What's Wrong With A Little Pornography?

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Question:

I fail to understand the great sin in looking at sexy pictures on the Internet. It doesn't make me do anything evil. I don't masturbate when I watch. I just enjoy seeing pictures of beautiful women.

Answer:

In his book, "Nefesh HaChaim," Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explains that each and every Jew is a miniature Mishkan (Tabernacle), connecting us to all of the spiritual worlds of the universe.

This is implied in the Torah verse, "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them' (Shemot, 25:8), implying that the Jewish People themselves are to be, "according to the pattern of the Tabernacle and according to all its vessels." The commandment is telling us that we ourselves should be like the Tabernacle, a holy vessel prepared for the actual dwelling of the Divine Presence within us. ("Nefesh HaChaim," Gate One, Ch. 4, Addendum).

Because of this Divine connection, a Jew has to live with the moment by moment recognition that all of his thoughts, words, and doings have profound cosmic influence, for good, and for evil. As the "Nefesh HaChaim" makes clear:

"A man of Israel must understand, know, and establish in his mind and heart that every detail of his deeds, speech, and thoughts, at every second and time, all rise up according to their root source to influence the most exalted worlds. When a wise person recognizes this truth, his heart will greatly tremble in the face of his wrongdoings, realizing the awesome and devastating damage that even a small transgression can cause, even more than the destruction wrought by Nebuchadnezzar and Titus.

"For their deeds had no damaging effect on the upper worlds, for they have no portion or root source in those worlds that would enable them to cause damage there. Rather, it was our sins that polluted the celestial Temple, so to speak, and that gave Nebuchadnezzar and Titus the power to destroy the Sanctuary below.... Therefore, when a man entertains an impure, licentious thought in his heart, G-d forbid, he in effect brings a prostitute into the most exalted, celestial Holy of Holies, giving strength to the forces of impurity and evil in this transcendently holy place, to a much greater extent than the impurity caused by Nebuchadnezzar and Titus when they brought a prostitute into the Holy of Holies in the Temple sanctuary on earth."

The fire that destroyed the Temple started in our hearts and our minds. Every time a person watches pornography on the

internet, he is adding flames to the conflagration that is still burning, thus preventing the Temple's rebuilding. When he gazes at erotic images, he causes the exile of the Shechinah (Divine Presence) from within his own miniature Mishkan, thus adding to the prolongation of the Shechinah's exile from the world. You may think that your erotic interludes are your own private affair, but the very opposite is true. Every time a Jew watches some smut on the internet, his fantasies and lustful thoughts pollute not only himself, but all of the Jewish People, and all of Creation! You have to ask yourself - is this something you want to do?

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