

“You Shall Not Stray After Your Heart and After Your Eyes”

Parshas Kedoshim

Transcribed and translated from previous recordings of

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“Be Holy for I am Holy” (Vayikra 33:18)

Am Yisroel is a holy nation! *Am Yisroel* is looking to serve G-d only through purity and holiness! They're not looking to reach “prophecy” and “levels” which is what most of the world is after. The mistake of *Bilaam* and the nations of the world is that for them the main thing is to be a big person! An important person! Someone famous! But *Am Yisroel* is looking for one thing only: How to serve Hashem through holiness and purity, which is the opposite of all the methods and all the teachings of the world, who don't know what is holiness. They don't know what the concept of holiness is!

The Holy Nation of Israel is not satisfied with words. With us we first start working on holiness, guarding the eyes, the holiness of the covenant-- we fight for these things! We fight to be saved from the “*la'av*” of, “do not follow after your heart and after your eyes,” even when it's very hard and a person doesn't see almost anyway in which he can be saved from it. But he knows that he has to fight it, he has no choice-- he was brought into the world for this.

It is written in *Even Shlomo* from the *Vilna Gaon* that man comes into the world just to

conquer this inclination. A person comes into this world only for this, not for anything else, and everything else comes to help a person in holiness. People think that holiness is a side issue, there's 613 mitzvos, and there's also the “negative commandment,” of the, “do not follow after your eyes...” The Rambam says, “Twenty-four things hold back repentance...and one is, “He does not realize how looking [at forbidden sights] is a great sin, for it motivates a person to actually take part in illicit relations as implied by, “Do not follow after your heart and after your eyes” [Numbers 15:39].” (Rambam, *Hilchos Tshuva*, Chapter 4).

The Rambam says it's mistaken for anyone who thinks it's possible to skip the “do not,” of, “do not follow”-- to put it in parentheses, to put it on the side, and say, “There's 613 mitzvos, so what if I'm not careful about only one *mitzva*, not everyone is meticulous about every *mitzva*? I'm meticulous about being a *gaon*, being famous, being a master of *ruach hakodesh*, but being meticulous about the “do not,” of, “do not follow”-- there's no time for it. It's not possible, I'm a busy person, I drive a car, I need to get around, how can I guard my eyes?”

Really, the world is making a mistake! Of course a person can guard his eyes! Even a person who drives can guard his eyes. He can ask *Hashem* that He guard his eyes! Because through prayer a person can reach everything. *Avraham Avinu* went through the whole world in holiness and didn't see a thing! Likewise, so did the children of *Ya'akov Avinu*, they went from Israel until Egypt, and they didn't open their eyes the whole way through! The *Midrash* says that they didn't see anything on the way. A person can travel the whole world guarding his eyes! Of course it's possible to guard one's eyes on the way. The Rambam says that someone who looks at women forbidden to him, rationalizing it as inconsequential, that person damages his eyes and claims, "What did I do?! What sin did I commit?! It doesn't affect me badly--" that's a lie!

There's a story about the *Beit Yisroel* that met with some professors, and they asked him, "Why are the *charedim* so afraid of every sight, of every glance, and for us professors these things don't have any effect on us and don't bother us at all?" He told them a *mashal* to what it's similar to-- the Bedouins and Europeans. "The Bedouin walks every day on stones, thorns, and thistles. From the day he was born he's been walking on the sharpest stones, and it doesn't bother him at all. He doesn't feel any pain **because** he got used to it. On the other hand, as soon as a pebble enters the European's shoe, as soon as some sand comes in, he can't walk! His foot hurts him! He suffers a lot from it. The *nimshal* is that you professors are like the Bedouins, you have sullied yourselves so much, in endless impurity, so one small stone, one small sin,

sneaking a peak, an illicit glance, it doesn't affect you anymore! But a person who is refined and upright of heart, every little small thing, every small sin, every forbidden glance, every forbidden sight, it bothers him! It hurts him! It stabs him like a sword stabbing!"

The voice of man is only with the eyes! The moment someone guards his eyes, he will reach all the levels in the world. He won't speak *lashon hara*, he won't criticize, he won't hate, he will keep *Shabbat*, and put on *tefillin*. And not just the physical eyes need to be guarded, also the mind's eyes need to be watched! A person can guard his physical eyes, but he still has endless eyes! He has eyes of jealousy, eyes of hate, eyes of pride. He has to watch every kind of eye that he has! He has to detach from every kind of sense in this world! He shouldn't have eyes at all for this world, for any matter in this world! All the senses, all the desires, may they only be for G-d Almighty-- for His Honor. When he himself guards his eyes (physical eyes and the mind's eyes of jealousy, hate, etc.), then he'll merit: "Uncover my eyes and I shall look at hidden things from Your Torah" (*Tehillim* 119:18). The secrets of the Torah are revealed to him, the secrets of creation, and all of the wonders of the yoke of Heaven.

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