

**RABBI YEHOASHUA KAGANOFF**

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*The following is pages 13-14 of my book/sefer:*

**FORWARD**

There is a saying,

“Religion is for people who are afraid of going to Gehinnom/Hell;  
Spirituality\* is for those who have already been there!!”

This compendium of Teshuvos (Halachic Responsa) is being published for both of the above groups:

1) For the second group, those who have “been there already”, and are beginning now to find their path in spiritual recovery, this compendium will provide them with Halachic and Hashkafic guidance tailored to meet their specific needs. It covers the spectrum of addictions: from food addiction to sexual addiction; And the codependent syndromes/symptoms suffered by victims of abuse (please see page 21 for description and definition of abuse as used in our context!)

2) For the first group, this volume is also intended to serve a very important function. Namely to acquaint them with the yearnings, challenges and aspirations of the *other* group - this significant part of the Jewish people that desire to serve and feel connected with Hashem; but cannot do so in the context of what is erroneously considered by most, as the required Halachic standards. My experience of 16 years in this endeavor, has taught me that we, as a community, who pride ourselves on being the normal, mainstream flag-bearers of Torah and its Mesorah would do very well to take a step back, as I personally was forced to do (see pgs 118-134), and see whether what we are really promoting is authentic Torah Judaism and its values. Some of what is written in this volume is very shocking to our preconceived value system. This is because we perceive our Jewish Cultural Mores as being identical with Halachic Torah Observance! However, the intellectually honest reader will come to realize, as he contemplates what is written within this volume that there is much in our cultural mores that is considerably “off-the-mark”.

Indeed, the more appropriate question that should be asked is, “Is the Judaism (Yidishkeit, Chareidism, Yeshivishkeit, Chasidische, Heimische) that presents itself to our eyes really a true representation of what God has written in His Torah and stated in His Oral Torah?” Or have distortions and misperceptions crept in and now have become counterfeit axioms of a quasi new religion. Rav SR Hirsch & Rav Yisroel Salanter in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Chazon Ish in the past century all admonished to be very careful not to confuse Jewish Culture with Torah Observance. Or as has been wittingly remarked, “Please! Do not confuse Jews with Judaism!”

To this end, I have included my source-material and cross-references within the Teshuvos, so that the reader can study them and ascertain for himself the veracity and acceptability of my conclusions, guidance and recommended solutions;

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OR alternatively the reader should be able to demonstrate where I have erred. **If indeed this is the case, I would greatly appreciate a communication so that I may correct my error!**

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\* The term SPIRITUALITY as used in this aphorism and throughout this volume is NOT identical with what is, in our common terminology, described as RUCHNIYUS; AND neither of them are synonymous with RELIGION.

This differentiation is a basic fundamental that needs to be absorbed and grasped at a deep level, in order to comprehend the “world of recovery”.

Please see pgs 118-148 for elaboration.

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# **The S- Addiction**

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*The following is pages 193-194 of my book/sefer:*

The chart on the next page is from the basic primer on the sexual addictions. The author is nationally renowned expert Patrick Carnes, PhD, and the name of the book is "Out of the Shadows – Understanding Sexual Addiction" (published by Hazelden - pgs 66-67 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition).

**This book is a must read for:**

- 1) An understanding of the underlying dynamics of these very denigrating addictions and
- 2) For the enlightenment and encouragement it provides for the road to recovery. Hence, its title, "Out of the Shadows"!

**In this regard, it is important, at this**

ואלו דברי רב צדוק הכהן

**juncture, to contemplate the following**

בספרו צדקת הצדיק

**words of Rav Tzadok HaCohain:**

אות מ"ד

He, who has a tremendous craving for physical pleasures, should not despair with the thoughts of how despicable he is! **Because, quite to the contrary,** [the depths of his perceived depravity is a clear indicator that] he is a **fully prepared 'vessel' for an all-powerful love and desire for the pursuit of absolute truth!** Etc. etc.

מ"ד] מי שיש לו תשוקה גדולה לתאות  
הגוף אל יתעצב בזה לחשוב כמה פגום הוא  
שיש לו תשוקה כ"כ. כי אדרבא הוא כלי  
מוכן לתוקף אהבת ותשוקת דרישת האמת.  
וכמו שנחמו ההוא סבא [וכו' וכו'] לאביו  
(בסוכה נ"ב.) וע"ז אמרו דלעת"ל צדיקים  
נדמה להם יצה"ר כהר ורשעים כחוט  
השערה ואינו שקר רק שניהם אמת כי אלו  
תשוקתם ותאותם עצומה ביותר:

**In my experience in this field, this prognosis of R' Tzadok is PRECISELY AND ACCURATELY correct!!**

**So עלה והצלח!! "TAKE HEART!!"**

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*The following is pages 195-196 of my book/sefer:*

There are many practical Shaalos for those in SA/S-Anon recovery. They cover the topics dealt with in Shulchon Aruch Orach Chaim 240; Even HoEzer 25 & Yoreh Deah 295.

However, the Mishna admonishes:

**אין דורשין בעריות בשלשה (חגיגה דף י"א:)**

“A Teacher should not expound upon the laws of intimacy and illicit relations in a forum of three or more students.”

The Gemoro explains: “2 students will perforce need to pay attention to the Teacher’s explication and interpretation [and will thereby receive accurate information]. However, in a forum of 3 or more students, if one of the students will engage the Teacher with a question, the others in the meantime, will engage in their ‘own conversation and interpretations’ and unwittingly arrive at erroneous conclusions!

“This is specifically problematic and uniquely of concern in regards to sexual matters because it is “normal human nature” to seek devious fallacious loopholes in this topic.”

To compound the hazard and difficulty, the Novominsker Rebbe, Shlit’a, taught me more than 30 years ago, “Yehoshua, *Zols Du Vissen!* The Shulchon Aruch did not present a graduated hierarchy of Halochos. Often, he placed one Din that is Chayov Kores (culpable with excision), another that is merely Mili d’Chasidus (extreme piety) and everything else in between, side by side, one seif next to the other, without any discrimination or differentiation. It is the Achrayus (responsibility) of the Teacher, or the one studying it on his own, to ascertain with clarity which is which, so that a distortion of priorities and importance does NOT occur!”

It is for these reasons, that it is deemed prudent and better advised, to keep the responses to these Shaalos as Torah She’B’al Peh (conveyed orally).

However, Rabonim who would like to become acquainted with these issues and would like to avail themselves of my research and decisions should contact me to receive a written compilation of these Halachic sources and my reasonings and rulings.

