



**When my parents asked about my future husband, one of the things that was emphasized about him was his yiras Shamayim.**

**For 11 years, I had no reason to question it.**

**A few months ago, during a casual conversation, I was horrified to learn that his smartphone does not have a filter, and he has no plans to get one. He acknowledged that on the obligatory form he submitted to the vaad ha'ishur of the mosdos to which we send our children, he signed that he doesn't have a smartphone; he instructed our three school-aged children never to reveal to anyone that he does.**

**When I pressed him on it, he claimed that the Rabbanim who demand filters rely on information given to them by others, and therefore, their psak isn't binding. I subsequently learned that he has sold this line to my children as well.**

**I am a total loss where to go from here.**

When I first received this anonymous query (identifying details have been changed), I urged the questioner to seek guidance from a Rav in her *kehillah*. She gave me several reasons why she felt unable to do so.

I then consulted one of the leading Rabbanim of our generation on her behalf. He told me that my initial response was accurate; the only feasible option was for her to personally contact a Rav who would be able guide her and her children as to how to deal with this heartbreaking saga.

When I asked him what advice he would give if he would be the Rav she turns to, his response was telling:

"I would be given the *siyatta diShmaya* to know what to answer," he told me.

After advising her of the Rav's response, I initially saw no purpose in addressing this agonizing question in this column. Other than urging readers to *daven* on her behalf and on behalf of others in similar situations, what is there to say that isn't obvious to every reader?

With the passage of time, I reconsidered.

Those who choose to live in denial and use deception to cover up their vices will allow neither facts nor logic to dissuade them. Their family members are their innocent victims who deserve our support and compassion — and their privacy as they watch the world crashing down upon them.

It's the rest of us who can desperately use a dose of *chizuk* as we navigate the treacherous waters of 2025.



All *Gedolei Yisrael*, without exception, have ruled that there is an unequivocal obligation to properly filter any device that can access the internet.

As Jews, we live our lives according to the Torah. Even if we could not possibly imagine a reason to use a filter, we would still be obligated to follow a united call of all *Gedolei Yisrael*. In this case, even if the *Gedolim* had remained silent on this matter, anyone with an iota of common sense would understand the imperativeness of a strong filter on every device that can connect to the internet.

As I type these words, I can imagine what readers will be thinking at this point in the article: *Where is he going with this? No one doubts that filters are needed. So what's the point of writing about this?*

The answer lies in an illustrative anecdote that sheds much light on an oft-overlooked aspect of *Yiddishkeit*.

A villager walked into a *sefarim* store in a nearby city and asked to purchase what is known as the Emden Siddur — a *siddur* containing the teachings of Harav Yaakov Emden.

Knowing that the villager could barely read *Leshon Hakodesh*, the storeowner asked him why a simple *siddur* wouldn't suffice.

"My children sometimes play with the *siddur*, and the first few pages get ripped. A regular *siddur* has *Adon Olam* right at the beginning. In the Emden Siddur, even if the first few pages are ripped, *Adon Olam* stays intact."

Throughout the generations, entire *kehillos* and individual families took upon themselves various *chumros* to create a buffer zone between them and the abyss. If the evil inclination had swayed them to abandon these *chumros*, the observance of basic *halachos* would have remained intact. But when the line is drawn only according to the exact lettering of the law, it will be the connection to the *Adon Olam* that will, *Rachmana litzlan*, be ripped out of our lives.

Even with the best filters, internet usage is still hazardous. So many marriages have been ruined and so many lives have been destroyed because of the misuse of fully filtered smartphones.

As the interviews in the popular "Ashreinu" column in *Hamodia* so powerfully illustrate, the rationale behind smartphone usage is often based on a myth. Even in industries in which it is assumed that smartphones are an absolute necessity, those courageous enough to try

living without one find that the smartphones actually hinder *parnassah*.

A number of years ago, a *yungerman* I know approached his *Dayan* with a question. His company had switched to a communication system that could be accessed only via smartphone.

"I know that the *vaad ha'ishur* of the *kehillah* will allow me to have one. This is really *l'tzorech parnassah*," he told the *Dayan*. "I have a wife and young children at home who rely on my income, and there aren't many openings in this line of work.

"But I really don't want to do this. Am I permitted to inform my employer that I will not agree to use a smartphone, even if it costs me my job?"

The *Dayan* thought for a long minute and told him that if he felt that way, he should do so. If he was fired, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* would find him a different *parnassah*.

Before writing this column, I reached out to the *yungerman* for comment.

"I am still working there, *baruch Hashem*," he told me. "I am still the only one in my department who doesn't have a smartphone. My colleagues, manager and employer communicate with each other via a messaging app but have to communicate with me only via email."

When I asked how this has impacted his *parnassah*, he chuckled.

"At first, they grumbled about it. Then they made peace with it and, over time, began to respect my keeping to my principles. It seems like they are happy with my smartphone-free work, as they gave me a promotion and a raise..."

The approach of many to smartphones is that when a *tzorech parnassah* — real or imagined — is found, there is no reason to even consider refraining from using one. Once the device is in one's pocket, the only barrier between the user and the abyss is a filter.

All it takes is a little persuasion to get the most permissive filter or no filter at all. For someone with such a device, there are no pages left; all it takes is the slightest veer and the connection to the *Adon Olam* will, *R"l*, be severed.

The only recourse is to establish a new starting point.

The natural thought process ought to be, *How can I find a way to manage without it?*

The question asked of Rabbanim should be, "Am I permitted to give up my current source of income and enter a different line of work in order not to use a smartphone?"

This approach will also impact those who already have these devices. When they realize that it's their connection to the *Adon Olam* that is now at risk, they will seriously consider getting rid of it — or at the very least ensure that they are using the strongest, most stringent filter available. ■

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*Questions can be submitted via email to [aheschel@hamodia.com](mailto:aheschel@hamodia.com) or by calling 718.853.9094 ext. 254 and leaving a voicemail.*

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