

Question

Posted by ANewStart - 22 May 2012 15:46

B"H

Hope everyone is splendid.

Just a question I've been pondering. What about looking at women, whether clothed, or in any/lack of dress, is immoral? I can understand why anything addictive would be harmful to the addict, just as a person were addicted to drugs--it takes over and makes the addict subservient to his drug of choice. But what about simply looking at a women to appreciate beauty, as one were to look at anything else, is essentially wrong if it won't be an addiction or arouse fantasies, etc.?

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Re: Question

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 22 May 2012 16:06

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Halacha forbids strongly ("avon gadol me'od") to look at a woman to enjoy her beauty (even dressed, and even her tiny pinky).

Common sense suggests that we stay away from things that may trigger us to slip down the slippery slope.

Please let's not look for trouble. We need to be heading upwards, not downwards.

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We drunks need to stay far away from the vinyard, so that we are not teased to drink the wine.

MT

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Re: Question

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 22 May 2012 16:21

Sorry to be blunt, but let me ask a question first: Do you masturbate or look at porn?

--Elyah

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Re: Question

Posted by ANewStart - 22 May 2012 16:54

I try not to on a regular basis. I slip up every once in a while, but I've experienced the negative consequences of porn and masturbation, so I make an effort not to.

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Re: Question

Posted by alexeliezer - 22 May 2012 18:26

[ANewStart wrote on 22 May 2012 15:46:](#)

What about looking at women, whether clothed, or in any/lack of dress, is immoral?

YES!

I used to justify my gazing, saying I was appreciating Hashem's artistry. Bull !

Love you man! Thanks for the question.

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Re: Question

Posted by ANewStart - 23 May 2012 01:19

Just to clarify-- I know that speaking in terms of Yiddishkeit and Halacha, looking at women is assur because it brings on taava which is klipka. I know that very well. But my question is, psychologocially or philosophically speaking, what is degrading about enjoying the image of a beautiful woman? I've been trying to grapple this question for a while, because although there is a special point in just accepting something because it is what Hashem says and it is reported to be harmful for one's neshamah, I want to hear an argument that will speak to my intellect as well.

I mean, one could say it is degrading to the women, but frankly some women advertise themselves to be looked at. The only thing that really inspires me to stay moral is that notwithstanding the "in your face" attitudes of some women, I personally want to hold myself to a higher standard to preserve intimacy in my personal sexual and emotional life.

Any insights appreciated.

All the blessings

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Re: Question

Posted by Blind Beggar - 23 May 2012 05:04

Where's Dov when you need him?

I don't think there is anything psychologically or philosophically or intellectually wrong with enjoying the image of a beautiful woman or the taste of oysters or keeping warm with shatnez or drinking wine that was poured as a sacrifice to an idol. Jews have to do what the Torah says and alcoholics need to avoid all wine.

Blessings to you too.

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Re: Question

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 23 May 2012 14:34

... and I think (la'aniyus da'ati) that it is psychologically, philosophically and intellectually wrong to enjoy the image of a beautiful woman. We know that the Torah has Mitzvos that are a Chok (without apparent logical reason) and Mitzvos sichliyos (logical). To stay away from lust is a logical Mitzva. If you were at the Asifa this week, you would have heard Rabbi Wachsmann Shlit"a addressing the non-Jewish media and explaining to them in logical terms how the Kedusha ideals of the Torah are necessary for all of mankind, and how wrong and illogical it is for American government bodies to enact laws that go against these guidelines ("come to your senses, come to your senses...").

May we all be zoche to "come to our senses, come to our senses..."

MT

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Re: Question

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 23 May 2012 14:35

[ANewStart wrote on 22 May 2012 16:54:](#)

I try not to on a regular basis. I slip up every once in a while, but I've experienced the negative consequences of porn and masturbation, so I make an effort not to.

Yes, but how often is that? Have you tried to keep track at all?

And, do you find this "effort" you make is a constant effort, sort of in the forefront of your conscience, a regular presence in your thoughts, a constant sort of background noise? Or is it something you need to do every once in a while (and then, how often is that)?

--Elyah

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Re: Question

Posted by kidushashem - 23 May 2012 14:35

[ANewStart wrote on 23 May 2012 01:19:](#)

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All the blessings

hey there, I can relate, because it used to really bother me that I couldn't give an intellectual explanation. Look, if you want to be really philosophical, it can be argued that there is no compelling logic to explain *any* moral values. In order for any value to exist, there has to be a personal (emotional or religious) interest.

So... when it comes to the issue of looking at women, if you're looking for an explanation outside of religion, you shouldn't really look anywhere but inside yourself. We can all give you *our* feelings, but they won't do you much good because they are *ours*.

I think that, with time, many of us regain some sensitivity towards this matter (do you remember, long, long ago, the first time you watched porn, how bad you felt afterwards, how big of a step it felt like?). But I also think it's very important not to rely on that if you're an addict. An addict's reason for stopping is that his life has become unmanageable.