Those who are afflicted with these diseases, and are not able or not comfortable, to persuade their Rov to avail himself of the offered compilation, and in the interim are in need of guidance until they find a Rov who can guide them, may feel free to contact me to receive Torah Sheb’al Peh guidance on these issues.

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*The following is pages 197-198 of my book/sefer:*

**Interview with Binah Magazine**

**Understanding Root Causes**

There is scarcely a rabbi in any Jewish community who has not encountered internet addiction in his congregation, although some are more advanced than others in their experience and expertise in dealing with it. Rabbi Yehoshua Kaganoff of Passaic, New Jersey, whose *semicha* was signed by Rav Yoseph Breuer and Rav Shimon Schwab, *zt'l*, and, *lehavdil*, the Novominsker Rebbe, *shlita*, is a *posek* of over thirty years standing, and regularly deals with addicts who turn to him for help. He also received specific training in addiction from Dr. Abraham J. Twerski.

Rabbi Kaganoff shared with me an impressive body of research from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia (pgs 367 and 390 of this volume), as well as large portions of his correspondence with Dr. James W. Hopper of Harvard Medical School's Department of Psychiatry (see pgs 21-22 of this volume). The research indicates a strong correlation between ten categories of child abuse and the development of addiction. All of these categories can adversely affect the developing brain in ways that result in emotional, social, and cognitive impairments, increasing the risk for a variety of problems, including substance abuse, depression, and suicide.

"Actual, measurable physiological changes occur in the brain, which is proven by MRI brain scans," he informs me. "Practically speaking, what it means is that it's not bad *middos* or *taivos* (desires) that fuel an illicit addiction. These people are *cholim*, sick, and if left untreated, they can deteriorate into a situation of extreme *sakanah*, danger!

Therefore, it behooves us to reassess our responses and attitudes in the arena of mental health and to understand what fosters good mental health and what is contraindicated. Only by so doing, will we be able to receive truly proper Torah guidance as to the proper prevention, and to receive the appropriate care after adverse experiences have occurred.

**Why should mental health be treated any differently than our physical health?!"**

He is very distressed by, and critical of, well-meaning but ill-informed *rabbanim* who try to motivate addicts with *mussar* and talk of *teshuva*. "You wouldn't tell a person with a heart condition to 'just lower your blood pressure!' You understand that he's sick, and needs treatment and/or medication.

"The evidence is overwhelming that when it comes to addiction, **mussar and even therapies that are rational and cognitive-based do not work**. That's why the Twelve-Step tenet of relinquishing control to a Higher Power is so crucial. First, You have to stop the

addictive acting out (“the using”), and allow the mind to clear, before you can begin the process of restructuring the impaired brain patterns.”

***In the stark words of an addict in well-established recovery, “The standard teshuva thing did me no good at all, simply because it’s not structured for crazy people.”***

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*The following is pages 199-204 of my book/sefer:*

**An Internet SA's Letter to Rabbi Menahel**

After a recent gathering in a prominent yeshiva high school, convened to educate the community regarding the perils of the internet, a member of the parent body penned a letter to the principal, which is excerpted below:

*Dear Rabbi X,*

*I want to share something of my own story with you, in the hopes that it will, in turn, help you guide the students of the yeshiva. I have been addicted to pornography for my entire adult life. The addiction really took off in college and I thought that becoming a Ba'al Teshuva and going to yeshiva would be the solution. It wasn't. I thought getting married would be the solution. It wasn't. I thought that Kollel and additional years in yeshiva would be the solution. It wasn't. At a certain point, I gave up on looking for a solution and lived with my double life – outwardly a Ben Torah, husband, and father; inwardly, a lust addict*

*Coincidentally, I noticed a close friend who had lost some weight. When I approvingly commented, he replied that he had started going to meetings of Overeaters Anonymous. He had struggled with his weight his entire life and had done every diet, seen various nutritionists, etc. Then he found OA and started losing weight.*

*He asked me if I'd like to come along to a meeting to see what it's all about. I was happy to do so. I wanted to support him and I was curious. I was blown away – they had a speaker, a non-Jewish woman who told her story of recovery from food addiction. This woman clearly had something – some aspect of chiyus, some aspect of spirituality that I had never seen before. And before my eyes, my friend's body was shrinking and his neshama was growing. He was really shteiging and I knew, inside, that I was dead.*

*There was a frum guy at the meeting, someone I felt I could trust. I told him: I might have a problem with food, but I have bigger problems than a second or third piece of cake at the Shabbos table. He put me in touch with one of the longstanding frum members of SA (the branch of "Anonymous" dealing with this addiction) and that week I went to my first meeting.*

*One of the things that struck me deeply about SA was the fact that here were these gentiles who had a very deep and real relationship with G-d. They talked about how they prayed to G-d when they were walking down the street and saw a woman who triggered their addiction. They prayed to turn their will and their life over to the care of G-d. They prayed to G-d to take away the character defects that prevented them from being good people who*



*give to their peers instead of taking from them. And they prayed to G-d to save them from their addiction, one day at a time. One of their pithy sayings was, "Without G-d, I can't. Without me, G-d won't."*

*Frequently throughout the year, the group has a weekend convention – lots of meetings, speakers, etc. I think it is fair to say that Orthodox Jews are overrepresented at the conventions. There is kosher food, there is a minyan. The gentiles know we can't use the microphones or give donations on Shabbos. As one member joked to me: "When I first drove up to the hotel, I thought I must be in the wrong place...it looked like a rabbis' convention."*

*And occasionally the frum addicts get together for a Shabbaton. "It is a deeply moving experience." There were some very heimishe people at the meeting – and some of the men had been to gehinom and back. I heard a chasidishe lady share her guilt (perhaps her enabling the husband caused their son's problems). I heard her husband share about how he lives with and takes responsibility for the fact that there is little trust in the marriage. And yet this marriage and others like it survive and go forward.*

*I saw a room full of frum people talk from the heart about the pain this disease has caused them, and the hope they have as they see Hashem perform miracles for them every day as the husbands remain sober. When this meeting ended, everyone closed the meeting by proclaiming, "Shema Yisroel, Hashem Elokainu, Hashem Echad". Through my tears I thought, "Moshiach surely has to come at this very moment."*

### **The Internet is the symptom of the disease, not the cause.**

*The cause of the disease is that many, many Jews today -- myself very much included -- don't have a real, living, day-in, day-out relationship with Hashem. We might have religion, but we don't have G-d. Into that vacuum – as the speaker this year rightly noted – steps the Internet or something else that feels like life but turns out to be death.*

