



Tobacco's Temptations

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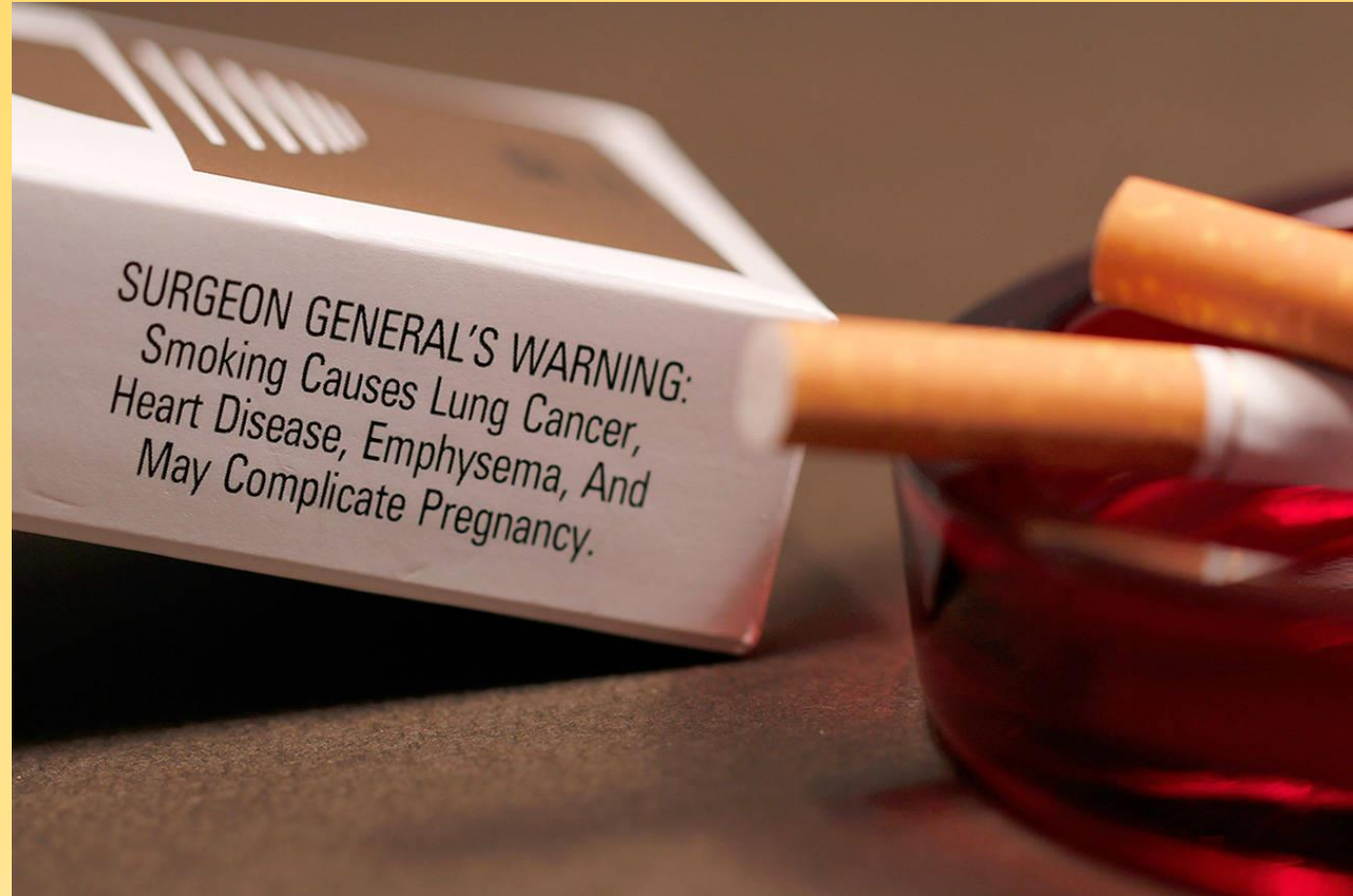
Warning Label

- History of Tobacco Use
- Dangers of Tobacco
- Why would someone use tobacco?
- Why is/isn't it prohibited to smoke?

