



There is no better way to conclude the *halachos* of guarding one's eyes and thoughts than to quote the holy words of the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (*Vayikra* 18:2), who speaks very strongly about this topic and adds an important point that we should always bear in mind. (Since it is quite lengthy, we will cite the main parts, with a bit of explanation [in brackets]. It is worthwhile to look up the entire piece and see it in its original form.)

“It is known that all of the mitzvos that Hashem commanded His holy nation are commandments that a person has the ability to keep, and that he can arouse in himself the will to fulfill them.” [This means that a Jew has the spiritual fortitude to withstand every challenge that attempts to obstruct him from fulfilling any of the *mitzvos asei* or *lo sa'asei*.]

“However, one mitzvah is an exception: that of distancing oneself from *arayos*.

The desire for *arayos* is very strong and people feel compelled to submit to their desires. One can **only** withstand this challenge if he works on distancing himself from being affected in two ways: by what he sees (i.e., one must guard his eyes from seeing forbidden sights), and by what he thinks (i.e., one must guard his thoughts to avoid thinking forbidden thoughts).” [Only by guarding himself in these two ways will a Jew have the spiritual strength to overpower the challenges and *aveiros* of *arayos*.]

“However, if one does not guard himself in *both* of these areas — even if he is careful in one of the two — he will not have the strength to rule over his inclinations and overpower his desires. We find stories in *Chazal* that depict how someone who guarded himself in only one of these two areas was nevertheless subjected to very difficult challenges.

“Having said this, a person may think to himself: ‘How can I withstand this *nisayon*? This test can only be withstood by people who have no problem guarding their eyes and thoughts and are easily able to protect themselves from spiritual harm. People like me, however, who live amongst lowly gentiles, have no way of controlling themselves from seeing improper sights and thinking forbidden thoughts!’” [How, then, can we ever have the strength to overcome these challenges? How could the Torah demand this of us?]

“The answer is that this is indeed a valid claim. The vast majority of humankind does not, in fact, have the strength to overcome such difficult challenges.

However, the Jewish people possess within themselves a ‘*chelek Elokah mi’maal*,’ a Divine ‘piece of Hashem’ (*kaveyachol*). Therefore, we *do* have the strength and fortitude to stand strong and overcome the most difficult

challenges. Even if we live amongst the lowliest of people, we possess the strength to guard our eyes and thoughts to ensure that we are not dragged down by them, and we have the ability to stand firmly against difficult temptations.”

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh is teaching us that essentially, by instructing us in the mitzvah of distancing ourselves from *arayos*, Hashem is telling us that we possess G-dly strengths that can be utilized to stand strong against the *yetzer hara*. We can guard our eyes and thoughts despite the difficult challenges that are rampant in the streets.

“*Haba l’taher mesayin oso.*” If a person takes steps to purify himself, Hashem helps him. If we want to succeed, Hashem will assist us!