*I am going to tell you something that you might resist hearing, but I think it is important to say it straight. If you have a student in the school that is addicted, I do not believe the yeshiva has the resources to help that student. Mussar, as we relate to it today, does not have the resources to help that student. I believe that student needs some form of twelve step recovery and therapy. (And the students who aren't yet addicts are at risk of addiction unless their Judaism includes the beginnings of a real relationship with Hashem.)*

*I knew a lot of very deep Gra's, Maharals, Rav Tzadok's, etc on this inyan. I could have written a sefer on it. The problem is that I am an addict and addict's ears are stuffed shut with selfishness. I could not hear one of the basic messages of Yiddishkeit, namely that this is not your world to take what you can, rather it is Hashem's world to contribute what Hashem has asked you to contribute.*

*Strange as it might sound, I could only begin to hear this in meetings of SA. It is almost as if the twelve step literature translates for me, into addict language, the fundamentals of*

*spirituality. With that foundation, I can then progress to Torah and Mitzvos. (Rabbi Twerski has written that the reason Mussar doesn't work in our times is that we rarely grasp Mussar with the life and death intensity of an addict who has hit bottom and has no choice but to find G-d or die.)*

*Until I had a certain basic purification of the middos in SA, the most elementary and simple concepts of the Torah couldn't be chal (take hold) on me. I could quote sophisticated lomdos and deep machshava; I kept Chalav Yisroel and wore a black hat. And yet: I was addicted to lust. The Torah is only chal on a mentsch. And before SA, I was very far from being a mentsch.*

*A friend of mine in the (SA) program told me that he once went to the mashgiach of Ohr Sameach in Monsey. "I have this problem (eyes to the floor)...ummm, well, you see..." Apparently the Mashgiach opened his desk drawer and pulled out the "White Book" – the fundamental text of SA and encouraged him to go to the meetings.*

*Beyond what you have done already in terms of raising awareness of the internet problem in a thoughtful way, you need to start thinking about what to do with addicted students in the yeshiva. I can promise you from personal experience that mussar from the best, most sensitive mashgichim in the world is like water off a duck's back. It is not chal.*

*My guess is that these boys need a support group for themselves – for frum teenagers. Maybe some of the frum SA's in town would be willing to help, if it could be done in such a way that wouldn't compromise their anonymity. But I'm not sure – solutions are beyond my expertise. But what I am pretty sure of, is that there are kids at Yeshiva who are addicts and need help (and there are plenty of fathers in the school who are addicts who need help as well). And I'm pretty sure that there are going to be more and more such kids (and fathers) every day. My guess is that the frum people who show up now at SA are the tip of the iceberg.*

*I would also give some thought to how computers are accessed at Yeshiva among the rebbeim. I've been at SA meetings with rebbeim from other yeshivos. I would question the safety of any situation where a man has access to a computer in an office where the door can close, regardless of filters. If it hasn't happened yet at Yeshiva, in my opinion, it is only a matter of time, if people have the opportunity.*

*I would reach out to Rabbi Avraham Twerski. He is surprisingly accessible and he is the Rav HaMachshir for 12 step recovery in the Torah world. I would also recommend to you two books: The White Book of SA and Patrick Carnes' Out of the Shadows. In the next week or so I'll get you a copy of the Patrick Carnes' book. If you want a copy of the White Book as well, let Rabbi Kaganoff know and I'll get you one. My understanding is that there are other rabbonim in town, who have read the Carnes' book and I have sent it to my own rabbonim who have read it. It is the primer on sexual addiction.*

*As I said at the beginning of my letter, I'm a big admirer of you and the Yeshiva. I hope this letter is received in the spirit it was written, as encouragement for you to go another step in your leadership on the issue of the internet. May H' continue to give you and the yeshiva the siyatta d'shmayah to transmit the Torah to this troubled generation.*

*Yours,*

*A grateful, recovering sexaholic and grateful parent*

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*The following is pages 205-207 of my book/sefer:*

*[Editor's note: As a result of the below letter, an Asifa (gathering) for Rabbonim was convened (summer '11) in Lakewood. Rabbi Dr. Avrohom J. Twerski presented some basic information concerning addictions to this Asifa. This same summer the "Chosson Rebbe" of BMG were also addressed on this same topic by another mental health professional.]*

**S-ANON's LETTER TO RAV MATISYOHU, Shlit'a**

לכבוד הרה"ג סולומון, שליט"א

The משגיח said in the biannual כינוס לנשים (appx 7 years ago); הכל בחזקת סומין עד שמאיר "הקב"ה את עיניהם. This concept has been a tremendous source of חיזוק that helps me deal with my נסיונות. But I would also like to apply this concept to the fact that הקב"ה is blinding many Rabbonim in the areas of mental and emotional health. I would like to be a שליח of ה' to help open the eyes of the Rabbonim ("עיני העדה"), so that no one else should suffer the way we did - seemingly unnecessarily.

This letter is not in any way referring to the way the משגיח deals with mental and emotional health, rather, it is a plea to the משגיח to speak to the Rabbonim - if not all over, then at least in Lakewood. The point of my letter is to ask the משגיח to make the Rabbonim aware that they should treat a mental or emotional illness the same way they would treat a physical illness.

Imagine a woman would come to a Rav saying that her husband has יענע מהלה at the beginning stages. Would the Rav give the wife suggestions/advice about how she can cure the illness? Or would the Rav send them straight to a doctor? If the Rav would try to help them cure the illness on their own, the disease would just spread, and the husband would deteriorate.

Well, that's what happened to me! We caught my husband's עריות addiction in the beginning stages. To make a long story short, I was dealing with Rabbi X (Lakewood), Rabbi Y (Another major Chareidi community), and Rebbetzin Z for 7 years, and I was terribly misguided (we thought my husband could fight his הרע יצר). His addiction kept getting worse, and I kept on telling and writing to the Rabbonim that my husband was deteriorating in front of my eyes. We did not realize that an addiction is a real disease, and the only way to help addictions is through therapy and a 12-step program (*heard from R' Abraham J. Twerski and R' Yehoshua Kaganoff*). Not only did the rabbinical advice not help, but it enabled my husband to continue in his addiction for many more years, and caused a lot of damage to our entire family. I have 4 children קע"ה who were definitely affected.

Not only was my entire family in major סכנה נצחית, לדורי דורות ולנצח ולנצח נצחים, I was also in physical danger (of catching STD - sexually transmitted diseases)! We are dealing with matters of פיקוח נפש!

