

Dr. Benzion Sorotzkin, Psy.D.
Clinical Psychologist
Brooklyn, NY
www.DrSorotzkin.com
bensort@aol.com

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TORAH PERSPECTIVES ON BOUNDARIES, RESTRICTIONS AND SEXUALITY¹

Boundaries and restrictions

A significant portion of the Torah revolves around boundaries and restrictions. Many youngsters' mental image of G-d and His rules can be described thus: A very powerful god, who for some mysterious reason, needs us to provide him with *nachas* by doing positive deeds, and who needs us to avoid transgressing his rules. If we break the rules we will incur his wrath upon us. In the worst case scenario the mental image of god will most closely resemble the gods of the ancient pagans who had no interest in morality or the welfare of people and were basically very powerful bullies whom one needed to appease in order to avoid getting "beaten up," or worse.

A more accurate, Torah-true, image is of a G-d who is concerned with our welfare and therefore wants us to do the things that are beneficial for us and to avoid certain acts that will be harmful to us (not unlike a doctor who tells us not to smoke because of the harm it will do to us).

This perspective is reflected in these verses in Iyov (35:6-7): **אם תִּטָּאֵת מִהַ תַּפְעֵל בּוֹ, וּרְבוּ - פִּשְׁעֶיךָ מִהַ תַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ. אִם צְדָקָתְךָ מִהַ תַּתֵּן לוֹ...** - Even if your rebellions were numerous, what would you have done to Him? Were you to have been righteous how would you have benefited Him? These verses make clear that our transgression cannot hurt G-d and our good deeds do nothing for Him. The rules of the Torah are strictly for our own benefit.

Nonetheless, those inclined to the first perspective will be able to find many Torah and Talmudic statements that seem to back them up (e.g., sacrifices bringing *nachas ruach* to *Hashem*, our misdeeds causing *Hashem* pain, etc.).

It is clear from *Chazal* that expressions such as "an *aveira* causing G-d pain" are not to be understood literally – rather we use these metaphors as a way of bringing closer to the human

¹ Presented at an Ohel Workshop on Boundary-Crossing Sexual Behavior in Children & Teens on Feb. 2, 2011 in Brooklyn, NY.

mind concepts that are beyond the mind's ability to comprehend.¹ Rav Dessler emphasizes that these metaphors serve an important function. For example, speaking about the pain our *aveiros* causes *Hashem*, so to speak, helps us feel that our behavior makes a difference. While we use such helpful expressions, Rav Dessler stresses, we must also be cognizant that understanding them literally is actually sacrilegious!²

The Torah perspective on threats to maintaining boundaries

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz,³ in a discourse on the Torah perspective of boundaries, brings the *posuk* that forbids adding or subtracting from the *mitzvos*. The *posuk* then connects this to the *avoda zora* of Pe'or: (ואתחנן ד:ב-ג) לא תוסיפו על הדבר אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם ולא תגרעו ממנו... עינכם הראות את אשר עשה ה' בבעל פעור...

What is the connection between adding to and subtracting from *mitzvos* and the *avoda zora* of Pe'or, asks Rav Chaim?

Unlike other idols that had specific protocols as to the proper manner of their worship, the essence of Pe'or was "no boundaries" – in fact, the more you treated it with contempt, the higher the level of worship it was considered! The *gemora* says that Pe'or was the most popular *avoda zora* – because it symbolized no boundaries.

The main protection we have against descending into a moral cesspool is to maintain appropriate boundaries. Minimizing the significance of boundary violations jeopardizes the system. Interestingly, adding to a *mitzvah* (without being clear that it's not an integral part of the *mitzvah*) is also a threat to the system of rules. This is why the *posuk* connects the prohibition of both adding and subtracting to *mitzvos* to Ba'al Pe'or since they both threaten the integrity of appropriate boundaries.

Rav Chaim also makes a very interesting observation that the same perspective that allows people to reach the highest levels – the appreciation of גדלות האדם (mankind's awesome potential) – can, in its pathological version (narcissism) allow people to believe that they are above the rules!

Restrictions experienced as excessive deprivation can lead to a desire to throw off the intolerable burden.

