consequences. The reward and punishment that the soul experiences in the World to Come, is infinitely greater than the pleasure and pain of this world.

It is critically important to understand that without genuine Awareness of Hashem, it is impossible to master desire. Just as a security guard will deter a thief from robbing a store, only the awareness that we are in G-d’s presence, will empower us with the ability to control our eyes.

MUSSAR STUDY

The most effective way to acquire Awareness of Hashem is through the daily study of Mussar, which is the ethical teachings of the Torah and character refinement. Some of the classical Mussar texts are: Mesilat Yesharim (The Path of the Just), Orchot Tzadikim (The Ways of the Righteous), Chovot HaLevavot (Duties of the Heart), Ohr Yisrael, Pirkei Avot, Mishlei, and Kohellet.

In the book Maggid Mesharim, Rav Yoseph Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch, records Torah teachings and secrets that were revealed to him by an angel. Once the angel said, “Read one section from Chovot HaLevavot every day in order to humble the negative impulse.” If Rav Yoseph Caro, who was a pure and holy *tzadik*, was told to learn Mussar every day, is there any question that we need to learn Mussar every day to humble our negative impulse?

In fact, the Rosh, the Tur, the Arizal, the Vilna Gaon as well as the Mishneh Berurah (Chapter 1 and 603) ruled that every person should study Mussar every day.

THE PRIMARY REMEDY

Continuous Mussar study over time will instill the awareness that Hashem sees our actions and knows our thoughts. **This is the primary and indispensable weapon to gain self-mastery and win the battle over the eyes.**

Once we have attained Awareness of Hashem, we have a force at our disposal that can contend with and overcome our desires. When we are tempted to look at something improper, our Awareness of Hashem will remind us, “Hashem sees all of our actions and knows our innermost thoughts. All of our deeds will ultimately be judged by G-d.”

TODAY: *Make a commitment to study Mussar each day for about twenty minutes.*

The Method of Mussar Study

1. Select a Mussar book from the ones mentioned above.
2. Schedule a daily time for Mussar study.
3. Read it aloud so that it penetrates your heart.
4. Even if you don't sense any immediate change – persevere – with time you will be transformed and elevated.

Internalize

1. Highlight key ideas.
2. Write these ideas on an index card.
3. Carry the card with you.
4. Review the ideas a few times a day.

Guidelines

1. The key to success in Mussar is incremental steps.
2. Devote about 20 minutes a day to Mussar study.
3. Absorb the concepts at your own pace.
4. Know that Mussar is healing your soul.

Day Twelve

Make a Spiritual Accounting

Rav Yisrael teaches us two other techniques for increasing our awareness of Hashem so we can effectively control our behavior. The first method is “Searching for the Truth.”

“We should endeavor to place the truth before us and use purity as a lamp for our feet. Therefore, we must look deeply into our deeds and the fruits of our thoughts.”
(Ohr Yisrael, Letter 4)

A person who contemplates his path in this world will merit seeing the deliverance of Hashem. (Moad Katan 5a)

That sounds like a good thing to do but truthfully, I'm too busy to take the time.
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When we were slaves in Egypt, Pharaoh was concerned that we would rebel and overthrow his rulership. In order to prevent us from organizing a rebellion, he placed upon us a heavy and continuous workload, as we find in the verse (*Shemos 5:9*): “Intensify the burdens of the people.” That way we wouldn't have a spare minute to create a strategy.

Just as Pharaoh denied us time for reflection and action, the fast pace of modern life gives us little time to contemplate our conduct. Even if we have learned the laws regulating our eyes, it's possible that we may have grown lax concerning some of the laws.

VISUAL MISJUDGMENTS

The Ramchal in his Mesilat Yesharim (Chapter 3) explains that the darkness of night causes two types of visual misjudgments:

- (1) We cannot see a stumbling block in our path.
- (2) We see something and imagine it to be something else. For instance, we see a tree and imagine it to be a man.

The nature of this world also causes two types of misperceptions:

- (1) We may fail to realize that a certain behavior conflicts with Halachah.
- (2) We rationalize doing an *aveira* by insisting that it is a Mitzvah.

For example, even though we know we're prohibited from looking at a woman who is dressed immodestly, we may not realize that includes the female teller in the bank. After all, if we close our eyes, how can we conduct our business? So we decide that the prohibition does not apply in this case or that it's even a Mitzvah to look at her because it's necessary in order to accomplish our mission.

SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTING

The only way to check whether our conduct is consistent with the principles of Torah is to establish a daily set time to examine our deeds. First we review the basic principles regarding regulating our eyes. Secondly, we review our deeds to see which conduct we should strengthen and which actions we should eliminate.

This is a highly effective way to strengthen the performance of good deeds and uproot *aveirot*. Through a regular evaluation of our deeds, we can determine if we are being influenced by desire. This system of checks and balances will help us to achieve mastery of our eyes.

TODAY: *Take a few minutes in the evening to review your conduct for that day.*

SAMPLE CHART

Here is a sample chart to make a daily accounting. Place a “check” for controlling eyes; place a “minus sign” when you did not exercise control.

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
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1. I controlled my eyes from seeing improper sights.

2. I took an alternative route when possible.

3. I took a route where immodest women are found and controlled my eyes.

1. I cut off improper thoughts.

2. Whenever I controlled my eyes I remembered that “I am holy.”

3. I reviewed the four laws on Day Seven.

Day Thirteen

Guidelines for Entering Immodest Areas

Applying the prohibition “Not to go to places where there are immodestly dressed women.”

In today’s world, this law seems impossible to keep. There are immodestly dressed women almost everywhere.

The wisdom of the Torah is eternal. The People of Israel have lived by the laws of the Torah for thousands of years. Wherever we have settled during our long exile – from Babylon to Burbank – we have observed the laws of the Torah. They emanate from HaShem’s Eternal Light and their practice is eternal and universal.

Yes, avoiding areas where women are immodestly dressed is a great challenge. However, the Halachah gives us a path to proceed. Firstly, if there is an alternative route, it is forbidden to take the path that leads past immodestly dressed women.

Yet, if there is no other reasonable alternative route, then you are permitted to walk in this area. However, you must observe the following guidelines:

1. Lower your gaze or partially close your eyes when you pass immodestly dressed women. (*Bava Batra 57b*, see the Rashbam)
2. Ensure that they will not be in your view for an extended period of time.
3. If a man knows that he cannot avoid looking at the immodestly dressed women, then he cannot go into that area.

If you inadvertently see an immodestly dressed woman, you are not responsible as long as you didn't intentionally look at her.

In an area of inappropriate sights, use strategies to keep your mind focused. For instance, as you enter the area, listen to a *shiur* on a portable device or call someone on your cell-phone. In addition, be prepared to turn your eyes away or close them as needed.

A person who looks downward or shuts his eyes when he walks through an immodest area is called “a saintly man,” in keeping with the verse (*Ishaiah 33:15-16*) “One who shuts his eyes from a bad image will dwell in the heights.”

TODAY: *If you must be in an area of immodestly dressed women keep your eyes lowered and distract yourself with something worthwhile.*

Practical Application of Chapter 13: “Guidelines for Entering Immodest Areas”

Steve has a meeting on Lexington Ave. The shortest way to get there would take him down a street that has many challenging images. In order to avoid these images he takes a few extra minutes and walks around the corner to the next street. With a small effort on his part, Steve protects his eyes, and arrives for his meeting right on time.

Day Fourteen

Lower Your Gaze

“When an army plans a war, the generals design a strategy. They consider every detail and prepare for every scenario. However, when the war is actually fought, there are always unforeseen events and situations that will come into play. Therefore, the

generals retain a flexible posture and prepare a backup plan in order to adjust the strategy as the war unfolds.” (Ohr Yisrael, Letter 19)

Whenever we plan to battle the negative impulse regarding our eyes, we have to remember that this plan is only an approximation. When we go out in public, we have to expect the unexpected.