The same way a Rav would not even attempt to cure a physical illness by giving the patient or the family members advice; he should realize that a mental/emotional disease is completely out of his range. The Rabbonim must learn to recognize the signs of

mental/emotional illness, and learn to differentiate between people in need of rabbinical advice, and people in need of a doctor.

ב"ה my husband is in therapy and a 12-step program now, and is on the road to recovery, and my [child] and I are also going for therapy because of all the effects the addiction had on us. But besides for dealing with the pain of the situation, I am dealing with the pain of having suffered, seemingly, unnecessarily (I am working on myself to recognize that everything was באשערט and happened because that was רצון ה' ) If even one person can learn from my mistakes and the Rabbonim's mistakes, it would give me some גחמה.

I know the Rabbonim are there to help us, and most of them are extremely well-meaning. May הקב"ה open our eyes, and help the Rabbonim to help us.

Sincerely,

*(I met with Rebbetzin Salomon in person and spoke to the Rebbetzin on the phone a few times)*

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*The following is pages 208-216 of my book/sefer:*

**S-ANON's LETTER TO HER RABONIM**

רבבי X, שליט"א (A prominent Rav in another major  
Chareidi community)

רבבי Y, שליט"א (A prominent Rav in Lakewood)

*[editor's note – separate letters were sent by Mrs. Anonymous to each Rav without mentioning the other.]*

I am the one whose husband has an addiction to Arayos.

We have a lot of **הכרת הטוב** for all the Rav has done for us over the past 7 years. I want to stress, that I have absolutely no **טענות** on the Rav. I would just like to explain our situation, since I have more clarity and understanding now. The reason that I'm writing this letter, is only to benefit other people that might seek the Rav's advice and **הדרכה**.

Right now, our entire family (except our baby) is suffering from the effects of the addiction: I am emotionally unhealthy because I suppressed my own needs, desires, and feelings for many years, and my self-confidence decreased from the abuse I got from my husband. Our 9 1/2 yr old needs a major **ישועה**. S/He is going to therapy now, and it's a slow and painful process, and the outcome is not guaranteed. Our 6 year old is extremely difficult and also needs help. Our 7 1/2 yr old is very codependent. Although I always thought divorce would be the **worst** option, I am now realizing that if **חס ושלום** my husband does not recover, then divorce would be the **best** option. His addiction is destructive to our family. We are clearly seeing the destruction it brought on all of us. We hope and daven that we can repair the damage and only get stronger from this.

Several months ago, my husband and I both joined the SA & S-Anon (Sexaholics-Anonymous) support groups. We feel, after all these years, we have finally come to the right place. Yes, there **are** support groups for close relatives of addicts, because we have a sickness called "**Codependence**" or "**Co-addiction**". The abridged definition of codependence: Attempting and thinking that we can **control** the addiction, taking **responsibility** for the addict, **neglecting** our own needs, doing more than our share, **suppressing** our emotions, being **unassertive**, and being a **martyr**. As the book says, codependence is "a normal reaction to an abnormal situation." I am a paradigm of codependence. Therefore, I need the support groups to help **me** recover.

Let me explain in more detail: For many years, I tried to control the addiction (based on the guidance I received) by: constantly trying to make things easier for him and reduce stressful situations for him, giving him unconditional love and warmth, building his self

esteem and showing him respect, showing him that I wanted our intimate relationship, always being physically available for him, not letting him drive our car and chauffeuring him all day. But as I am learning, all the aforementioned things did not help at all, and instead they **enabled** him to continue his addiction. How? Because by my taking **responsibility** for his behavior, he did not have to suffer the consequences. And why didn't my efforts help? Because we are **powerless** over the addiction. There is no way an addict can overcome his addiction by himself – the only way an addict can become sober is by working a **Twelve Step Program** and joining support groups (*heard from Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski and Rabbi Yehoshua Kaganoff*). The **טיו'** is to realize we are powerless and only **'ה** can help us, and to take moral inventory and become honest with ourselves. One of our slogans for the Co-Addicts, is "**3 C's**: You didn't **Cause** it, You can't **Control** it, and You can't **Cure** it".

This has helped me to understand why the Rav's guidance didn't help the addiction. For example, I was advised that it would help if I would be physically available to my husband, and even initiate the relationship. But most of the addiction specialists hold the opposite – that I should **abstain** until my husband is completely sober. An addict has to be dealt with in a tough way, and suffer consequences for his behavior. Most of the time, an addict needs to be threatened in order to pull his life together. In other words, Rabbi Kaganoff told me that if I accept my husband unconditionally, he will not feel the need to get his life together.

In any case, it's impossible to have a relationship with an addict, unless he is sober. Therefore, whatever I had been trying to work on to improve our relationship – being warm, respecting him, making him feel good, being physically available for him, and making **שלום בית** my main focus, etc.... was all for nothing. I was trying to accomplish the impossible. I was being told to create **יש מאין**. Why? Because an addict is not emotionally present, and is wrapped up in his own fantasy world, unless he is completely sober.

Although the Rav meant well, and sincerely wanted to help us improve our relationship, the Rav's advice really did the opposite. How?

Addiction means **self deception**. The addict fools himself to the point that he doesn't even realize he is lying. He has **distorted thinking**. My husband was completely **deluded**. He thought that I loved him, wanted him, desired him, and accepted him unconditionally. And the fact that I was guided to show him this, only helped him continue in his self deception and delusion. An addict must be treated with toughness, and must suffer the consequences of his behavior. Also, our therapist – T M – who is a marriage counselor that specializes in addiction is working with us to develop an **HONEST** relationship. The Rav was telling me to show my husband love, but that was not real. The only way we can have a good relationship, is if it's real and honest – meaning that we can both express our true feelings to each other.

Also, our whole intimate relationship has been so traumatic for me: I did things that were disgusting to me, against my will, and for the wrong reasons. I never got any pleasure from

it. It became something that I dread, and have no interest or desire for it. I need major professional help in this area.

Our entire family was/is in a מצב of סכנת נפשות. But besides for the danger in רוחניות, I must make the Rav aware that I was also in physical danger – of חס ושלום getting an STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease). There are frum women in my support group - in Lakewood - who actually did catch these diseases. The danger is real! When we started dealing with professionals, I was told to get myself tested for any of these diseases. I should have been told this, right after we found out that he was picking up prostitutes, because I was living for 4 years in danger without being tested!