Rav Chaim cautions that overly rigid boundaries are also problematic.⁴ That's why the Torah provides soldiers in wartime an extraordinary exemption from the regular restrictions

¹ See e.g., *Michtav MeEliyahu* Vol. 3, pp. 257-260

² וראה גם בספר **שם דרך** לרבי שמחה זיסל ברוידא: פרשת תצוה מאמר טז', הסבר מקיף בענין זה, ובספר **מעין בית השואבה** (רבי שמעון שוואב) תצוה כז:ד ובמשך **חכמה** פרשת קדושים יט:ג.

³ ספר **שיחות מוסר** (רבי חיים שמואלביץ) מאמר פד'.

⁴ ראה **שיחות מוסר** (רבי חיים שמואלביץ) מאמר ל' עבד ה' (א) "הקושי להיות מוכרח".

related to marriage (*eishes yefas toar*). The Torah recognizes that during wartime soldiers are unable to maintain their regular boundaries.¹ Rather than allow them to descend into a situation of no boundaries (as in “Pe’or”), the Torah creates a more flexible boundary for this occasion.

It is interesting to note that many chronic boundary violators grew up in **overly** disciplined environments. Likewise, the increasingly popular “zero tolerance policies” for drugs, violence, weapons etc. in schools and workplaces have often turned out to be counterproductive.² Even in structural engineering over-rigidity creates weakness rather than strength. It is for this reason that skyscrapers are constructed to sway in high winds.

Similarly, Rav Dessler cautions us that resisting illicit temptations solely via repression is like pressing on a spring. The harder you press the harder it pushes back. Based on this concept, Rav Chaim Friedlander advises that we should frame our *avodas Hashem* in positive terms, focusing on the benefits of following the Torah rather than on the negative consequences of breaking the rules.³ Rav Wolbe gives similar advice regarding learning *mussar*.⁴ Likewise, Rav Mattisyahu Salomon cautions parents not to frame *frumkeit* to their children exclusively in terms of “we don’t do this and we don’t do that.”⁵

The Chovos Halvovos likewise cautions not to make the Torah overly burdensome because that can lead to the person to throw off the yoke of Torah completely.⁶

Interestingly, studies show that diets and attempts to stop smoking that emphasize the positive consequences of eating healthy and not smoking are more effective than messages that

¹ רמב"ן כי תצא. As seen by wartime atrocities committed by soldiers who always acted civilized in their civilian life. (כג'): **ובמכתב מאליהו** כך אלול עמ' מד'.

² “Blanket policies that are often not clearly explained to teachers or students can create an atmosphere in which rules get in the way of relationships between students and teachers, to the detriment of keeping the schools safe.” “Code of Silence: Students’ Perceptions of School Climate and Willingness to Intervene in a Peer’s Dangerous Plan.” Syvertsen, A. K., Flanagan, C. A., Stout, M. D., (2009), *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101 (1). (<http://www.apa.org/journals/releases/edu1011219.pdf>.)

³ ספר **מכתב מאליהו** (רבי אליהו דסלר, ח"א עמ' 235): יש שהאדם דוחה את יצרו, אבל אינו מבטלו... ע"כ אם גם לפי שעה מתגבר האדם עליו, אבל הוא כמו דוחק ע"ג קפיץ, אשר כלעומת שידחוק יותר, יתנגד הקפיץ יותר. ובספר **שפתי חיים** (רבי חיים פרידלנדר, מועדים א' עמ' 25 בהקדמה): [בעניין שמירת העיניים] הקושי הוא, שלכאורה "שמירת הראיה" היא פעולה השוללת, זו פעולה נגד... וידוע דברו של מו"ר הגרא"א דסלר שכלל שלוחצים יותר על הקפיץ כן גובר הלחץ הנגדי... כאן חידש רבנו לקיים את המצוה מתוך החיוביות. לשמוח בזכות של שמירת העין, וממילא סרה ההתנגדות הפנימית.

⁴ בספר **עלי שור** (רבי שלמה וולבה, ח"ב, עמ' קנט') – המתחיל ללמוד ספר מסילת ישרים במתכונת של לימוד מוסר, ייטיב בתקופה הראשונה שלא להתעכב בכל פרק לערוך חשבון נפשו על ליקוייו במידה שהוא עוסק בה, אלא ילמד את המידה בכל עומקה ויתלמד להעריך אותה ולהשתוקק בה [ע"כ מהעלי שור]. וראה גם בח"א עמ' רה'. וראה גם בספר לדעת בארץ דרכך (ר' יהודה גרינולד, ירושלים תשנ"ו) עמ' 168 ו-343-344.