The Vilna Gaon would review the second chapter in Mesilat Yesharim which talks about “Watchfulness,” thirteen times before going out into the street. We are not on that level; however, it is an indication of how careful we have to be when entering the danger zone.

COUNTLESS IMAGES

Once we leave the privacy of our homes, we will be confronted with countless images that will present themselves before us. The eye is a sensitive organ that is stimulated by any image that enters its field of view. However, most of these images are unnecessary and a great number of them are harmful.

Since the intention of most of these images is to catch the eye, most of them are positioned at eye-level. Without a doubt the eye scans a wide area, and all the images in that range are competing for the eye’s attention. Unrestrained, the eye darts up and down, here and there, back and forth, reacting to everything it sees. The more stimulating the image, the more the eye will be attracted to it.

The eye does not naturally lower its gaze below eye-level. **Therefore we have to make a conscious effort to lower our gaze in order to protect our eyes.** This basic strategy is easy and attainable and it doesn't mean staring at your shoes and bumping into street poles or poking along looking strange.

Just direct your eyes towards the direction you are walking. This takes in an area of about five to ten feet on our pathway. Although lowering our gaze is a wondrous and effective strategy, it is not foolproof. Therefore, just like the generals we have to have a contingency plan

TODAY: Make a conscious effort to keep your gaze below eye-level when you are in a public place.

Practical Application of Chapter 14: “Lower Your Gaze”

You can't imagine how effective this advice is until you try it. As soon as I started using it, I naturally removed the majority of improper sights from my view. When I walk in public, I lower my gaze a bit. I make adjustments as I go along, until I am able to avoid the majority of improper images.

At first, it felt unnatural and I thought people might say to me, ‘Hey, why are you looking downwards.’ But nobody ever notices.

Day Fifteen

Training The Eye

“Man has the ability to gain mastery over his nature. Indeed, through Mussar study and force of habit a person can transform himself. In reference to this, our Sages teach (Avot 4:1): “Who is strong? He who subdues his passions, as it is said: ‘A master of his passions is greater than the conqueror of a city’ (Mishlei 16:32).”
(Ohr Yisrael, Igeres HaMussar)

How can I retrain myself from my normal way of keeping my eyes at eye-level?
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Since keeping our eyes lowered is not the norm we need to accustom ourselves to our new eye position. The best way to change an old habit is to consciously practice a new behavior. Over time, the new pattern of behavior will become second nature.

Here is an exercise that is designed to help you readjust the level of your gaze. Just as an army practices their battle plans before going into the heat of the battle, we recommend practicing these exercises when you have a few spare moments.

Exercise #1: “Walking With Humility”

1. Choose a quiet area in your home or yard and designate a twenty foot length as a practice path.
2. Lower your gaze so that it takes in about five to ten feet of the path.
3. Begin walking and keep your eyes focused on the five feet length, moving your eyes a little further down the path as you walk.
4. Proceed this way until you reach the end of path.
5. Turn around and repeat the exercise, returning to the starting point.

6. Do this exercise, every day for one week (walking the path back and forth at least one time each time.).

Exercise #2: “Focused Vision”

The eyes are extremely curious. Here is an effective exercise that trains us to realize that we can fully participate in life without seeing every detail occurring in front of us.

1. Explain to your family or friends that you are going to close your eyes for a few minutes.
2. Close your eyes, and experience the events and conversations without seeing them.
3. Be conscious of how much you are aware of what is happening, even without seeing.

TODAY: *Begin practicing your new exercises and know you are performing an important Mitzvah.*

Practical Application of Chapter 15: “Training the Eye”

At first, these exercises might seem unnecessary but they are very helpful. I found that if I did them just one time, they helped me keep my eyes under control. I did them for a few days – and it just takes few minutes for each one. These exercises showed me how curious the eyes are, and how easy they are to control through making a conscious effort. Now, I do them once a week or whenever I feel I need a tune up.

Day Sixteen

Consistency and Learning by Experience

“Routine and experience are the keys to control in every matter.”
(Ohr Yisrael, Letter Four)

“The keys to control” are exactly what I need! What are the keys and how do we apply them to mastering our eyes?

The word "routine" implies that self-improvement does not happen overnight. Character refinement is a process that takes time. Therefore, one must develop a routine practice of guarding his eyes. By making it a habit, he will eventually train his eyes to naturally avoid looking at improper images.

RABBI AKIVA

We cannot detect the movement of the hour hand on a clock unless we look at it intermittently. In the same way, it's hard to detect the character transformation that takes place through Mussar study and practice.

Rabbi Akiva became discouraged when he began learning Torah at age 40 and did not notice any improvement in his character.

Subsequently, he sat down near a spring and noticed a rock with a hole that had been made by the dripping water. Rabbi Akiva then remarked (*Avot D'Rebbi Natan*, Chapter 6), “If water which is soft can carve into a rock which is hard, than surely the Torah, which is so strong, can penetrate my heart which is only flesh and blood.”

This insight of undetectable but certain change encouraged Rabbi Akiva to rededicate himself to Torah. **He understood that every word he learned infused him with spiritual health, life, and holiness.** This awareness propelled him to become one of the greatest of our Sages, understanding areas of Torah that even Moshe Rabenu did not know.

EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER

“Experience” suggests that there will be slip-ups and mistakes along the way. For instance, a person may not be prepared for unexpected images or challenging situations. Mistakes are part of the learning process. We need to learn the pitfalls in order to avoid them. Even if someone has the strongest dedication to avoiding improper images, the Talmud states (*Gittin* 43a): “A person can only learn after he has erred.”

The realization that mastery over the eyes takes time and experience is very important for two reasons. First, to avoid the unrealistic expectation of instant change. And secondly, to understand that without occasional mistakes, we cannot really grasp the lesson.

Considering the tendency of human nature to be attracted to improper images, it is virtually impossible for a person to instantly master his eyes. Rather, the slip-ups are part of the training process. Just as a soldier needs the experience of actual combat to learn how to fight successfully, learning from true encounters will give us the keys to mastering our eyes.

If we react with guilt and despair every time we fall short, we will never learn from our mistakes. However, if we identify the exact mistake, we will eventually learn not to repeat it, as Rav Yisrael concludes, “Routine and experience are the keys to control in every matter.”

TODAY: Use “*the light of your mistakes*” to pave the road to success. And be patient!

Practical Application of Chapter 16: “Consistency and Learning by Experience”

“The idea about learning from our mistakes really speaks to me,” says Steve. “It’s like a baby learning to walk. Nobody faults her when she falls down because we know she is just learning to walk. We appreciate that she is making a great effort. We applaud every step she makes. If she falls, we react with compassion and encouragement.

It’s the same way with our eyes. We sincerely want to learn how to master our eyes. If we slip up, we have gained the knowledge of where we are vulnerable. We sensitize ourselves so that we will be able to anticipate that trap and not fall into it again. This is a wonderful method towards attaining our goals.”

Day Seventeen

Design a Strategic Plan

“Man utilizes Wisdom of the World to contemplate the results of his business affairs. He can therefore endeavor to rectify things before trouble occurs – each person according to his own ability. We have the ability to learn from our mistakes. According to the degree that we refuse to embrace foolishness, so will our wisdom increase.”
(Ohr Yisrael, Letter Four)

This is an interesting idea. Can you make it more practical?
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An entrepreneur makes every effort not to repeat his mistakes. The consequences of business errors are clear because they cause financial loss, which is a powerful motivator. "To embrace foolishness," means to make the same mistakes over and over. By refusing to do that, we become wiser.

Our goal to master our eyes follows the same rules for success. **The more we know about the detrimental effects of improper images, the more motivated we will be to avoid hurting ourselves.** Even more, we will prepare ourselves in advance by having a plan to avoid viewing improper sights.

ALAN'S DILEMMA

The last time Alan walked down 53rd St. on the way to his office, he inadvertently saw an indecent image. The image lodged in his mind and he struggled with the effects all day. When he recited *Birkat HaMazon* after lunch, he had trouble concentrating.