My main point is: The same way a Rav would not even attempt to try to cure a physically ill husband, and a Rav would not give a wife advice how to cure her husband, a Rav cannot cure or help a mental/emotional illness. I think that Rabbanim must learn to recognize the difference between a situation that requires rabbinical advice, and a situation requiring Professional help. Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski told me he wrote a book for Rabbanim.

Again, I would like to express my utmost הכרת הטוב for all the time, advice, and חיזוק the Rav gave us over the past 7 years. We know the Rav only had our best interest in mind, and the Rav's help was pure חסד, and we really appreciate the Rav's sincere caring and desire to help us. This letter is only for the sake of others – that they should receive the correct guidance.

Sincerely, Anonymous

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**S-ANON's 2<sup>nd</sup> LETTER TO HER RAV**

שליט"א, א, Rabbi X לכבוד

The last letter I wrote to the Rav (over a year ago) was when I had first joined the S-Anon support groups for the wives of Sexaholics. B"H I am greatly enjoying and benefitting from the group and the 12-step Program we work. I am now in the Program for almost 1 and a half years, and I have B"H grown tremendously in my emotional health, as well as my understanding of the dynamics of my situation.

I know that in my previous letter I explained some important concepts, but now, since I have come to a deeper level of understanding, and (I hope) I am a bit older and wiser, I would like to explain even further.

The difference between 1 and a half years ago and now, is that I have learned to focus on myself, instead of my husband. In my previous letter, I emphasized the fact that my behavior and the guidance I had received, enabled my husband to continue his addiction. Obviously, this is excruciatingly painful, because we tried so hard to stop his addiction, while in reality we accomplished the opposite.

But now that I am focusing on myself, I am realizing that my behavior and the guidance I tried to follow, caused a lot of damage to myself. Besides for the joint sexaholism that I have to recover



from, I also have to recover from the way I acted for many years.

Let me explain: Codependence means "controlling others and not caring for yourself". Well, that is exactly what I did before I joined S-Anon: I tried to control him (with not letting him drive the car, with trying to "keep him busy in the bedroom" etc ... ), while neglecting myself. I neglected my needs, desires, and feelings. I was a "caretaker" - my whole focus was on him, not on myself. It was like I didn't count, my feelings didn't matter, my wants and preferences didn't make a difference, and my needs were unimportant.

I know the Rav tried explaining this to me, but I honestly, truly, did not understand. The only way I was able to begin to understand, was with the help of S-Anon. And that is why, in the past year and a half, I have been able to change.

I am now learning that my needs, desires, and feelings are very important, and should be taken into consideration. I am realizing that being a martyr for the sake of controlling someone, does not benefit anyone, and usually backfires. I am learning the importance of taking care of myself.

I often think of this whole concept in terms of **אם אין אני לי מי לי, וכשאני לעצמי מה אני**. Our case was a living example of this *mishnah*: I am proof of **אם אין אני לי מי לי** If I don't take care of myself, who will? I really neglected myself. And [my husband] was a proof of **אני לעצמי מה אני** because an addict is completely wrapped up in himself. Now, I am learning how to be for myself.

This goes even deeper: The root of codependence is low self esteem / low self worth. I had a very low self worth, which caused me to feel that my thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires were not worth anything either. But now the Program is helping me realize that I am worth it, and my feelings, needs, and desires are worth a lot.

I would like to discuss one of the biggest tragedies of my situation: **I have not been to the mikveh in approx 15 months.** I know the Rav probably finds this mind boggling, and the Rav is probably wondering, "*Doesn't that make it harder for him?*" So let me answer that question: Although it might be making it harder (even though some hold that it doesn't make a difference), **it is not my responsibility** to go to the mikveh just to help him, if **I would be hurting myself.** And now, according to the professionals we are dealing with, I would definitely be hurting myself by going. **And in the long run, it will not benefit either of us.**

Why would I be hurting myself if I would go to the mikveh? Let me explain: For many years, I used our intimate relationship as a tool to control his addiction (In other words, if I would fulfill his needs, he wouldn't have to go elsewhere to have his needs fulfilled). Besides for the fact that this was a totally ineffective tool, because it is impossible for me to control his addiction, this caused MAJOR trauma for me.

Our intimate life became a horror story: The only emotions I felt were dread, tension, pressure, guilt, fear, pain, frustration, helplessness, desperation, and relief when it was over. We had intimacy for *all the wrong reasons*. It was the *complete opposite of what it is supposed to be*. I did 100% for him, and he did 0% for me. He was not interested, he was not at all "present", and he did not participate physically or emotionally most of the time. I did things that were

absolutely disgusting and *echeled* (ed - revolting to) me.

Before our abstinence, each time we were together I had a lump in my throat from beginning to end, and sometimes it even turned into tears. As soon as the bedroom door closed, all my negative thoughts came tumbling and swirling into my head. Everything he said or did, triggered a negative mental association or memory. So with a huge lump in my throat, and trying to hold back tears, how can I be an enjoyable partner to be with?

Whenever I even think about being together with him, I feel such a tremendous sense of dread. I am at a point that I feel like I don't want "*intimacy*", I don't need it, and I can live my life just fine without it.

But aside from my issues, [my husband] has not been sober that long. And when he was not sober there was nothing to even talk about, because it is not possible to have a relationship with an addict who is not sober.

Recently, since he's doing pretty well now, I decided to think about going to the *mikveh*. I did not know how to approach my problems, so I went for an evaluation to [a Frum world-renowned therapist], who specializes in these issues. Her answer was clear and unequivocal: I have suffered severe TRAUMA in my [intimacy] life. I need specialized "Trauma Therapy". I am not up to working on anything sexual, before I reduce the trauma. So I am starting treatment with an expert therapist IY"H, (Although not Jewish, she is given top ratings by Echo, who refers Chareidi people to her for services on a regular basis.), travelling 1 hour 15 minutes each way, and paying \$200 per session.

It is so painful to see the damaging results of my behavior and attitude, that were based on the guidance I received (and my own unhealthiness). There is no one else in my support group (out of the 40) who suffered so much trauma in this area, because most of them were fortunate to have joined S-Anon right away, when they found out about their husbands' addiction. If I would have joined S-Anon earlier, I would have known the 3 C's: I didn't Cause it, I can't Control it, and I can't Cure it.

It is *tragic* that I wasted so many years, and I spent so much effort - tears, toil and sweat - trying to do the impossible ... while throwing myself away.