⁵ Said in a *Chinuch Vaad*. See also *With Hearts Full of Love* Rav Mattisyahu Salomon Artscroll, 2009, pp. 179-180.

⁶ **רבי ירוחם** ("דעת תורה" בראשית עמ' יט-כ): וכתב בעל **חובות הלבבות** שלא ראוי לאדם להוסיף סתם גדרים וסייגים למצוות ועבודה זו שייכת רק לצדיקים וחסידים, דהיינו, "שרק אם האדם מרגיש בנפשו שהתורה אינה עליו כמשא או יכול להוסיף, ואם לאו הרי יכול להיות שאדרבה, מה שמוסיף על התורה, מזה גופא תיעשה התורה עליו כמשא, ואז סכנתו גדולה לפרוק מעליו כל עול התורה. חז"ל יראו מאוד מזה שהתורה לא תיעשה על האדם כמשא. וזה ביאור דברי חז"ל (ירושלמי נדרים ט.) שאמרו "לא דייך במה שאסרה תורה" וכו'. חוה הוסיפה על הציווי לפיכך באה לידי גרעון, כי אחרי שהציווי נעשה עליו למשא, אז משליח מעליו אף העיקרים, וזהו הסכנה הכרוכה בתוספות, וכל זה מדרכי היצר."

emphasize the negative consequences of smoking and obesity.¹ This should caution us not to become overly reliant on negative consequences as an educational tool.

The concept of a yoke – self-control

A related issue is the concept of “yoke” – as in עול מלכות שמים. The mental image many people have of this concept is that of a yoke of slavery – a burden. In fact, Rav Matisyahu Salomon explains, based on a Zohar, a yoke is a tool² – a way to more efficiently accomplish a task that we want to accomplish (similar to the rigid backpack used by hikers, allowing them to carry all their equipment with minimal discomfort).

Likewise, the “yoke” of self-control has great benefits for those who embrace it. Walter Mischel and his colleagues conducted a series of studies where preschool children were offered the choice between an immediate small reward (one marshmallow) and a larger delayed reward (two marshmallows). Those children who were able to wait longer at age 4 or 5 became adolescents whose parents rated them as more academically and socially competent, verbally fluent, rational, attentive, planful, and able to deal well with frustration and stress.³

People who grew up appreciating the intrinsic benefits of appropriate restrictions will view them as helpful tools and not as burdens. Those who were “bribed” with rewards or praise or threatened with punishment as a means of eliciting compliance, are not likely to develop an appreciation for **self-control**. The overuse of “Because I told you so” as a reason for expected compliance is also not likely to promote the appreciation for the intrinsic value of self-control.

Clinical implications of excessive feelings of guilt and shame

Overwhelming guilt and shame play significant roles in the emotional distress therapists encounter with religious patients. An important component of *chinuch* is learning how to deal with human imperfection and setbacks. While healthy and reasonable guilt serves a crucial function in *avodas Hashem*, overwhelming and unreasonable guilt and shame is destructive and counterproductive.

¹ “Thinking about the negative consequences of an addiction will only increase the desire for the addictive substance... [because] the psychological defense at the core of any addiction is denial, so when contemplating any negative idea (such as getting cancer from smoking), your mind will crave the intense pleasure of the addiction as a way to override (i.e., deny) the frightening idea” [Retrieved 12/26/2010 from www.guidetopsychology.com/stopsmok.htm]. Perhaps contemporary pornography is today’s Pe’or – the refutation of all boundaries. It often seems that those who have experienced an overly oppressive form of discipline in their families are particularly vulnerable to succumbing to the lure of pornography.

² מתנת חיים (רבי מתתיהו סלומון, ימים נוראים, עמ' עה) - נפש החיים (שער ד' פרק ד') ע"פ הזוה"ק.

³ “The nature of adolescent competencies predicted by preschool delay of gratification.” Mischel, Walter; Shoda, Yuichi; Peake, Philip K. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1988, Vol 54, 687-696. More recently summarized by Walter Mischel (2014) in his book “*The Marshmallow Test: Understanding Self-control and How to Master It*.” (My thanks to Dr. David Pelcovitz for calling my attention to this study).

