

Visit to the Eye Doctor

Contributed by Michael
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Question:

I have wasted thousands of hours frying my eyeballs with internet porn. Can you offer some practical advice on things I can do to rectify the spiritual damage I caused?

Answer:

First, it is important to understand that the damage caused by looking at forbidden images is not to the transgressor alone. The eyes are windows to the soul, and the soul is connected to all of the highest spiritual worlds. Thus, a person who watches pornography on the Internet not only damages his own spiritual and physical being, but also the spiritual channels that bring blessing into the world.

The impurity caused by his transgression pollutes the Holy of Holies of the Temple on high and adds to the prolongation of the exile, the suffering of the Shechinah [Divine Presence], the continued destruction of the earthly Beit HaMikdash [Temple], and the delay in Mashiach's [Messiah's] coming.

On an individual level, looking at impure images creates impure thoughts, and these thoughts pollute a person's faculty of "Daat," which is seated in the brain. In a sense, a person addicted to pornography on the Internet "loses his head." This negatively influences his process of thinking and can cause confusion and other physical problems. The forbidden images he watches also bring about an unholy sexual arousal, and this blemishes the spiritual channel of the "Yesod," something which can negatively affect not only the person, but his offspring as well.

Therefore, when a person comes to do t'shuva [repentance], he must express sorrow for the blemishes he caused on every level, not only the damage he inflicted on his eyes.

Regarding your specific question regarding the eyes, and rectifications a person can do in beginning a new and holy bond with his Maker, here are some formulas recommended by our Sages:

A person who was wont to gaze lustfully at women or at forbidden images should accustom himself to cast his gaze downward at all times, and particularly during times of prayer, when the Shechinah is present. (Reshit Chochmah, Gate of Kedusha, 8:15 and 45; Sefer Haredim, Mitzvah T'shuva, Ch.1; also, Rabanu Yoneh, Gate of T'shuva, Gate One, 35)

To the extent that one looked upon unholy things, he should strive to gaze upon holy things like tzitzit, Torah texts, prayer books, blessings, and the like. It is especially helpful to look at the Torah text when one is called up for the reading of the Torah, and to look closely at the written parchment in order to make out the letters when the Torah scroll is held up [hagbah] in synagogue.

Also, seeing things like a synagogue, the study hall of a yeshiva, the Torah scrolls in the ark holding the Torahs, all bring a holy, healing light to the eyes. (Pele Yoetz on Seeing; see also Writings of Rabbi Pinchus from Pelachek, student of the Gra)

Looking at the two Hebrew letters of "shin" embossed on the Tefillin of the head before one puts them on is good for the eyes and the faculty of "Daat." (Ben Yehoyeda, Shabbat 118)

Looking at one's Rabbi, at a Torah Sage, and at the pure, holy face of a Tzaddik, is a rectification for the eyes. This is especially true when one sees them on Shabbat and Festivals. (Reshit Chochmah)

Crying tears of repentance over the sins that one committed with the eyes is a powerful rectification. (Rabnu Yonah, Gate of T'shuva; Orachot Tzaddikim, Shar HaT'shuva)

Also, crying over the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, and the exile of the Shechinah, during the recital of Tikun Hatzot [Midnight Rectification].

Keeping one's eyes from sleep by awakening in the night to recite Tikun Hatzot and learn Torah is a great rectification. Likewise, learning Torah all night on Shavuot and Hoshana Rabbah, and on Thursday nights, but it should not interfere with being alert during the morning prayers. (Pele Yoetz)

All of these are rectifications to purify oneself from the impure spirit that pollutes a person's being when he looks at forbidden matters. May we all merit to purify and sanctify our eyes, and thus merit to behold with our eyes the return of the Shechinah to Zion, may it be soon, Amen.