All I can do now, is work on my *emunah* that everything I went through was meant to be. Also, I can daven and put in my *hishtadlus*, to undo the damage and become healthy and whole. And part of my healing is to spread awareness among Rabbanim, so that others should get the proper help as soon as possible.

The only way the Rav can help us now, is to daven for our entire family:

My Husband, the son of Bubby

Me, the daughter of Bobbi

Anonymous 1 son/daughter of me      Anonymous 3 son/daughter of me

Anonymous 2 son/daughter of me      Anonymous 4 son/daughter of me

Sincerely,

*Anonymous*

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*The following is pages 15-20 of my book/sefer:*

**INTRODUCTION**

Is a person afflicted with Mental Illness considered a Choleh (sick) by Halocho? In its more serious forms can Mental Illness be considered a Choleh SheYesh Bo Sakana? (A life-threatening disease?)

Does it fall under the rubric of Pikuach Nefesh? (Do we lay aside most of the Torah's laws in consideration of attending to the medical needs of such an afflicted person?)

These questions are central to the contents of this volume. If one answers the above questions in the affirmative; then the majority of what follows will not be surprising to the reader who is knowledgeable of the Halachic requirements and directives in regards to medical needs. This work then is merely a simplified ordering of practical Halachos and Hashkofos tailored specifically for a specific area of illness and health.

To all too many within our community, however, and sad to say, even among our esteemed rabbinic and lay leadership, these basic premises are a matter of great confusion and consternation. The reason for this conflict is also explored in a number of the chapters within this volume (pgs 21, 45, 48, 118, 197-216, 238, 467-496).

This introduction is being written with this latter, very significant portion of our people in mind. I am hopeful that our community will be sufficiently open-minded to realize that we are dealing with a very severe challenge to the very fabric of our Chareidi community that needs to be addressed in a very informed and enlightened manner. This volume seeks to expedite the enlightening process so as to alleviate and mitigate so much suffering among our people. **The tragedy and travesty is that most of this suffering is totally unnecessary** would we just allow ourselves to be educated in the causes, symptoms, remediation and prevention of these maladies.

In this vein, I am hopeful that the reader will consider and contemplate these words of introduction.

So to return to our original questions:

Is a person afflicted with Mental Illness considered a Choleh by Halocho? In its more serious forms can Mental Illness be considered a Choleh SheYesh Bo Sakana? Does it fall under the rubric of Pikuach Nefesh?

In Halocho we find 2 criteria for establishing what is considered illness/life jeopardy and what is not:

Criterion #1: Those items explicitly stated by Chazal to fall into any of these categories, is considered halachically as so doing today as well, even if modern medical research disagrees! A

classic example of this is tearing (as in crying tears) with a bloody discharge from the eye. The Halocho considers this Pikuach Nefesh - sufficient grounds to set aside Shabbos Laws etc. to rescue the patient (Shulchon Aruch 328:9 - see inset below) even though modern medical science is incredulous as to the danger to life posed by such a condition. In practical terms, Poskim tell us that we nevertheless follow the Halocho and not current medical science in regards to Shabbos (and other Torah Law) and this medical condition.

**Criterion #2:** If current medical experts and research consider a specific condition as being a serious illness and/or as life threatening/jeopardizing, then Halocho recognizes the current medical experts' opinions and we set aside Shabbos Laws etc. to rescue the patient. Please see the 2 excerpts from Shulchon Aruch below. (The first is Hilchos Yom HaKippurim 618:1 et al; and the second is from Hilchos Shabbos 328:10)

159 פ הלכות יום הכפורים סימן תרי"ח

אם ילדה בשבעה בתשרי בערב אין מאכילין אותה ביה"כ (יד) אם לא אמרה צריכה אני אע"פ שלא שלמו לה ג' ימים עד י"ב בערב משום דכיון שנכנס יום רביעי ללידתה מקרי לאתר שלשה :  
**תרי"ח דין הולדה ביה"כ . וכו' י' סעיפים :**

א \* "הולדה שצריך לאכול אם יש שם (א) רופא בקי אפי' הוא (ב) עובד כוכבים ישאמר אם לא יאכילו איתו אפשר שיכבד עליו החולי (ג) (ד) ויסתכן מאכילין אותו על פיו ואצ"ל שמא ימות יאפי' אם החולה אומר א"צ (ה) שומעים לרופא \* יואם החולה אומר (ד) צריך אני אפילו מאה רופאים אומרים א"צ (ה) שומעים (ג) לחולה: ב (ו) הרופא א' אומר צריך (ז) ורופא א' אומר א"צ מאכילים אהנו . הגם וס"ה לשנים נגד שלס (ח) ולפילו קלטן (ד) יותר בקולין מקלטן כ"ל: ג (ט) יואם החולה ורופא אחד עמו אומרים שא"צ (י) ורופא (אחר) אומר צריך 'או שהחולה

הלכות שבת סימן שס"ח 328

ואפילו ביום הא' : ט' החושש (כב) בעיניו או בעינו ויש בו ציר או שהיו שותתות ממנו דמעות מחמת הכאב או שהיה שורת דם או שהיה בו (כג) ירא ותחלת איכלא (ס"ב) (כד) תחלת חולי מחללין עניו את השבת : י' ככל חולי (כה) שהרופאים אומרים שהוא סכנה אע"פ שהוא על הכשר מבחוץ (כו) מחללין עליו את השבת \* ואם רופא אחד אומר צריך \* ורופא אחד אומר א"צ מחללין \* יו"ש מי שאומר (ז) שאין צריך מומחה (כח) דכך בני אדם חשובים מומחין קצת וספק נפשות להקל . הגם ו"ל (כט) דוקא יסדלגיס (ל) אצל סתם א"י שאין רופאין לה מחזקין לומס כבקולט

Returning now to our original questions:

Is a person afflicted with Mental Illness considered a Choleh by Halocho? In its more serious forms can Mental Illness be considered a Choleh SheYesh Bo Sakana?

Does it fall under the rubric of Pikuach Nefesh?

**Criterion #1-** I believe the sources in Shearim Metzuyonim b'Halocho (see below inset) give adequate sources that Halocho indeed considers Mental Illness as falling into this category.

To realize this however, the uninitiated will need the following clarification in regards to terminology: Chazal in their delineations of Halocho utilized a term "Ruach Ro'oh" to describe a medical condition. The symptoms described, therein, are identical in symptomology with the condition described by Freud as "Hysteria". Currently, the Mental Health Field and its practitioners have renamed Freud's "Hysteria". Today it is classified as Acute Trauma Reaction or more commonly as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). A little more investigation reveals as well, that most of the Mental illnesses and conditions listed in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychological Association) have previous traumas in their etiology.