Rav Dessler states: Shame is the result of internal dissonance and it holds the power to prompt a person to do *teshuvah*. On the other hand, very strong feelings of dissonance can bring the person to rebel against his Creator – to silence his conscience by force.¹

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz also discusses at length how the psychological turmoil from overwhelming guilt can be more dangerous to one's spirituality than the transgression itself.²

Sexual guilt and shame

The sexual arena is especially prone to feelings of overwhelming guilt and shame – and a frequent cause of emotional turmoil among *frum* adolescents. One reason is because, in regard to private behaviors, youngsters tend to believe they are the only ones transgressing and so they are more deeply affected by the severe comments they see in *seforim* – in contrast to how they react to equally severe comments that relate to their deficiencies in other, more public, behaviors (e.g., *lashon horah*)³.

Rav Wolbe addressed the issue of sexual guilt in an Israeli medical journal over 35 years ago:

The difficult period of adolescence is fertile grounds for the development of excessive guilt feelings. Masturbation is a serious transgression. The vast majority of young people stumbles in this area and are incapable of totally overcoming this problem. The result is guilt feelings. This is the place for proper guidance from rabbis and educators. Rabbis are not authorized to permit what is forbidden, but they can guide, reassure and encourage the youngster to develop patience with himself. In addition, promoting an active social life and introducing the youngster to the noble treasures of Torah will gradually bring him to **forget** to transgress. Rather than a constant battle which is for naught, a positive toiling in Torah and social activity will bring him gradually to wean himself off. This is the approach that is proper in our times.⁴

Rav Wolbe is also critical of *mechanchim* who give their *talmidim* the impression that sexual feeling are inherently evil, rather than teaching them that these feelings are feelings of

¹ בספר **מכתב מאליהו** (רבי אליהו דסלר ח"ד, עמ' 263): בושה באה מהרגשת סתירות פנימיות, ויש בה כח גדול להביא את האדם לידי תשובה. אבל מצד אחר, יכול האדם לבוא על ידה לידי עזות וחוצפה, כי הרגשת הסתירה באופן חזק מאד יכולה להביאו למרוד נגד בוראו לגמרי ח"ו, כדי להשקט בכח את קול המצפון [ראה גם ח"ג עמ' 216]. וראה גם בספר **זכרון אליהו** (לזקני הרה"ג ר' אליהו מאיר בלך זצ"ל עמ' שכב): אי-שקט פנימי מביא לפעמים לידי מעשים נתעבים, שהם פועל-יוצא של התלבטות פנימית של יסורי-מצפון.

² בספר **שיחות מוסר** (רבי חיים שמואלביץ), מאמר נה' - "מאיגרא רמא לבירא עמיקתא".
³ שולחן ערוך, הלכות לשה"ר (ל: א-ב): "והוא עון גדול וגורם להרוג נפשות מישראל, לכך נסמך לו ולא תעמוד על דם רעך, צא ולמד מה אירע לדואג האדומי... ולא נחתם גזר דין על אבותינו במדבר אלא על לשון הרע בלבד".

⁴ **רבי שלמה וולבה** כתב ב"בשבילי הרפואה" (סיון תשמ"ב, בית חולים לניאדו, עמ' פב): התקופה הקשה של ההתבגרות היא קרקע פורה לגידול רגשי אשמה.... האוננות היא איסור חמור. רוב רובם של הצעירים נכשלים בזה ואינם יכולים להתגבר על זה בשום אופן. התוצאה הם רגשי אשמה. כאן הוא המקום להדרכה נכונה מצד רבנים ומחנכים. כידוע, רב אינו מוסמך... להתיר איסורים. אבל הוא יכול להדריך, להרגיע ולהביא את הצעיר לסבלנות עם עצמו. ויחד עם זה: טיפוח חיי חברה אינטנזיבית והכנסת הצעיר לתוך אוצרות התורה האדירים... [ש]מביאה לכך, שבמשך הזמן שוכחים לחטוא. במקום מלחמה תמידית שהיא אך שוא – יגיעה חיובית לתורה ולחברה, ולאט לאט נגמלים... זאת היא דרך החינוך הנהוגה היום אצלנו.

kedusha that require us to preserve and protect that *kedusha* status. Due to this improper *chinuch*, bemoans Rav Wolbe, *from* youngsters enter marriage believing that they are going to be involved in *tumah*, albeit, a *tumah* that the Torah now permits!¹