History of Tobacco Use

- Used in the Americas
- Reached “West” in 16th century
- Quickly rose to prominence as drug of choice
- By the mid-20th century 50% of adults smoked

Negative Effects of Smoking



Why would someone start smoking?

- Societal pressures
 - Advertisements
 - Depictions in TV and Movies as “cool”
- Control other prohibited urges
- Relax
- Because they are already addicted

Why shouldn't one smoke?

Prohibition against inflicting harm on oneself

- Simply the Halacha
 - Rabbi Akiva – Even though it is prohibited to injure oneself, one is exempt from payment (Mishnah Bava Kamma 90b)
- Based on Verses
 - But for your own life-blood I will require a reckoning: וְאֶךָ אֶת־דַּמְּךָ לְנַפְשִׁיִּךְ (Breishit 9:5)
 - “בַּרְךָ הַשָּׁמַר לְךָ וְשָׁמַר נַפְשְׁךָ”
 - “וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם מְאֹד לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם”
- Common sense

Issue of second hand smoke to others

- Damaging others
- Lifnei Iver

Why do we see religious people smoking?

Can one engage in dangerous activities?

- Making a fence around one's roof
- Rambam, Laws of Murder and Preservation of Life 11:4-5
The roof is like every other thing that has danger in itself, and which is possible that a person will make a mistake with it and die. An example is having a pit in one's property, whether it has water or not - one is obligated to make a wall of ten tefachim (32 inches/80cm.) around it, or a covering over it, so a person won't fall in it and die. And so too any stumbling block in which there is a danger to life: it is a positive mitzvah to remove it, and to guard against it, and to be exceedingly cautious about it, as it is written "take care of yourself and guard your life" (Deut. 4:9). And if one has not removed the stumbling blocks that bring people to danger, one has cancelled a positive commandment and transgressed "do not bring bloodguilt" (Deut. 22:8). Our Sages forbade many matters because they involve a threat to life. Whenever a person transgresses these guidelines, saying: "I will risk my life, what does this matter to others," or "I am not careful about these things," he should be punished by stripes for rebelliousness. (Sefaria Community Translation)
- Traveling by boat or over deserts

If it's dangerous why do people smoke?

- It's not that dangerous 'שומר פתאים ה' שומר, that G-d watches over the simple (Tehillim 116:6)
- Great Rabbis smoked and still do
- They already addicted and are considered אונס under duress
- Better than other vices
- People don't understand statistics, think they are "safe"

Rav Moshe Feinstein

In regards to smoking cigarettes certainly since there is a chance of getting sick because of it one is recommended to refrain from doing so, but to say that it is prohibited from the prohibition of 'a dangerous practice' since many have trampled over it as is mentioned in the Gemara Shabbat 129 and Nida 31, and specifically when many Torah giants of generations past and of our generations smoke, then consequently even those who are stringent about the dangers there would be no prohibition of 'placing a stumbling block before a blind person' by offering a lite or matches to a smoker.

(Igrot Moshe YD 2: 49) Chanukah 1964

הנה בדבר עישון סיגריות
ודאי מכיון שיש חשש
להתחלות מזה מן הראוי
להזהר מזה, אבל לומר
שאסור מאיסור סכנתא מכיון
שדשו בה רבים כבר איתא
בגמ' בכה"ג שומר פתאים ה'
בשבת דף קכ"ט ובנדה דף
ל"א ובפרט שכמה גדולי
תורה מדורות שעברו ובדורנו
שמעשנין, וממילא אף לאלו
שמחמירין לחוש להסכנה
ליכא איסור לפנ"ע בהושטת
אש וגפרורים למי שמעשן.

