



Introduction

The *pasuk* states (*Devarim 23:14-15*): “**Because Hashem your G-d walks in the midst of your camp... and your camp should be holy and no unseemly thing (*ervas davar*) shall be seen to you...**”

From this *pasuk*, *Chazal* learn that whenever Hashem “walks with us” — such as when we daven, recite *Krias Shema*, or learn Torah — our “camp,” meaning **the place where we are situated**, must be holy.

The *pasuk* says that one may not see an *ervas davar* in such a place. This means that no *dvar ervah* may be in one’s field of vision while he is davening or learning. A person’s main “camp” is the area that he can see in his immediate vicinity, and this camp must be kept “holy.”

Thus, we are speaking about an *issur d'Oraysa*. If someone does daven or recite *Krias Shema* in a place where a *dvar ervah* is visible, he has uttered Hashem's Name in vain and has not fulfilled his obligation to daven or recite *Krias Shema*.

This *issur d'Oraysa* applies to one who davens in the presence of an “*ervah*” itself. In the coming emails, we will not be discussing the various body parts and detailing which ones are considered “*ervah*.” Rather, we will focus only on *Chazal*'s enactment forbidding reciting *Krias Shema*, davening, and learning in the presence of **anything** that causes impure thoughts, i.e., while viewing parts of the body that are not necessarily “*ervah*” but are anyway customarily covered, or while hearing a woman sing (as will be explained). These things are also included in the category of “*ervah*,” albeit *mid'rabbanan*. (*Berachos* 25b; *Rashba*, *Berachos* 24a; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 74:1 and 75:1; *Mishnah Berurah* 75:1 and 75:19; *Aruch Hashulchan* 74:1 and 75:1)