Rav Chaim Volozhin highlights the spiritual danger of excessive sexual guilt in a dramatic statement in the *Keser Rosh*. He criticizes those who quote from the *Zohar* regarding the severity of the transgression of masturbation; yet neglect to quote the end of this same *Zohar*, which says that Torah study corrects this transgression.²

In an extraordinary footnote, the שני לוחות הברית quotes the אוהלי חיים:

Those stringent ones who are stringent and state that there is no correcting this transgression... they are the ones who induce an increase of sinning among us, and cause people to distance themselves from *Hashem*, since the sinner, when he hears that there is no repentance for this sin will abandon all attempts to improve himself. These stringent ones cause the *Shechinah* to go into *golus* and rather than be called *chasidim* (stringent ones) should more properly be called “*chaseirim*” (lacking ones) and their punishment will be very severe.³

Our surprised reaction to the following statement by Rav Dessler highlights how we perceive sexual infractions on a different plane than other equally egregious transgressions. “The transgression of wasting seed is very serious – and how much more so is the seriousness of wasting precious time”!⁴

Family dynamics that encourage vulnerability to overwhelming guilt

We wouldn’t expect our children to properly keep Shabbos without ever discussing Shabbos with them. Yet we seem to expect them to cope with their sexuality without any direction. This is especially problematic in today’s world. In *Child and Domestic Abuse: Torah, Psychological, & Legal Perspectives*, the author relates: “I once mentioned to the Noviminsker

¹ **אגרות וכתבים** (ממך המשגיח **רבי שלמה וולבה**, ח"ב, אגרת שח'): ... אין זאת, כי אם הטעות משנות הנעורים הראשונות שהתרגלו לראות בכל דבר שביצה"ר ענין של טומאה, וכל כך השתרש מבט זה בבני תורה הצעירים, עד שאח"כ כשהם ניגשים לחתונתם, נדמה להם גם אז כי בעצם בטומאה הם עוסקים, אלא שהטומאה הותרה ... כמובן, אין לך טעות גדולה מזו! ולדאבונו גם מחנכים אינם נזהרים בזה ומרבים לטמא את היצה"ר, במקום לחנך תלמידיהם לדעת שהיצה"ר הוא דבר שבקדושה, וממילא צריכים לשמרו בקדושה! ואילו חונכו התלמידים ככה, היו יודעים בעת בואם בברית עם בת גילם כי בית מקדש הולכים לבנות, לא מקום מותר לטומאה ח"ו!

² בספר "כתר ראש" (**רבי חיים מוואלוז'ין**, הודפס בסוף סידור הגר"א, סי' קלג'): והראה לו [לגר"א] מאמר בתיקונים ובספרי מוסר המחמירים מאד בענין זה.... אבל בסוף המאמר בתיקוני זהר נמצא דבר טוב למבין [שלימוד תורה]... מצלת מן המיתה... ומן היסורים... והספרי מוסר לא הביאו זאת...

³ **של"ה**: אלו החסידים המחמירים לומר אין תיקון לחטא הזה ר"ל... הם המרבים פושעים בישראל ומרחיקים מלבא תחת כנפי השכינה אשר בעל העון... בשמעו אלה אומר אין תשובה לחצי דבר, וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי כו', ואלו [החסידים] גורמים גלות השכינה, ואינן נקראים חסידים כי אם חסרים ועונשם גדול למאוד. [הערה נח'].

⁴ **מכתב מאליהו** (רבי אליהו דסלר ח"ה עמ' 275) – איסור הז"ל חמור כ"כ... קל וחומר כשמוציא לבטלה את הזמן היקר שלו.

Rebbe that Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky had stated that children should be educated about sexual matters at the age of 16. His reply was, "It is too late for children today (this was 25 years ago). Even some 8-year olds know more than I do."¹

Every parent needs to think about when and how to discuss sexuality with their children. Consulting with a knowledgeable Rov is a good place to start.²

Image of G-d

There is evidence that children's image of G-d, the ultimate authority figure, is shaped by their experiences with their earliest authority figures. As Rav Matisyahu Salomon writes: "The father and mother serve as a physical paradigm for our Father in Heaven" for their children.³ If their parents were unreasonable, punitive, unpredictable, unforgiving, hypercritical, more focused on their own needs, then their children's image of G-d will resemble the gods of the ancient idol worshippers. Such children learn to feel overwhelmingly guilty even for minor infractions - how much more so for sexual ones.