Alan does not want to jeopardize his spirituality, his ability to do Mitzvot or his share in the World to Come. Moreover, even if he avoids the image on 53rd Street, there will be no end to the other indecent images waiting for him.

He decides to implement a strategy to protect himself when he enters the city. He prepares his plan using classic *Wisdom of the World*. Alan decides that before he leaves his home each day, he will:

- (1) Take a few moments to think about the prevalent practice of modern society to display improper images.
- (2) He'll also think about the spiritual downfall caused by viewing them.
- (3) In addition, he will review the four primary laws taught in Day Seven.

TODAY: *Prepare yourself before you leave your home. Remember that society bombards us with indecent images, and resolve to avoid seeing them to the best of your ability.*

Practical Application of Chapter 17: "Design a Strategic Plan"

"For me," says Steve, "the best way to make a plan is by taking a few minutes after I make my 'spiritual accounting' and think about what I need to work on for the next day. I like to keep improving the strategies. I look at it like a chess game – the more I think about my next move, the better it will be. Also, when I think about things at home, outside the intensity of the city, it gives me the objectivity to see what strategies will be more effective."

"For instance, last night when I made my spiritual accounting, I noted that when I am on a crowded escalator, there is just no place that I can safely look. So I came up with a plan. Next time I get on the escalator I will try to position myself behind a man and keep my eyes downward until I get to the top."

Day Eighteen

Modest Dress at the Workplace

"Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'Who is this woman?'" (Ruth 2:5)

Boaz noticed that Ruth conducted herself with modesty. She sat while gathering the sheaves on the ground so she would not have to bend and expose her legs. (Rashi)

The workplace usually involves men and women working together. How can an employer apply the laws regarding proper dress to his staff?

In many ways, the owner of a company is like a father figure to his employees. He provides them with an honest occupation so they can earn a livelihood. The boss understands that the better he treats his employees, the better they will fulfill their tasks. In the bigger firms, the company provides health care packages, pension plans, and other benefits.

The employer also serves as a role model, setting the standards for business ethics and personal integrity.

Employers want to create a healthy environment in the workplace. They encourage teamwork and good interpersonal relations. In this light, the employer surely wants the office to be free of inappropriate conduct.

ELIYAHU

One day Eliyahu the prophet, was asked by Rabbi Beroka Hazah, to show him someone in the marketplace who was destined for the World to Come. Eliyahu pointed out a person and said, "He is destined for the World to Come." The Rabbi approached the man and asked him, "What is your occupation?" He answered, "I am a warden in the prison. I separate the men and women and I place my bed between them so that they will not sin. When I see a Jewish girl in whom the non-Jews are interested, I risk my life to protect her." (Ta'anis 22a)

This account sheds light on the incomparable merit of guarding the environment from unethical and immodest behavior.

A RESPECTABLE DRESS-CODE

One of the most important ingredients for a company's success is the establishment of a respectful dress-code. Immodest dress gives off a carefree, enticing message, which interferes with a business atmosphere and professionalism. Immodest dress can be the catalyst for major personal and financial setbacks. The worst thing for business morale is an office scandal.

You might be thinking that as much as you want to establish a dress code, you can't see how you can communicate these ideas to your employees. However, the current trend in office attire calls for appropriate dress. For instance, Human Resource experts have written about the importance of a dress code, from a secular point of view. An article entitled, *Dress for Work Success: A Business Casual Dress Code*, states: "Clothing that reveals too much back, chest, or leg is not appropriate for a place of business, even in a business casual setting."

Today, dress codes are acceptable – and recommended – throughout the business world. Your employees have heard about dress codes from their friends and colleagues. They will not be offended or surprised if you tactfully ask them to dress appropriately.

It is understood that appropriate attire helps to keep the focus on productivity, efficiency, and achievement. Mutual respect fosters a wholesome environment. Workers can focus on their work without having to contend with undue distractions. Clients and customers appreciate a professional atmosphere.

Any employer who considers the benefits of modest dress in the workplace will want to implement a dress code. As a father figure and role model, he will wish to utilize every opportunity for enhancing the lives of his employees. Respectful dress is an important component in helping others conduct themselves with dignity and morality.

TODAY: *Whether you are an employer or an employee, consider the advantages of modest dress at the workplace.*

Practical Application of Chapter 18: “Modest Dress at the Workplace”

The key to instituting a dress code with employees is effective communication. Here is an example of a memo that you could send to your employees announcing the new dress code policy. Of course, each company will adapt the policy that best suits their needs:

“Research studies have shown that respectful dress improves efficiency between co-workers and creates more productivity with clients. Appropriate attire projects a professional image. In addition, it enhances the social ambiance of the office, making a more pleasant atmosphere for all concerned.

Therefore, we have decided to institute a dress code in our company. The dress code establishes a standard that the average person is comfortable with, and with a little flexibility, can live with. The code applies to both men and women. We ask our employees not to wear jeans, sweat pants, shorts, or tee shirts. Clothes should be clean and pressed. Men should wear a button down shirt with dark colored slacks. As always, for some employees, suits are required for key meetings.

Women should avoid sheer fabrics and sleeveless blouses. The neckline and the length of the skirt or dress should be “conservative.”

We have established a “dress-code budget” as an incentive for our employees to comply with our new dress code.”

Whenever we interview a new employee, we show him this memo.

Many people have complimented our company for their respectful dress and courteous interaction with our customers. It seems like respectful dress and good conduct compliment each other.

Day Nineteen

Vanquish Improper Thoughts

It is forbidden to have thoughts of desire for any women. (There are different laws regarding one's wife.)

Improper thoughts defile our spirit and in turn, these thoughts are the cause of misdeeds. Therefore, cutting off an improper thought before it initiates an act is the root of all goodness. As the Mishneh says, (Avos 4:2): “A sin leads to another sin, and a Mitzvah leads to another Mitzvah.”

If your mind is full of improper desires, you will have a tendency to repeat that pattern. But if you succeed in conquering your negative impulse – and just one time shut your eyes from seeing immodest images – it will be progressively easier for you to control your eyes and thoughts.

(Sefer HaChinuch 387 Shelach)

I understand the importance of controlling my eyes from seeing improper sights, but how is it possible to control my thoughts?

When a person looks with desire at a woman (who is not permitted to him), it causes spiritual impurity. In fact, Chazal (*Yoma 29a*) tell us that a desirous thought for a woman is even worse than committing the illicit act. That is, it is far more difficult to control thoughts than actions. In addition, because thoughts are private, it is hard to motivate oneself to repentance for improper thoughts. Whereas, an improper deed is tangible and known, therefore, it serves as an impetus towards repentance.

However, if a man masters his improper thoughts this is “the root of all goodness.” Cutting off the improper thought reverses the negative streak and becomes the genesis of four good things:

- (1) He protects his mind from impurity.
- (2) He stops the inclination to commit a sin.
- (3) He initiates good thoughts.

(4) He performs more and more good deeds because “One Mitzvah leads to another Mitzvah.”

A person might think it's too difficult to stop thinking about women. Therefore, the Sefer HaChinuch reassures us that we can change our behavior patterns regarding women. “If you master your *yatzer hora* and close your eyes just once from seeing improper images, it will become progressively easier for you to control your eyes and thoughts.”

Even if a person is caught in a chain of improper thoughts, he can break the chain by cutting off his thoughts just once. Spiritual levels ascend progressively. **The merit of closing our eyes one time will create a propensity and empower us to reach successive levels of holiness.**

TODAY: Remember that by cutting off improper thoughts just once, you begin a new habit of control.

Practical Application of Chapter 19: “Vanquish Improper Thoughts”

“I never thought that I could control my thoughts,” said Steve. “But now I use this formula of stopping the thought as soon as it comes, and it really works. What encourages me is the knowledge that if I cut off the thought, my life takes on a new reality. My soul is elevated to a higher level. That means through controlling my thoughts, I have the power to continually improve my spiritual standing.”

You know, Rabbi Levy told me something that the Chofetz Chaim wrote in the Mishneh Berurah (Chapter 98:2) that helps control one’s thoughts. That is, when you are walking through an immodest area, say to yourself the verse of Psalms (51:12), ‘Elokim, create a pure heart within me and renew my spirit.’ Saying the holy words of King David uplifts my soul.’