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Re: Question

Posted by helpme! - 23 May 2012 14:38

Anewstart,

The Torah is the ultimate truth, given by G-d Himself, whereas 'morals', *lehavdil*, are subjective manmade unwritten 'laws'. Therefore, for a Torah-believing Jew, if the Torah forbids something, who cares if it is morally right/wrong?

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Re: Question

Posted by ANewStart - 23 May 2012 14:59

Thanks for each of you taking the time to respond. A little background about me...I'm young. Just 18. I became a baal teshuva over three years ago and have been deeply immersed in the yeshiva world ever since. So for me growing up with older brothers and in just a traditional non-Halachic home, openness about sexuality was considered normal. My brothers would sleep with women starting at the age of 15 in a very open way, my parents had sex advice books around, and encouraged me to MZ"L on a daily basis because they claimed it was a healthy practice. So I did and for the most part it never became an issue *persay* until I became frum. So the hormones kick in around this age, and I see my old friends getting game and doing what I probably would be doing---so it's a struggle sometimes to see the wrong in something that so many claim to be normal.

But then again, is this the same by all mitzvot?.....

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Re: Question

Posted by alexeliezer - 23 May 2012 15:16

ANewStart,

I am very touched by your story and your struggle. I don't have answers to your intellectual questions, although I think KidusHashem raised an important point. Morality, and more specifically, conscience, isn't logical. Having a conscience means being in touch with your neshama. The more we keep the Torah, the more we will be in touch with our neshama. If Hashem tells me not to look at women, then that's what's best for my neshama.

Now that's for a normal person.

Perhaps looking at images of (or live) beautiful women is problematic for me because of what I end up thinking as a result. I'm never satisfied with just looking and saying, "she's pretty." Not this sick mind. Nope. I've got a whole to-do list for her and it isn't so pretty.

I also find the less I look at women, the more I appreciate the sometimes more subtle beauty of the symphony of nature.

Anyway, you are dealing with a 180-degree turn in your life. Your best (only) hope is to avoid looking at women. When you are married, you can look at your wife's beautiful face all you like (and other parts in the appropriate setting). And you can enjoy the beauty of your sons and daughters.

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Re: Question

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 23 May 2012 17:11

Actually, what I'm getting at is that I identify with your question very much. I have asked it many times over and over again myself on this forum (I think I once even started a thread "what's wrong with just looking", but it was a few years ago and I don't remember exactly). I still wonder about it, and it has been the most difficult form of what I consider to be acting out to stop doing. Especially in my neighborhood when everyone is so tznuis, too!

Part of my introduction to the world of addiction was a facts-of-life book that glorified nudity and nudist colonies -- just be free, uninhibited, and just appreciate the beauty of the human body! Part of that philosophy that human beings are just big art objects walking around all the time, to be appreciated and admired, a spiritual experience, without any base desires at play at all! After all, aren't we beyond all that in today's enlightened, modern era?

I think, perhaps, there are some people who can do that.

My problem is, however, if I should choose to stop looking, if I should try to exert my freedom of choice and my will-power, I can't stop for more than a millisecond.

And, I see that this behavior has become more obsessive and more compulsive as time goes on. I take bigger risks--caring less and less if I am caught looking. Perhaps even hoping, and trying to make more direct eye contact. Unable to stop myself even while I'm out for a stroll with my wife.

It doesn't matter to me how high this behavior ranks as far as immorality, or issurim, are concerned. All that matters for me is I see it takes up a lot of my head space, and it gets progressively worse.

Looking, looking, looking, getting pulled more and more. I saw I was crossing lines--starting to intentionally stand a bit closer to that nice-looking woman in line. The lust to reach out and make contact, looking ever so innocent, starts to develop.

Thank G-d I am in recovery and not in jail.

If it's progressive, no matter how innocent the behavior is now, it's just a matter of time until it gets worse.

One of the slogans here in recovery is:
HIT BOTTOM WHILE STILL ON TOP.

When I got here, I didn't think my acting out was really so bad or so dangerous or was going to harm anyone or get me killed any day soon. But, I saw that I had no control over my behavior, and that is what scared me.

Thank G-d, I am 11 months and 2 weeks clean from more obvious forms of acting out--masturbation and from looking at pornography. (Recovery has helped me much more than just to stop acting out. My entire life had radically changed.)

These more subtle forms of acting out, these activities that don't even seem like there's anything wrong with them--I see that I am, indeed, making progress. I know that if I keep drinking in and enjoying the images, even "decent" images, I'll eventually act out.

I have found, for myself, that any justification or rationalization to allow me to look at the women in the street (and, I have done lots of justification and rationalization about this), is really just my disease lying to me.

--Elyah

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Re: Question

Posted by ANewStart - 23 May 2012 22:11

Elyah, that was for me a meaningful post. I could feel your struggles through your words.

It's all very frustrating for me when I ponder the state of the world we live in. Everything here seems to be focused around some damn personal motive. Either money, sex, honor, fame, etc. Where in the world is to be found some real goodness? I've been hurt so many times by people in the Torah world too. It seems at some point there is no where to turn. AND HERE, IN THIS MENTAL STATE, when a person feels, UGH, nothing to do---is where lust hits.

I pray that we should all find our inner peace and do only good, because all the negativity just brings me down.

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