A young man once told me that he has full *bitochon* that *Hashem* will provide him with his physical needs. He just can't believe that *Hashem* will take his emotional needs into consideration. Not surprisingly, this is what he experienced with his father who provided for his physical needs but was oblivious to his emotional needs.

Parents who are reasonable, forgiving, supportive, and focused on their children's needs create a similar image of G-d for their children. This prepares them to handle the guilt of masturbation in a healthier manner even if it wasn't discussed directly since they have a template to process guilt.

Overreaction by parents to minor infractions without consideration for extenuating circumstances results in the "saint or sinner syndrome" in their children. If they can't be a saint, they may as well be a sinner. They are unable to perceive gradations, where one option is bad but the other one is even worse. Children who grow up in this environment project onto G-d the same attitude. This leads to absurd situations such as a person who feels that if he can't stop himself from masturbating feels he might as well go to a prostitute. Or since he feels very guilty for wasting time watching a relatively clean movie, he feels he may as well watch pornography.

In contrast, parents who react to their children's infractions taking into consideration the specific circumstances involved will have children who will assume the same regarding *Hashem*. They will strive to be as good as they can and feel proud of their accomplishments even if they

¹ Dr. Daniel Eidensohn, 2010, *Vol. 1*, p. ii,

² A helpful resource is a book by Sara Diamant – *Talking to your children about intimacy: A guide for Orthodox Jewish parents*.

³ *With Hearts Full of Love* Rav Mattisyahu Salomon Artscroll, 2009, pp. 65-66. This can be true of adults as well: "אור החיים" (במדבר כ:ח): הרמב"ם פירש [למה משה נענש על שהיכה את הסלע] כי הקפיד ה' עליו על אשר נתרגז על העדה ומסיבה זו חשבו כי גם ה' בכעס עמהם אשר לא כן היה.

can't be perfect. When they "slip," their level of guilt feelings will be appropriate for the circumstances.

"Fearful" *chazals*

A vulnerable youngster's terrifying image of G-d is exacerbated by fearful *chazals* simplistically understood. Children who grow up with punitive and vindictive parents find it easy to believe the most frightening explanations. For example, *chazal* tell us that someone who embarrasses his friend in public has no share in the world to come. Some youngsters find it believable that this applies to anyone who did this even once. Children who grew up in a loving and forgiving environment will intuitively figure that this probably isn't the case. Perhaps they will assume it means someone who does this habitually – as in fact the Rambam states.¹

The Steipler Gaon related that after every Yom Kippur he was approached by terrified teens who had experienced a nocturnal emission on Yom Kippur. They recalled the *Mishna* that states that the person this happens to should fear that they won't finish out the year. (Here too, youngsters who grew up in a more rigid and punitive environment would be more vulnerable to panic in this situation). The Steipler had to reassure them that the *Mishna* is only discussing a married Torah scholar over the age of 40 for whom such an event is very unnatural. Such a person has to worry that perhaps this is a "heavenly sign." For a single teen, in contrast, this is a very natural phenomenon and not a cause for worry.²

A very common cause of extreme anxiety among religious youngsters is guilt over masturbation. They often "justify" their anxiety by citing the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* that masturbation is equivalent to murder. They are unaware that the *Bais Shmuel* brings evidence that this cannot be taken literally.³

Inadequate *hashkafik* grounding in sexual issues

Many youngsters are unaware of rational reasons to refrain from pre-marital sexual activity. For many whom already have a distorted image of *Hashem*, this is just another way of depriving them of pleasure. In their eyes, this world was not intended for pleasure or even

¹ המלבין פני חבריו ברבים אין לו חלק לעוה"ב – רמב"ם: "הרגיל בהן" (ראה הל' תשובה ג:יד).

² ספר "קריינא דאגרתא" (ממרח הסטייפלר) ח"א סי' קס"ה בענין הגמ' ביומא פח. ("הרואה קרי ביוה"כ ידאג כל השנה")...: והנה לא ידאג כלל וכלל, כי דברי חז"ל אמורים למי שאירע לו ר"ל שלא מחמת טבעו כלל וכגון נשוי ובן ארבעים ויותר עמוס בתורה ויר"ש... אבל אנשים צעירים וכש"כ כשאינו נשוי הדבר פשוט וברור שאירע הדבר מחמת טבעו... [ראה גם רבי שלמה וולבה – אגרות וכתבים ח"א – מכתב כא].