Day Twenty

Respect the Privacy of Other People

“It is forbidden to derive pleasure from looking at the beauty of a woman, even if she is modestly dressed.”

This is hard to understand. What is so bad about merely looking at a beautiful woman, especially if she's modestly dressed?

Let me ask you one simple question. How would you feel if another man entertained immodest thoughts about your wife? Even if he were your best friend or relative,

wouldn't you be offended? Then again, your wife is an attractive woman. Isn't your friend just having a normal human reaction?

The answer is obvious. Marital relationships are exclusively private. The Sages' word for marriage is *Kiddushin*. This means "consecrated." Once married by Torah law, husband and wife are consecrated to each other. Their relationship is exclusive on every level. A Jewish wife is forbidden to every other man, except her own husband.

Therefore, if a man looks with desire at a married woman, even if she is modestly dressed, he is breaching the privacy of her relationship with her own husband.

The same respect must be shown to a modestly dressed woman who is single. Her beauty is reserved for the man she will eventually marry. Looking at her with desire leads to impure thoughts as the verse says: "Guard yourself from every bad thing."

IN OUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE

If in our professional life we need to speak to a woman who is modestly dressed, we should first determine if we are able to speak to her while maintaining proper thoughts. If we decide that we can, we must remember to utilize everything we have learned up to now and we should keep the words to a minimum.

The Talmud (Bava Basra 168a) tells us that Rabbi Yirmiyah ben Abba once served as a witness for a loan. However, when the creditor came to collect the money, Rabbi Yirmiyah ben Abba did not recognize the woman whom had borrowed it. However, the other witnesses told Rabbi Yirmiyah that it was the same woman but she had aged. Abaye explained that it is not the nature of a Torah scholar to take particular note of a woman's face. Therefore, Rabbi Yirmiyah ben Abba did not have a strong recollection of the incident.

Although, we are far from the holy status of Rabbi Yirmiyah ben Abba, nevertheless, we can learn from him. **With the wisdom of Torah and Mussar, we will find inner reserves of strength and dignity to speak to modestly dressed women while retaining our holiness and purity.**

TODAY: *Preserve your dignity by respecting the privacy of others.*

Practical Application of Chapter 20: "Respect The Privacy Of Other People"

This afternoon, Steve has a meeting with Mrs. Cohen about printing the invitations. He reminds himself that by fulfilling the Mitzvah of keeping his eyes in check, he effectively respects her privacy as well as preserves his own integrity.

“I would never have imagined that it was possible to exercise such control over human nature,” said Steve. “But now that I know the Halachah, I have the confidence to conduct myself accordingly.”

Day Twenty-One

Beware of the Enticing Nature of the World

The second concept for increasing awareness of Hashem is called “Wisdom of the World.”

“It is important to deepen our understanding of the ways of the world, which are deceptive. The various temptations of the world entrap people in their web, each person according to his own tendencies. (This understanding of the world is called “Wisdom of the World”).” (Ohr Yisrael, Letter Four)

I enjoy life and see the world as a beautiful place. What is meant by the deceptive nature of the world?

Wisdom of the World gives us the insight to live a pure and wholesome life. It encompasses these four basic strategies:

(1) Recognize the enticing nature of the world. For instance, as we walk through town, every fast-food place tries to tempt us. Sizzling steaks, mouth-watering ice cream, the tantalizing aroma of fresh coffee, chewy bagels, ice-cold coke, fresh pastry, and piping hot pizza... Yes, it is instant gratification. But at what a cost!

(2) Understand that there are appetites in human nature that are triggered by the various sensory attractions. What’s more, it’s very difficult to resist desire because desire is rooted in the subconscious. Before we smelled the pizza, we weren’t even thinking about eating. However, once the aroma hits our olfactory sense, our craving for pizza is aroused and we eat.

(3) Know that surrendering to your cravings can be detrimental to your well-being.

(4) Prepare a plan in advance to protect yourself from being entrapped by your physical desires.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

The world's enticements are the primary cause of sin and self-destruction. In fact, the very first episode in the Torah describes how Eve fell into deception and awesome devastation. The serpent urged her to eat the forbidden fruit so that she would gain true wisdom. While the serpent's enticement did awaken a desire to eat the fruit, it was not strong enough to convince her to violate G-d's commandment. What convinced her to actually eat the fruit? She looked at the tree and it "was a delight to the eyes." The sight of the fruit evoked a desire that overwhelmed her. She ate the fruit and then convinced Adam to eat it as well. As a result, death came into the world and they were both expelled from Gan Eden.

Throughout the Torah, we find examples of the power of the eyes to cause calamity. For instance, when Cain **saw** that only his brother's sacrifice was accepted, he was overcome with jealousy. He murdered his brother and suffered unspeakable consequences. When Cham **saw** his father, Noah, was unclothed, he disgraced him. When Lot **saw** the fertile plains of Sodom, he left Avraham and went to live there among evil people. He lost his spirituality and was nearly destroyed in the obliteration of Sodom. When Avimelech **saw** how beautiful Sara was, he took her to his palace. He and his household were then stricken with a terrible illness. When Joseph's brothers **saw** that Yaacov gave him a special coat they were blinded by envy. They sold Yoseph into slavery, tearing apart the family and bringing us to Egypt. These are a few of the countless examples.

ENTICEMENT

Society exploits human weakness in order to manipulate others for their own benefit. Television, movies, advertisements, magazines, the entertainment industry and the internet use images of women to entice men. They have one goal: to increase sales. Showing a pretty woman is high on their list of sure ways to get a man's attention.

Shimshon was the strongest man, David the most pious and Shlomo the wisest. Nevertheless, each one of these great and holy men stumbled when caught in the gravitational field of a woman.

When we contemplate the powerful seductions that pulsate in the world around us, we start to attain the *Wisdom of the World* needed to help us control our eyes.

TODAY: Beware of the enticing forces surrounding you. Guard your eyes from the images that try to manipulate your senses.

Practical Application of Chapter 21: "Beware of the Enticing Nature Of The World"

As Steve rounds the corner he realizes there is a fifty foot indecent billboard in front of him. He pauses for a moment and then reminds himself that the only purpose of this image is to manipulate people to buy a product. There is a "no holds barred attitude" – anything goes to make money. "Do they care about ruining my soul? Not in the least!"

This thinking fires his will to avert the image.

“The enticing nature of the world is the type of thing that we know superficially but the real power of it slips by us,” explains Steve. “Until I read about ‘Wisdom of the World’, I didn’t realize how much society uses the image of women to entice men. This awareness helps me protect myself from the various temptations that are trying to get the attention of my eyes.”

Day Twenty-Two

Recognize the Hidden Flaws of Human Nature

“Each person has certain blind spots in his personality. For instance, a spendthrift will waste money on items which are completely unnecessary. A compulsive eater will eat everything that looks good despite the effect on his health.”

(Ohr Yisrael, Letter Four)

Imagine a judge who is a great legal scholar but has little insight into the deceptive tactics that people use to manipulate others. If a defendant fabricates his defense in court, this judge might not be able to see through his manipulations. But if the judge has “street-smarts” as well as knowledge of the law, he will be able to perceive the deceptions of the defendant and render a just ruling.

Just as the judge who is unfamiliar with deception is unable to recognize it, so too, we can't understand how vulnerable we are to visual stimulation unless we've learned about it. When a man looks at a woman his desire becomes ignited, as Chazal say, “The eyes see and then the heart desires.”

Can you give me a true case that demonstrates the detrimental effect of a man viewing improper images?

A TRAGIC TALE

Eli and Gail were married for a few years and lived in a vibrant observant community. They both came from traditional Orthodox families. Their goals were to build a Jewish home which reflected classic Torah ideals. However, a few years later, Gail realized that Eli was viewing improper websites

Making matters even worse, Eli eventually stopped going to Shule in the mornings. He showed little interest in maintaining the holiness of their home or in strengthening his children's Torah education. Their relationship and the family structure became completely unraveled.