Why G-d won't pity the fools

Rabbi Eliezer Waldenburg (Tzitz Eliezer 15:39 – dated 1982)

It is clear without a shadow of a doubt that there is no place to bless it in your heart and instruct that since smoke is 'a path trodden by many' and if so we can apply the phrase and now that it is a path well trodden by many we can employ G-s protects the fools. Because they did not say such except in cases where it is not revealed what happened and reality hasn't shown the opposite... but in our case before us where over the last several decades in light of various scientific and medical research has revealed alarming measures of damage to the body that are far greater and more dangerous than just smoke itself causes, the this knowledge has gone out and entered nature of the world to the extent that many great and strong nations have made laws about needing to declare a warning on each pack of cigarettes saying 'the surgeon general warns against smoking and smoking endangers and hurts people' ... if so certainly it is obviously absurd to turn our eyes away from all of this and exempt ourselves backhandedly saying that upon this too applies 'G-d protects the fool'.

”נראה ברור ללא צל של ספק כי אין מקום להתברך בלב (כפי שאחרים רוצים לומר כן) ולהורות כי היות והעישון רבים דשים בו אם כן יש להחיל על זה המאמר... והאידינא דדשו בו רבים שומר פתאים ה'". דלא אמרו כן אלא במקומות דלא נתגלה בהתם, והמציאות לא הראתה על היפוכו של דבר, ... אבל בכגון הנידון שלפנינו אשר בעיקר בעשרות השנים האחרונות לאור המחקרים המדעיים והרפואיים השונים נתגלו בממדים מבהילים היזיקי הגוף המרובים והמסוכנים אשר העישון גורם בכנפיו, והתודעה הזאת גם יצאה כבר טבעה בעולם עד כדי כך שבכמה מדינות גדולות ועצומות יצא החוק מאת ממשלותיהם על חובת ציון אזהרה על כל חפיסת סיגריות האומרת 'הרופא הממשלתי הראשי מזהיר את המעשנים שהעישון מסכן את בריאותם ומזיק לה'. אם כן בודאי ובודאי שאבסורדי הוא להעלים עין מכל זה ולהפטיר כלאחר יד ולומר כי גם על כגון זה נאמר שומר פתאים ה'”

Why history is flawed

- Pitchei Teshuvah –R' Abraham Zvi Hirsh Eisenstadt (1813-1868 Lithaunia). the concept אין מוציאין לעז על הראשונים, we don't disparage early generations, only applies to a חומרא בעלמא, a general stringency... and may only apply to matters of marriage, not elsewhere.
- Many Rabbis did in fact prohibit smoking when clearly having bad reactions – the Chofetz Chaim

Tobacco Habit - Don't Have it

Writing approximately one hundred years ago, the Chofetz Chaim expressed his dismay that many “weak” people smoked, even though doctors clearly told them of the great risk to their health. He notes that on many occasions he spoke with these smokers, often receiving the same response--that they would love to quit but they are addicted. To this the Chofetz Chaim would respond “Whoever permitted you to get yourself addicted in the first place?” While it is certainly true that the Chofetz Chaim was only commenting on “weak people,” Rav Waldenberg emphatically states that, given our medical knowledge, all people are in this category, and the ruling of the Chofetz Chaim for “weak” people clearly applies to all people. (Rabbi Asher Bush, “The Prohibition of Smoking in Halacha”)

We don't trade prohibitions – bad is bad

- There is halachic triage – but not here
- False pretense

Statistics don't lie

Summary

- History of smoking
- Why people smoke
- Why it is prohibited to smoke
 - Endangering and damaging yourself and those around you
- Why justification of smokers fall flat
- Halachic consensus - it is prohibited to smoke cigarettes

Accordingly, this analysis must lead to the unambiguous conclusion that smoking is clearly and unquestionably forbidden by Halacha and that this should be made known to all who care about the Torah and their health. A final note is in order: People who smoke are not, Chas vShalom, doing so in an attempt to flout Halacha. In fact, most would dearly wish to quit, but shedding an addiction is no simple matter. While it is important to make clear that Halacha prohibits smoking, it is also important not to condemn those who struggle with this issue. Rather we must offer our full help and support to aid them in their quest for physical and spiritual health. (Rabbi Asher Bush)

Sources

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- https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4265963/jewish/Are-Cigarettes-Kosher.htm
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smoking_in_Jewish_law
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- <https://jacstoronto.org/>
- <https://www.camh.ca/>

Next week Cannabis and Hallucinogens