³ שולחן ערוך, אבן העזר (כג:א-ב) "אסור להוציא שכבת זרע לבטלה, ועון זה חמור מכל עבירות שבתורה... ואלו שמנאפים ביד ומוציאים זרע, לא די להם שאיסור גדול הוא, אלא שהעושה זה... כאילו הורג הנפש" – ושם בבית שמואל: "כתב חלקת מחוקק בשם ספר החסידים אם מתירא שלא יכשל באשת איש או בנדה ח"ו טוב לו להוציא זרע לבטלה... לפי"ז מה שכתב בזהר וכאן דעון ש"ז חמיר מכל עבירות לאו דוקא".

happiness. They are surprised to hear that according to the *Yerushalmi* people will have to answer for why they didn't enjoy the world *Hashem* provided for them.¹

An idea found in *seforim* that discuss this issue can be helpful. If one's experience of a very pleasurable activity is enjoyed exclusively with one particular person then that will create a very strong bond between them (ודבק באשתו). Intimacy shared with countless people is not that intimate (e.g., a "secret" shared with everyone).

Another important issue is the connection between emotional intimacy and the lasting pleasure of physical intimacy. Unfortunately, sexuality has become separated from intimacy in the minds of many people.² As a result many young men looking for a *shidduch* are obsessed with looks. They can't believe that their future level of enjoyment from physical intimacy is more dependent on their emotional bond with their spouse than with their spouse's physical attributes. They are unable to comprehend that if they really like someone and develop an emotional bond with her, they will feel more attracted.³

I find it helpful to point out to patients that most people would rather eat out in a mediocre restaurant with a close friend than in a fancy restaurant with someone they didn't particularly like.⁴

In Summary: Youngsters with an accurate and healthy understanding of the Torah view of boundaries and who have benefited from a positive familial experience with boundaries are less prone to boundary violations.

¹ בירושלמי קדושין פ"ד סוף הלכה י"ב אסור לדור בעיר שאין בה מרחץ וגיוניתא של ירק, עתיד אדם ליתן דין וחשבון על כל שראתה עינו ולא אכל.

² For a profoundly insightful discussion of how the many *halachos* that govern the physical relationship between a husband and wife are all geared toward enhancing their emotional bond, and their enjoyment of each other, see the *sefer*, בנין הבית מאת הרב משה אהרן שוחטוביץ (תשע"א), Available in English – "The Living Marriage," Rabbi Moshe Shuchatowitz.

This separation is also found among well-intentioned therapists who recommend using pornography as a tool in treating problems in marital sexuality. It's hard to understand how someone would try to treat a deficiency in intimacy using the ultimate in non-intimacy (pornography)!

³ If they grew up with parents who were not able to overlook their minor imperfections they may, in fact, be unable to experience (משלי י"ב): על כל פשעים תכסה אהבה

⁴ "טוב ארוחת ירק ואהבה שם, משור אבוס ושנאה בו" (משלי טו:יז). וראה מלבי"ם שם: טוב ארוחת ירק ואהבה שם, משור אבוס ושנאה בו", שראינו שייטב לאדם ארוחה קטנה אם נמצא שם אהבה, שהאהבה תמתיק גם ארוחת ירק, והשנאה תמרר המאכל של שור אבוס, ואין האושר החיצוני והעונג המדומה עיקר, רק המנחה הפנימית והאהבה והבטחון בה', כי בו תתעדן בדשן נפשו:

Rav Shlomo Wolbe - Letters, Part 1 - letter 24. (To one who failed to protect himself from חטא). (Free translation): My dear friend! Cease your searching for what the *seforim* say about that *aveira*. The sources that you have already found and copied for yourself – dispose of them properly.

The *yetzer horah* that brings one to this particular חטא is so cunning that any thoughts about the subject can stimulate one to fall again. This includes even thought of remorse and *teshuvah*. The only solution is, therefore, is to take the opposite path.... To forget about the *aveira*. That is, to give it no thought – even after being נכשל. You must stop thinking about the whole subject of this חטא! How? By completely investing yourself and learning, with an attempt to be מחדש תורה [to develop original thoughts in learning], and specifically learning with *simcha*....