It was painfully clear to Gail that she and her husband were no longer compatible. She did not want his influence in the house for her own sake as well as for the sake of the children. Not long after Eli and Gail ended their marriage.

This true account demonstrates how far “the eye” can lead a person from Torah values. Many leading Rabbis have proclaimed that viewing improper images on a computer is tantamount to “*yichud*.” Therefore, Eli's viewing of the images was forbidden to him, just as it is forbidden for him to be alone with a woman.

The Talmud teaches that a person is led on the path that he wishes to go. If a person desires good, he will be inspired to do good. If he desires base things, he will be motivated towards base conduct. In Eli's case, his desire to look at improper images intensified until it became an obsession that eventually overwhelmed him. Had he known from the start that his desire would destroy his marriage, he would have reined it in immediately.

REVIEW:

- 1) Be aware of society's attempts to entice you into seeing improper sights.
- 2) Stay conscious of the inclination for men to view improper sights.
- 3) Sensitize yourself to the detrimental effects of viewing improper sights and you will be more motivated to control your vision and preserve your spiritual well-being.

TODAY: *Put the story of Eli and Gail into your arsenal to serve as an effective deterrent to viewing improper sights.*

Practical Application of Chapter 22: “Recognize the Hidden Flaws of Human Nature”

“That story about Eli and Gail made an impact on me,” said Steve. “I always thought that something like that could never happen to me. But Eli was a regular guy and from a good, observant family. That’s what scares me – if it could happen to him, it could happen to me. The more I think about Eli’s tragic fall, the more I am motivated to take every precaution so that it will never happen to me.”

Control Your Home Environment

“*Tzaddikim* elevate themselves with their eyes, as it says (*Bereishit* 22): ‘And Avraham lifted up his eyes and *saw* the place from afar.’ Regarding Yitzchak, it says (*Bereishit* 24): “And Yitzchak went out to the field in the evening and he *saw*...” Regarding Yaacov, it says (*Bereishit* 33): “And Yaacov lifted up his eyes and *saw*.’

Whereas *rashayim* fall through their eyes, as it says (*Bereishit* 13): “and Lot lifted his eyes and he *saw* the entire plane of Jordan.’ This is Sodom; he left Avraham and went to Sodom in order to follow after their bad deeds. Regarding Balak, it says (*Bamidbar* 22): “And Balak ben Zippor *saw*.”

The righteous and the wicked both use their sense of sight, but for different purposes.

(Midrash Tanchuma, Vayeshev)

I understand the importance of protecting my eyes from improper sights. However, I work in an office which puts me in direct contact with immodestly dressed women. What should I do?

As we advance in Torah, we understand more clearly the importance of maintaining an environment that reflects Torah values. The conditions of some environments are not in our control. Regarding our workplace, there are many different and diverse situations. For instance, will our employer be receptive to our request to maintain a respectable environment; are there alternative options; etc. Therefore, if you have a question concerning your workplace, that is not dealt with in this book please consult your Rabbi. He will guide you as to the best solution according to your particular situation

THE JEWISH HOME

A Jewish home that is free of improper sights and full of Torah study and Mitzvot is a spiritual oasis. The holiness and purity of such a home nurtures the souls that live within its walls. It radiates with the special love of Jewish parents and it is the very foundation of Klal Yisrael. This home will abound with blessings of peace, happiness and closeness to Hashem.

Hashem instructed Moshe exactly how to count B’nai Yisrael. He told him to go to each tent and count how many souls were in each family. Moshe stood at the entrance of each household and the *Shechinah* entered inside the tent. Subsequently a heavenly voice announced the number of children found within.

If we are worthy, HaShem comes within our homes, just as one visits his friend. He loves us so much that he desires to come into our very midst. Therefore, we should make every effort to sensitize our family to the importance of maintaining a home free of

immodest images. We must understand that if improper sights are viewed in the home, the holiness will not be manifest, even if Mitzvot are performed..

TODAY: *You may not have control over your workplace but you can control the spiritual atmosphere of your home. Make your home fitting to receive the Shechinah.*

Practical Application of Chapter 23: “Control Your Home Environment”

Steve sat down with his wife and discussed constructive ways to improve the spiritual environment of their home. They would prefer to remove the computer from their home. However, they need it for work, email, and school. So they’re installing “kosher internet” and a “parental guidance block” on their computer. They will put the computer in the den so that they will be able to monitor its use. In addition, they are being more selective of which books and magazines should be allowed into the house. They desire their home to be a true spiritual oasis for their children.

Day Twenty-Four

Spiritual Inheritance for Your Children

When Yoseph went forth to rule over Egypt, the daughters of kings used to gaze at him through the lattice and throw jewelry so that he would lift up his eyes and look at them. Yet he did not look at them!

HaKodesh Baruch Hu said to him, “I will give your daughters an ornament in the Torah.” What ornament? A portion of Torah. (Midrash Bereishit Raba 128:18)

What is the relationship between guarding one’s eyes and the success of his children to live a Torah value lifestyle?

Is there anything more beautiful than sitting with your family at the Shabbat table and discussing the Parshat HaShavuah? Each one of us wants to see the continuity of a Torah lifestyle in our children. While there are many factors that contribute to the spiritual wellbeing of our children, much of the results depend on our own level of commitment.

Just as Yoseph’s modesty blossomed with merit for his future offspring, so too, our actions affect our own spiritual nature as well as that of our descendants.

MERIT FOR OUR CHILDREN

“The *tzadik* walks in his perfection – happy are the children after him.” (*Mishlei* 20) The meaning of the phrase, “The *tzadik* walks in his perfection” means that the *tzadik* worked

hard to fulfill a Mitzvah or to develop a worthy character trait. As a result, HaShem will bless his children so that they can reach that level with much less effort. Therefore, “happy are the children after him.”

The more we dedicate ourselves to Torah observance, the more we enhance the holiness of our children. Whereas, if *chas v'shalom* we weaken our Torah observance, we diminish our children's spiritual resilience. Therefore, one of the most powerful ways to guarantee that our children follow the path of Mitzvot is for us to strengthen our conviction in that regard.

When we develop control over our eyes from viewing improper sights, we are helping to build the spiritual foundation of our children. Just as a child inherits physical traits from his parents, he also inherits character virtues. Physical traits are transmitted to the child from his inception by DNA coding. Whereas spiritual traits are transmitted both in the womb, as well as after the child is born. If a parent achieves a particular character virtue, – even after the child is born – this good trait will be transmitted to the child. As a result, it will be easier for the child to master his nature vis-a- vis that same virtue.

The world today is chaotic, unpredictable, and decadent. Our children find themselves in the middle of a great spiritual tug-of-war. Countless mesmerizing and pervasive negative attractions flash in front of them, threatening their very soul! One slip, one click, one indecent view could set them on a downward spiral that could lead them far away from Torah values, *chas v'shalom*. How much protection they need! **Therefore, help your children and future generations by controlling your eyes. Grant them “a spiritual inheritance” and empower them with same the capability to preserve the well-being of their soul.**

THE INTERNET

Endowing our children with a spiritual inheritance is a powerful motivation to master our eyes. Let's look at an example of how we can apply this technique to gain control over one of the most dangerous challenges of our time – the internet.

The fact that the internet is so useful is partly what makes it so dangerous. It's an open system, putting everything at your fingertips and in your view. We are permitted to use it because we need it for our livelihood. However, we must never allow ourselves to use the internet in a way that violates Torah values.

When we are in the range of the computer screen, it is crucial to remember the prohibitions of not looking at immodest images that lead to improper thoughts. If we inadvertently come across any immodest image, it is imperative that we immediately remove it from our view.

The spiritual welfare of our children is the greatest motivation to exercise restraint and good judgment when using the computer. By choosing to avoid indecent sights, we are simultaneously transmitting the power of control over our eyes to our children. Our

resistance to temptation is the genesis of endless blessings, merit, and holiness for our children.