(Below are the quotes from the Shearim Metzuyonim b'Halocho, Kitzur Shulchon Aruch chap #133 footnote #10 second paragraph, and chap # 165 footnote #6)

כתוב ברמ"א ה' שבת (סי' שכח סלי"ה) דרוח רעה הוא חולי שאין בו סכנה. ובמנחת פתים שם מקשה ממש"כ בב"י (יו"ד סי' רכח דף קמז) בשם תשו' הרשב"א דחולי רוח רעה הוי חולי שיש בו סכנה וראי' ממשנה (שבת כט:): המכבה הגר מפני רוח רעה. ועי' בגמרא (תענית כב:) מתריעין בשבת על גרדף מפני רוח רעה ופרש"י דנכנס בו רוח שד ורץ והולך ושמא יטבע בנהר או יפול וימות, ועי' במג"א (סי' תקנד סק"ח) ובפמ"ג שם דמשמע קצת דחסר דעה הוי כחולה שיש בו סכנה ועי' בהגהות מהרש"ם (סי' תריח). ובשו"ת לבושי מרדכי (חוי"מ סי' לט וח"ד סי' סח) כתוב גמי דשגעון הוא בכלל סכנה, ובשו"ת חבלים בנעימים (ח"ד סי' יג) כתוב בחולה שוטה שאם יתענה יחזור לשטותו, פטור מלהתענות דטירוף הדעת הוא בכלל פקוח נפש.

#### שערים מצוינים בהלכה

1) ואם התינוק חולה קצת כו'. כתוב בשו"ת חתם סופר (או"ח סי' פג) בנער שוטה כבן ד' שנים, והרופאים אומרים למסרו לבית חינוך הרשים ושוטים ללמדם דעת ותבונה, והבית חינוך מתנהג ע"י גכרים ישם המאכלים אסורים — דאע"ג דעפ"י הדין, היה מותר למסרו שם עד י"ג שנים, כיון שאין אומר לו בפירוש שיאכל האיסורים, והוי כמעמידו אצל גבלה, — מ"מ אין למסרו שם, שהעידו הקדמונים שע"י מאכלות אסורות מטמטם לבו, לכן מוטב שיהא שוטה כל ימיו כו', ובשו"ת בית יצחק (אהע"ז סי' לט) כתב, דזה נאמר רק בדרך הפלגה בעלמא, וגם רק במצב שישאר בר מצות, אלא שלא יהיה בקי בהיות העולם, אבל כשישאר שוטה ממש דינו כמו חולה הגוף ותלוי בסכנות נפשות. ועי' לעיל (ח"ג סי' קלג סק"י) דשוטה הוא בכלל סכ"ג.

Concerning criterion #2 – On pages 21 and 361, I have reproduced correspondence that I have undertaken to enlighten leaders and lay people of our community about the most current recent findings of medical science research as to the severe nature of these Mental Health conditions. The documentation quoted therein, clearly demonstrates that criterion #2 is more than adequately met as well.

Therefore, the answer to all of the questions posed at the beginning of this introduction is indeed in the affirmative:

Is a person afflicted with Mental Illness considered a Choleh by Halocho? **YES!**

In its more serious forms can Mental Illness be considered a Choleh SheYesh Bo Sakana? **YES!**

Does it fall under the rubric of Pikuach Nefesh? **YES!**

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Please note that the following 2 qualifications are in order:

1) Just as in the case of heart disease, diabetes or any other potentially life-jeopardizing condition, whether or not at any particular moment, we will set aside Torah Law (Chillul Shabbos or eating Treif etc.), is completely dependent on the severity of the symptoms at that particular moment. (See pgs 83-90 for clarification)

I.E. - If the symptoms are severe, out of control, or we lack certainty as to what is really going on, then the condition is considered Pikuach Nefesh!

However, if the Choleh is under medical treatment and the conditions are under control, then we deem the situation at that moment not Pikuach Nefesh.

Of course, it is self understood, that the situation needs close monitoring and slight changes in condition and or environment might precipitate the escalation to a Pikuach Nefesh emergency at a moment's notice.

Mental Health issues are Halachically to be treated precisely the same!

2) A corollary of the above:

Just as with physical medical conditions, were someone to have the ability to "infect" someone with these conditions and would attempt to do so, he would be classified in his attempt as a Rodef (Attempting Murder), so too would this be so with an attempt to "infect" someone with mental illnesses that qualify as Pikuach Nefesh. (See pgs 293 and 235 for a fuller discussion.)

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*The following is pages 42-44 of my book/sefer:*

**OASAS Divrei Brocho v'Chizuk**

My greetings of Shalom u'Beracha to the Orthodox Women in food recovery - the attendees of the Shabaton and readers of this newsletter. My heartfelt wishes for a most meaningful, fulfilling and spiritually uplifting Shabbos and recovery experience.

Shabbos is the "Yom Menucha u'Kedusha" par excellence. The Posuk in Shmos (31:13) tells us, Keep My Shabbosos..... Because I, Hashem, make you holy. Clearly what is being stated is that Shabbos has the capacity of investing us with Kedusha. It can bring us a step closer to realizing our national mission and title designation as Goy Kodosh – "v'Atem Tihyu Li Mamleches Cohanim v'Goy Kodosh" "you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Shmos 19:6).

Indeed the Kuzari and other Seforim write that unfortunately due to the deleterious effects of Golus the magnitude of our Kedusha index is severely compromised.

However, I am encouraged through the growing popularity of 12 step recovery programs in our community, that we may realize a reversal of this degrading state of affairs. This is because I perceive those in recovery as the vanguard for the restoration of Kedusha to the Jewish people.

Lest I be accused of exaggeration, let me explain my sentiments by quoting excerpts of Rav S.R. Hirsch's definition of Kedusha (commentary VaYikro 19:2 – K'doshim Tihyu).

"Kedusha is a state of character. A person attaining this character trait will have the propensity to be ready and willing to perform all that is good; a person cannot attain this virtue unless his whole being is steeped in morality.... .....for much work is required of anyone seeking to attain this marvelous trait of Kedusha.

"Kedusha is attained through mastery over all of one's powers and faculties and over all temptations and inclinations associated with them -- to be ready and willing to do God's Will.