This matter involves a great battle. Often you will be victorious. It is possible, however, that at times you will be defeated by the *yetzer*. If that, unfortunately, happens – don't think about it and pay it no attention! Banish any thought about what happened and particularly beware of feelings of helplessness! This is the primary goal of the *yetzer* – to knock a person down and make him feel hopeless. Don't allow him that victory! Continue to learn, and with joy, as this nothing happened! ... The only solution to deal with this issue is to be involved in learning and to become accustomed to thinking and learning; in the street, after you go to bed, etc., as much as possible – but also to socialize and interact with friends... In addition, forget what you've seen in *seforim* about the punishments and difficulty of doing *teshuvah* resulting from this *aveira*. Just look at the סידור הגר"א¹, what you find there should direct you in this area.

I am aware that these instructions are completely different than what you've seen, but this way has the approval of the Chazon Ish. However, it is difficult to become accustomed to **not** paying any attention and to **not** giving thought. Thoughts of remorse, anguish and hopelessness constantly arise. For this reason, I request that you reread this letter occasionally. *Hashem* should help you ascend to the heights of Torah and *yiras shomayim* until you completely forget about this *aveira*. And with *Hashem*'s help you'll establish a house of Torah and father children בקדושה ובטהרה [in purity]. There is no reason whatsoever to be concerned that what you have done in the past will have any effect on your ability to do this. Only strengthen yourself and learning and be מחדש חידושי תורה!²

¹ "כתר ראש" מרבי חיים מוואלאזין (נדפס בסוף סידור הגר"א, סי' קלג') (cited above).

² **רבי שלמה וולבה – אגרות וכתבים ח"א – מכתב כד'** ("לאחד שנכשל בחטא"): "... ידידי היקר! הפסק לחפש בספרים מה שמדברים על אותו חטא, ומה שכבר רשמת לך – תגנוז. היצר המביא לחטא זה הוא כה ערום, שכל מחשבה על החטא, ואפילו מחשבה של חרטה ותשובה, עלולה לגרות שוב את היצר לעבור. אי לזאת, צריך ללכת בדרך הפוכה, כמו שאמר רבי בפ"ב דאבות שיפה תורה עם דרך ארץ (היינו גמילות חסדים, כמו שאמרו בבראשית רבה פרשה יג, טו) שיגיע שניהם **משכחת** עוון. צריך לשכוח מהחטא! וזאת – על ידי שתשקיע עצמך בלימוד ותשתדל לחדש, ודוקא בשמחה, וכמו שאמרו בברכות כב. "פתח פיה ויאירו דבריך כי אין דברי תורה מקבלין טומאה!" ... זוהי מלחמה גדולה, הרבה פעמים תנצח, אבל יכול לקרות שגם הוא מנצח ואתה נכשל. ואם חלילה נכשלת: אל תחשוב על זה ואל תשים לב! תדחה כל מחשבה על זה, ובפרט הזהר מייאוש! רק זה רוצה היצר: להפיל את האדם ליאוש, וזאת אל תתן לו! תלמד הלאה, ובשמחה, כאילו לא קרא כלום! ... העצה היחידה לחטא זה היא: לעסוק בתורה ולהתרגל לחשוב בלימוד ברחוב, במטה עד כמה שאפשר, אבל גם להיות מעורב עם החברה. חז"ל אומרים "בראתי יצה"ר, ובראתי לו תורה תבלין" ורש"י בב"ב טז. מבאר: "תורה מבטלת הרהורים". עוד זאת: תשכח מה שראית בספרים על העונשים וקושי התשובה וכו', רק עי' בסידור הגר"א... והדברים שתמצא שם הם ינהיגו אותך. יודע אני שהדרך שביארתי לך היא לגמרי אחרת מכל מה שראית, אבל יש על דרך זאת הסכמה ממרן החזון איש זי"ע. בכל זאת, קשה להתרגל **לא** לחשוב, **לא** לשים לב, ותמיד שוב מתעוררת מחשבות של חרטה, יגון ויאוש ח"ו. לכן אבקשך לקרא מכתבי זה מדי פעם. והשי"ת יעזור לך שתעלה מעלה מעלה בתורה וביראת שמים עד שתשכח לגמרי מהחטא! ובעה"י תייסד בית של תורה ותוליד בנים בקדושה וטהרה (אין שום חשש שהעבר יזיק לזה), ורק חזק בלימוד תורה עם חידושי! [ראה גם מכתבים כא', כה', ובח"ב מכתבים רע"ט, רפ', רפ"א, רפ"ב, שח', שי'.]