While there are many factors that contribute to the spiritual wellbeing of our children, much of the results depend on our own level of commitment. Just as Yoseph's modesty brought merit for his future offspring, our actions can bring merit for ours.

TODAY: *Be exceedingly careful while using the internet and bring merit for your children to live Torah lives.*

Practical Application of Chapter 24: "Spiritual Inheritance for Your Children"

Can anything be more important than seeing our children walk in the ways of Torah? When I realize that by controlling my eyes I am spiritually empowering my children, I become very inspired. The turbulent world is a great challenge to any child. Here is a concrete way that I can give my children a spiritual advantage. The love I have for my children is a powerful motivator.

Day Twenty-Five

The Main Weapon – Awareness of Hashem

“Wisdom of the World will lighten our burden and the Awareness of Hashem will strengthen us. Involvement in the ways of Divine service will teach man its paths.”
(Ohr Yisrael, Letter 4)

The following incident with Yoseph HaTzadik, illustrates how the combination of the Awareness of Hashem and *Wisdom of the World* complement each other in the battle of the eyes.

THE TEST OF YOSEPH

During the time Yoseph was a slave in Egypt, he was appointed caretaker of Potifar's household. Here he encountered a great test. Potifar's wife was extremely attracted to Yoseph and actively tried to seduce him on a daily basis. She placed herself in front of him whenever they were alone and openly invited him, "lay with me." Yoseph's automatic response and first line of defense was awareness of Hashem. Therefore, he turned his eyes away to avoid seeing her. His reaction of looking down was powered by his awareness of Hashem, and it was effective for quite some time in neutralizing her efforts.

Only after repeated attempts over a long period of time, was she able to find a niche in his spiritual armor. Nevertheless, Yoseph immediately recovered and saved himself from sinning. What did he do?

1. He closed his eyes and imagined the face of his father.
2. He ran away from the palace.

Imagining the face of his father, Yaakov, reminded himself that he is the descendent of great *tzadikim*. It would be beneath his dignity and moral heritage for him to yield to this woman. These thoughts injected him with the strength to supplement his waning awareness of Hashem – and gain control.

Why did he run outside? That was the best way of removing Potifar's wife from his eyesight. These two actions, (i.e., imagining his father and running outside) were the result of using *Wisdom of the World*.

Each one us has fluctuating degrees of “Yirat Shamayim.” **As we proceed in our efforts to master the eyes, we will learn how to balance our awareness of Hashem together with the application of *Wisdom of the World*.**

THE MAIN WEAPON

Yoseph’s main weapon was his awareness of Hashem. He succumbed only after he was repeatedly approached and finally physically accosted. At that point, Yoseph supplemented his awareness of Hashem with *Wisdom of the World* and succeeded in passing his test. As for us, while we know intellectually that Hashem sees our actions, the full consciousness of this truth has not yet penetrated our hearts. Therefore, our main defense is *Wisdom of the World*.

TODAY: Supplement your awareness of Hashem with *Wisdom of the World* and master your eyes.

Practical Application of Chapter 25: “The Main Weapon – Awareness of Hashem”

This morning when I was on the train, I found myself surrounded by improper sights. My Awareness of Hashem was not strong enough to control my eyes. I thought about Eli and Gail, and how his life fell apart when he lost control of his eyes. This gave me the incentive to reach down and find extra reserves of strength to avert my eyes. I opened an interesting book that I carry with me for this purpose and starting reading. I didn’t have the best concentration but I did a good job of averting my eyes the best I could under these circumstances.”

Day Twenty-Six

The Power of Viewing Holy Images

“How wonderful it would be if we could channel the energy of our lesser personality traits to serve Hashem.” (Ohr Yisrael, Letter Four)

How can we channel the desire to see improper images into strengthening our performance of Mitzvot?

Just as the eye is stimulated by negative images, it is also stimulated by positive images. Therefore, if we focus on good images, they will impart holiness within us and inspire the performance of good deeds.

For instance, can there be anything more inspiring than viewing a beautiful sunrise, a colorful flower or the graceful flight of a bird? All these sights reflect the majesty of the Creator.

Likewise, our Sages tell us that when we gaze upon holy objects, the light of our eyes brightens and increases. Listed below are some of the holy images that we can view and the positive effects they have on us.

- 1) When a person looks at the countenance of a *tzadik*, his soul is illuminated with light and holiness. (*Degel Macheneh Ephraim*)
- 2) Beholding the *sefer Torah* when it is raised before or after *kriat Torah* and reading a word or two from the scroll imparts a great, holy light within us. (Magen Avraham, Chapter 134)
- 3) Viewing the “*Shin*” on either side of the *Tephillan Shel Rosh* imparts holiness.
- 4) Looking at water is good for the eyes. (*Ibn Ezra*)
- 5) Looking at the heavens imparts *Yirat Shemayim*. (The Vilna Gaon)
- 6) When reciting the Kriat Shema in Shacharit it is good to look at the *Tzitzit* and touch them to the eyes when we say, *u’reitem o’toh*. (Shulchan Oruch 24:4)
- 7) Whoever brings the *Tzitzit* to the eyes when saying *Parshat Tzitzit* will never lose his sight. (*Be’ar HaTiv*)

8) Looking at the *Tzitzit* inspires a person to perform Mitzvot and stops him from randomly following his eyes. Therefore, we should look at our *tzitzis* a few times a day. This is especially important and beneficial if an impure thought enters his heart. (The Chofetz Chaim, *Shmirat HaLoshon* 2:30)

9) On Shabbat night, one should look at the candles before reciting Kiddush and at the Kos HaBrachah when reciting Kiddush. (*Shulchan Oruch* 271:10)

10) Whenever leaving the house, a person should look at the Mezuzah and kiss it. (*Ma'aseh Rav HaChadash*)

11) It is a mitzvah to watch other people who are performing a mitzvah, just as it was a mitzvah to watch the Kohen Gadol perform his Avodah on Yom Kippur. (*Nefesh \Kol Chai Phelagi*)

12) One who looks at a Beit Knesset or a Beit Midrash will be elevated and how much more so if he enters the building. Even more so if he stands in front of the Aron Hakodesh and looks at the holy Torah. (*Rosh HaGivah*)

13) Looking at the four letter name of HaShem -- YHVH -- and visualizing it, is a great spiritual influence and enhances Yirat Shemayim.

14) Study of the holy Torah, imparts holiness, light, and joy to the soul.

TODAY: Take the opportunity to look at holy sights and be uplifted.

Practical Application of Chapter 26: "The Power of Viewing Holy Images"

"I love this technique," says Steve. "Whenever I have the opportunity to look at one of these holy sights, I take a few extra seconds to bathe my eyes in holiness. I look at my Tzitzit and the Shin on my Tephillan and I feel the Kedushah enter my soul. When the Torah is opened, I come close to see its holy words."

Day Twenty-Seven

Guide Your Friend to Goodness

“Another effective way of mastering ourselves is to instruct a friend and guide him towards goodness. We can learn the inner longings of the person in order to incline his heart to Yirat Shamayim and Torah. Then our righteousness will shine like the light of the dawn. If we study the ways of human nature in order to understand the paths of man and his falseness – then this study of “Wisdom of the World has the power to correct all inappropriate behavior and improper thoughts.” (Ohr Yisrael, Letter Four)

It's hard for me to believe that guiding others will help me correct all inappropriate behavior and improper thoughts.

Like a general encouraging his soldiers on the eve of battle, Rav Yisrael encourages us with words of inspiration, wisdom, and hope. He now reveals another stratagem to ensure our triumph over the negative impulse – and that is to convey these ideas to a friend. Our approach must be custom tailored to each person, according to his particular personality, values and culture. By contemplating his inner makeup before we speak with him, we are in a position to approach him with sensitivity and effectiveness.

GOODNESS

We will “guide him to goodness.” Meaning, we should inspire our friend and encourage him by explaining that we know of an effective strategy for mastering the eyes. The idea of attaining purity will appeal to him because every Jewish soul yearns for holiness.

By sharing our convictions and knowledge with others, we will come to understand even more clearly the dangers of looking at improper images – and increase our efforts to avoid them. **We will be transformed; attaining levels of good deeds and holy thoughts that we previously thought were not within our reach.** “Our righteousness will shine like the light of dawn.”

This is also an application of the Torah concept “Measure for Measure.” If we help others achieve spiritual well-being, HaShem will help us. As Rav Yisrael taught, “In order to heal himself, a person should bring merit to others by influencing them to attain Yirat Shemayim and the wisdom of Mussar. And the Talmud teaches, ‘All who have mercy on

other people, Heaven will have mercy on them.’ There is no greater compassion than influencing others to study Mussar.”

If you can help someone to study Mussar, you will evoke merit for yourself and be guided on an upright path. As the Sages taught, “Everyone who brings merit to others – no sin will come to his hand.”

Ultimately, the mitzvah of *Shmirat Einayim* brings holiness to the world. The Torah (*Iyov* 22:29-30) alludes to this idea: “One whose eyes are lowered will save others. He will even save a person who is not innocent; and he will be delivered by the pureness of your hands.” This means that the holiness of a person who lowers his eyes from seeing improper sights will save others who have not yet attained purity of his eyes. The merit of controlling his eyes will serve as a spiritual influence to others to guard their eyes. (*Taharat HaKodesh*)

TODAY: Show this guidebook to a friend and offer to learn it with him.

Practical Application of Chapter 27: “Guide Your Friend to Goodness”

At first, I felt a little self-conscious about sharing these ideas of Shmirat Einayim with others. However, my friend David brought up the subject with me because he knows that I am working on Shmirat Einayim. Once, he shared his own concerns with me, I was able to guide and encourage him to begin a successful program of Shmirat Einayim.

He was receptive to my ideas and now we learn the guidebook together. We also discuss strategies that work and share our experiences. We both gain a lot of strength from each other. Reaching out to David has reinforced my own awareness of the importance of Shmirat Einayim and the fulfillment of its laws. I am now more excited than ever at the prospect of mastering my own eyes.

Day Twenty-Eight

Receive a Special Blessing

*“His eyes are as the eyes of a dove, by springs of water.” (Song of Songs 5:12)
A dove has only one mate for his entire lifetime. If the men of Israel will not look at other women besides their wives, they will be likened to the “Holy Supernal Dove.” In addition, they are “by springs of water,” as it says (Ishaiah 58): “You will be like a watered garden and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.” The allusion to water depicts wisdom and understanding. (Taharat HaKodesh)*

I use public transportation and I walk in crowds of people on a daily basis. Also, the customers that come into the store where I work are often dressed immodestly. How can I comply with the Torah's laws not to look at women?

“Resh Lakish said, ‘The pleasure of looking at a woman is worse than the illicit act itself, as it says (Kohellet 6:9): ‘Better is the seeing of the eye than the wandering of desire. (Yoma 74b)’”

Theoretically, a man who wants to look at improper sights can satisfy his desire whenever he wants. Whereas, regarding the actual illicit act, reality does not allow him unrestrained desire. In this light, the pleasure of looking at women is “worse” because it is constantly available.

Therefore, if a person controls his eyes when he is in public places, the Torah considers it as if he withstood a test as difficult as Yoseph's and rewards him with the same blessings that Yoseph HaTzadik received after he withheld himself from engaging in promiscuous behavior. [*Taharat HaKodesh*]

THE HOLY SHECHINAH

If a person must work in an environment frequented by immodestly dressed women, consider the account in the Talmud (*Ta'anis 21b*) that tells us about Abba. Abba was a doctor and he received daily greetings from the Heavenly Academy. What was his special merit? He had separate rooms for his male and female patients. Moreover, he would take special precautions to guard his eyes when he treated women.

A person who is regularly confronted with improper sights and controls his eyes is considered a mighty warrior in Heaven. If women frequent your shop or office, do your best to avert your eyes from looking at them in an improper way. HaShem will praise you and reward you with great blessing in this world, as well as in the World to Come.

TODAY: *Guard your eyes in the workplace and receive a special blessing from Hashem.*

Practical Application of Chapter 28: “Receive a Special Blessing”

Can you imagine the inner strength that Yoseph the Tzadik displayed to ward off the temptress? Therefore, he is considered the consummate Tzadik. The reward that he earned is unfathomable. Rabbi Levy told us that the splitting of the Red Sea was on his merit!

Now, when the Torah tells us that every time we avert our eyes from immodest sights, Hashem rewards us with the same blessings that Yoseph received – this inspires me!

I use this shot of adrenalin as my 'secret weapon.' Whenever I am confronted with an image that challenges me, I say to myself, 'Just look away and Hashem will give you a reward as great as Yoseph HaTzadik!'

This always gives me a fresh reserve of strength to master my eyes.

Day Twenty-Nine

Go For Holiness

"Man was only created in order to delight in Hashem and take pleasure from the Divine Presence, which is the true pleasure of all the pleasures that can be found."

The purpose of man in this world is to fulfill Mitzvot, serve Hashem and withstand tests. The purpose of pleasures in this world is only to assist a person in having calmness and peace of mind so that he can turn his heart to serve Hashem. It is fitting that everything he does should be dedicated to the Creator."

(Mesilat Yesharim, Chapter 1)

There are times when an involuntary reaction occurs.

How can I apply the ideas that we learned to gain control of the situation?

One of the most important things to know when an improper sight is imposed upon our view is that its grip on us will fade! The image could trigger an intense reaction in our mind. We might even think, "I can't shake this." However, this is no more than the force of imagination. It is an illusion, a mirage. Our attention to the image is the only fuel that keeps this image alive. Therefore, if we simply let it pass, it will dissipate and vanish. Like turning the page in a book, we can switch the focus of our mind by simple refocusing. We will see a few examples below of how to refocus.

AN UNEXPECTED CHALLENGE

Alan enters the local flower shop to buy flowers for Shabbat. The pretty female clerk tells him that the flowers he chose need special treatment and gives him detailed instructions. He wasn't expecting this and struggles to listen without staring at her in an inappropriate way. He gains control of the situation by remembering the great merit of mastering his eyes.

Mesilat Yesharim tells us that Hashem placed us in a dimension with many things that distract us from coming close to Him. **In order to merit eternal reward in Gan Eden, we must overcome these challenges and win the war of holiness over desire.**

MAKING THE EFFORT-GAINING THE REWARD

1) Each time that a person avoids an improper image Hashem calls him a “holy person” and he is rewarded for performing a Mitzvah.

2) If a person cuts off an improper thought just once, it is “the root of all goodness” because it changes the propensity of his thoughts and actions.

3) Whoever averts his eyes from looking at an improperly dressed woman merits receiving the *Shechinah*.” (Chazal *Derech Eretz* 1) The moment a person guards his eyes from looking at an improper sight, he receives the *Shechinah*, even if he does not sense it. In the World to Come, on the merit of averting his eyes even one time, a man will see the glorious *Shechinah* of Hashem. (*Taharat HaKodesh*) Imagine if a man averts his eyes continually!

May we be inspired to avert our eyes from seeing improper sights and merit receiving the holiness of the *Shechinah* for all eternity.

TODAY: Draw holiness to yourself by controlling your eyes from seeing improper sights.

Practical Application of Chapter 29 “Go For Holiness”

The tremendous amount of holiness that Hashem grants me when I control my eyes gives me great strength and inspiration. Yesterday, I was walking by a magazine stand. I immediately, reminded myself, “Look away, and you will merit seeing the Shechinah of Hashem!” This thought struck a chord, and I successfully averted the images.

Day Thirty

Perform the Mitzvot With Joy!

The Arizal revealed that his great happiness in serving Hashem was the genesis of all the lofty spiritual levels he attained and the esoteric knowledge that he received.

How can we utilize the various ideas that we learned to serve Hashem with great joy?
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We have completed the guidebook, **Windows of the Soul**. Now we have the wisdom, tools, and confidence to master our eyes.

The Ramchal wrote in *Mesilat Yesharim (Introduction)*: “The benefit of this book is not gained by reading it one time, for it is possible that the reader won't find many ideas that he didn't already know. Rather the benefit from the book is gleaned from review and consistent study. In this way, the study of the book will remind him of concepts that are naturally forgotten by people. And he will remember his obligations which may have eluded him.”

Mastery of the eyes requires reviewing the laws and consistent study of the pertinent topics. Therefore, keep the book with you and go through it periodically. Now that you know much of the ideas, you might prefer to read the book straight through in a few sittings. Or perhaps, turn to key parts that address the specific issues at hand.

In addition, you can study the book with a partner or ask your Rabbi to give a class on *Shmirat Einayim*, using the sources of his choice.

GROWING WISE

“The creation of man was for his ultimate existence in the World to Come. Therefore, Hashem endowed him with a precious soul. With his soul he is able to serve Hashem and to receive his eternal reward in its right time and place. Therefore, the existence of the soul in this world is beloved and pleasant to the soul.” (*Mesilat Yesharim, Man's Duty in his World*):

Each word of study, each second of contemplation and each effort we make to control our eyes will uplift and sanctify us. There is no greater joy than attaining holiness and purity!

May Hashem bless your efforts to master your eyes. May our collective effort to serve Hashem awaken great mercy in Heaven, so that we merit seeing the redemption of Klal Yisrael and the restoration of the Shechinah to the Kodsh HaKadashim.

“May Yisrael rejoice in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.” (*Tehillim* 149:2)

Practical Application of Chapter 30: “Perform the Mitzvot with Joy”

After reading Windows of the Soul, the importance of mastering my eyes has become very clear – and attainable. Baruch HaShem, I have made a lot of progress. I like this idea about forming a class and a discussion group. I could use the support and it will strengthen my friends, as well. I spoke to Rabbi Levy about it and he is going to start a class in Shmirat Einayim next Thursday evening. We already have three people who want to attend.

I used to think that it was impossible to control my eyes. But now that I learn and practice the Torah’s wisdom of Shmirat Einayim, I am a different person. I want to share my new perspective with the community. This class is going to encourage us – and heal our souls.

For further information on Shmirat Einayim, or for help in organizing a class or support group, or learn about our Shmirat Einayim forum, please contact:

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A REVIEW OF THE THIRTY PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS.

- 1. Know that if you sincerely wish to elevate yourself, Hashem will assist you in your endeavors.**
- 2. Each time you control your eyes from looking at an improper site, tell yourself, “I am holy!”**
- 3. Dedicate daily time to Torah study and set up the first line of defense to mastering your eyes.**
- 4. Remember that desire will intensify in order to drown out the voice of reason. Understand that and listen closely to your soul.**
- 5. Make a commitment to study Mussar each day for about twenty minutes.**
- 6. Be encouraged by knowing that through Halachah study we have the means to master our eyes and change old habits.**
- 7. Make a periodic review of these laws in order to strengthen their observance.**
- 8. Use a balanced approach – observe the laws of Shmiras Einayim and treat women with the proper respect.**
- 9. Enhance your relationship with your wife by practicing the laws of Shmirat Einayim.**
- 10. If you must be in an area of immodestly dressed women keep your eyes lowered and distract yourself with something worthwhile.**

- 11. Remember that by cutting off improper thoughts just once, you begin a new habit of control.**
- 12. Preserve your dignity by respecting the privacy of others.**
- 13. Defer to the wisdom of the Torah regarding the laws of the eyes and guard the holiness of your soul.**
- 14. Take a few minutes in the evening to review your conduct for that day.**
- 15. Beware of the enticing forces surrounding you. Guard your eyes from the images that try to manipulate your senses.**
- 16. Put the story of Eli and Gail into your arsenal to serve as an effective deterrent to viewing improper sights.**
- 17. Prepare yourself before you leave your home. Remember that society bombards us with indecent images, and resolve to avoid seeing them to the best of your ability.**
- 18. Use “the light of your mistakes” to pave the road to success. And be patient!**
- 19. Take the opportunity to look at holy sights and be uplifted**
- 20. Supplement your awareness of Hashem with Wisdom of the World and master your eyes.**
- 21. Make a conscious effort to keep your gaze below eye-level when you are in a public place.**
- 22. Begin practicing your new exercises and know you are performing an important Mitzvah.**
- 23. Draw holiness to yourself by controlling your eyes from seeing improper sights.**
- 24. You may not have control over your workplace but you can control the spiritual atmosphere of your home. Make your home fitting to receive the Shechinah.**
- 25. Be exceedingly careful while using the internet and bring merit for your children to live Torah lives.**
- 26. Whether you are an employer or an employee, consider the advantages of modest dress at the workplace.**
- 27. Guard your eyes in the workplace and receive a special blessing from Hashem.**
- 28. Show this guidebook to a friend and offer to learn it with him.**

29. Throw off the burden of your aveirot and start over. Hashem gives everyone another chance!

30. Each word of study, each second of contemplation and each effort we make to control our eyes will uplift and sanctify us.

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES FOR SHMIRAT EINAYIM

(Based on David Ashear's suggestions)

1. STRATEGIC PLANNING

Prepare yourself in advance by **formulating a plan of how to react** when improper sights come into your view.

2. THE HEALING POWER OF TORAH

Chazal teach (*Bava Basra* 16a), "HaKodesh Baruch Hu created the yetzer hora as well as its remedy, the Torah." Learn Torah with clarity and **activate** the healing powers of Torah.

3. FUTURE GENERATIONS

Chazal teach, "The deeds of our Forefathers is an indication of what will be in future generations."

When I succeed in turning away from improper sights, I am **planting the seeds** for my children to be *tzadikim*.

4. BOUNCE BACK

The Torah states, “A *tzadik* will fall seven times and arise.” If I fail to properly guard my eyes, **I will not despair**. I will get up and resolve not to be beaten again by the yetzer hora. I may have lost the battle, but I can still win the war.

5. WINNING WORDS

When I see an improper sight and turn away, I will tell myself, “I am turning away because Hashem wants **me** to be pure and holy.”

6. FEEL GOOD

Each time you turn away from an improper sight, **pat yourself on the back** and tell yourself, “I am doing great.”

7. PRAY

When you turn away from an improper sight, it becomes a time when **Hashem will answer your prayers**. Pray for whatever you want.

8. PRAY FOR YOUR FRIENDS

The stronger the community is, the stronger I will become. Therefore, if **you pray for others**, Hashem will strengthen you.

9. GLOBAL RIPPLES

We are at the center of the wheel. What **we do affects the rest of the world**. If we control our eyes in our city, Jews in another city will be inspired to do Mitzvot.

10. A MAN OF STRENGTH

Chazal teach us, “Who is strong? The person who defeats his yetzer hora.” Control your eyes and **become a mighty warrior**.

11. FOCUS

The Sifte Chaim teaches that the cause of sin is inattentiveness. **Focus** on mastering your eyes and you will succeed.

12. INNUENDOS

Avoid words that will cause improper thoughts.

13. KIDDUSH HASHEM

As a member of Klal Yisrael, you represent Hashem in the world. Conduct yourself in a way that **inspires others** to act with decency and goodness.

14. MY FATHER, MY KING

What **would Hashem tell me** about controlling my eyes from seeing improper sights?

15. THE AVOT

How would **Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaacov** conduct themselves when walking in public?

16. DIALOGUE WITH HASHEM

Speak with Hashem whenever you need His help. He is there for you, come close to Him.

17. GREAT REWARD

Chazal tell us, “The more difficult the Mitzvah, the greater the reward.” Earn great reward by **standing up to the challenge** of avoiding improper sights.

18. THANKS

Thank Hashem for helping you master your eyes.

19. TEST

A difficult test **strengthens you** and raises you to the next level.

20. RAV SCHACH

Rav Schach said that human nature gravitates to impure thoughts. Learn Torah and fill your mind with **purity and holiness**.

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