"Self-mastery is the highest art a (man) [person] can practice. Self-mastery does NOT mean neglecting, stunting, killing, or destroying any of one's powers or faculties. In and of themselves, the powers and faculties – from the most spiritual to the most sensual – that have been given to man are neither good nor bad. They all have been given to us for exalted purposes – that we use them to do God's will on earth. The Torah sets for each of them a positive purpose and negative limits. In the service of that purpose and within those limits, all is holy and good. But where a person strays from that purpose and exceeds those limits, coarseness and evil begin.

“As in any other art, virtuosity in this, the highest moral art can be attained only through practice – training one’s moral willpower to master the inclinations of the heart. But this training is not to be undertaken in the realm of the expressly forbidden, where any slip would result in wrongdoing. Rather, moral resolve must be tested and strengthened in the realm of the permitted. By learning to overcome inclinations that are permitted but related to the forbidden, one gains the power of self-mastery and thus makes all his powers and faculties subservient to the fulfillment of God’s will. Each person, according to his own unique qualities, should work on his inner self; and he should train *quietly*, in a manner *known only to himself*.” (By the way, Rav Hirsch was niftar (1888) 50 years before the first 12 step program was founded (1935). I think this chronological surprise speaks volumes of what authentic Torah really has to say about Recovery.)

So to all of us in Recovery, my Brocho that we should continue to strive to live up to these ideals and “Carry the Message” by “Attraction not Promotion” for the betterment of our families, our people, and the world at large.

“Ve’Hyeh Brocho” (Brashis 12:2)

Sincerely,  
Rabbi Kaganoff



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*The following is pages 45-47 of my book/sefer:*

**An OA Member's Letter to Her RAV**

**Subject:** 12 step program

**Date:** Sun, 06 Jun 2010 12:16:40 -0400

**From:** Zk<[zk@com](mailto:zk@com)>

**To:** R.E <[Rabbi@org](mailto:Rabbi@org)>

שלִיט"א, Rav E, לכבוד

I have heard from people about their perceptions of things they claim that the Rav has said about 12 step programs, and would like to share some observations that I have made and knowledge that I have gained through being a member of more than one program.

“Step One” makes a statement that can easily be misinterpreted. It states, “We admitted we are powerless over \_\_\_\_\_, that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Some who have not actually participated in the program, or who have not accurately understood its methods, may get the impression that this means to suggest we are claiming lack of בחירה [free choice]. However, this is a misunderstanding!

This statement means that we need to admit that through our בחירה [free choice], we have chosen to allow harmful elements (alcohol/drugs/harmful attitudes, etc.) to enter our beings. This poor choice has chained us to bad behaviors, to become אנוסים [compulsive], and we realize that we now cannot overcome this problem without סייעתא דשמיא [heavenly assistance].

The program constantly stresses the need for השתדלות, or “leg work.” Nevertheless, the fact that without Hashem’s help, השתדלות will be unsuccessful is emphasized as well.

I know that in my daily תפלה [prayers] I ask “וכוף את יצרנו להשתעבד לך;” [God – please, rein in my coarse nature to serve you.] and I also know that the *Chofetz Chaim* is said to have pleaded with Hashem before the ארון קדש [Holy Ark] for help in controlling his anger—not because he denied the principles of השתדלות and בחירה, *chas v’shalom*, but because he recognized that he could not do it alone. (My husband has suggested that perhaps the author of the 12 step program just needed a good editor to accurately convey his point.)

I look at a 12 step program as a רפואה [treatment] for an illness - not as Torah. Just as the man with a heart condition may need bypass surgery in order to serve Hashem, I and those who have the disease of addiction like me, in similar fashion need the “program” to do so.

Some may indeed, regrettably, make the program into an ע"ז [idolatry], but this is no different as some who decide to turn particular *mitzvos* into an ע"ז [idolatry]. It's not the subject that is the problem; it is this particular individual's approach to it that is! The importance of consulting a Rav who is well-versed in the fundamentals of 12 Steps—and understanding the principle “Take what you need and leave the rest”—is crucial.

I admire Rav E for speaking out on even unpopular issues. It is a wonderful goal to spur the Kehilla on to serious thought about the matters that affect their lives. However, I would like to respectfully note that it is very dangerous for those in early recovery to hear that there are theological problems with the program –which there aren't. I strongly feel that any presentation of the 12 step program must clarify that the program's principles totally follow mainstream Torah *Hashkofos*. Otherwise, those involved and/or in need of 12 step programs may in response drop the program, and may not *live* to think about these issues--especially those in Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous.

(Indeed, as a person who went into the program “kicking and screaming,” I would have loved any excuse to drop it.) It is true פקוח נפש.[rescuing from life jeopardy]

Just as an aside, my very close friend was amazed at the changes in רוחניות [spirituality] that have taken place in me during the last five-and-a-half years that I've ‘worked the program’. She asked her husband—a grandson of Rav Chatzkel, a מגיד שיעור [Torah professor] and a בעל מוסר [Mussar Ethicist] in his own right—“How could such a change be developed from working a program developed by גויים [non-Jews]?” He answered that the בעלי מוסר state that those who reach desperation (a.k.a. “rock bottom” in program lingo) will find Hashem.

I feel secure in signing my name, as I am confident that my anonymity will be protected.

May הקב"ה [The blessed One] grant you continued הצלחה [success] and *gezunt* [good health] in leading our community.

בכבוד רב,

Mrs. Z.

P.S.--Attached is an article Rabbi Kaganoff, שליט"א, gave me on this topic. Pages 174-175 [pgs 172-174 of this compendium] speak about the program's concept of “powerlessness.”

-----

**RABBI YEHOASHUA KAGANOFF**

**Passaic, NJ 07055**

**973.614.8446**

**rabbieyehoshuak@gmail.com**

*The following is pages 48-56 of my book/sefer:*

5 Tishrei, 5772

BS'D

3 October, '11

Binah Magazines  
207 Foster Ave  
Brooklyn, NY 11230

Dear Editor,

In Binah Vol. 5 # 248, you printed a few letters lauding the existence of a program known as TLC. I am writing to respond to some of the erroneous perceptions and information promoted by these letters.

**I believe it would be in order to give some introductory background information about myself: I am Yeshivishe, Frum-from-Birth and a Rov, who has been Paskening Shaalos re: Shabbos, Taharas Hamishpocho, Kashrus, etc. for almost 30 years (Washington Heights, Philadelphia, Passaic). My S'micha is signed by Rav Yosef Breuer, ZTvK'L, Rav Shimon Schwab, ZTvK'L and L'Havdil Bain Chaim l'Chaim the Novominsker Rebbe, Shlita.**

**I have been involved with people in 12-step recovery and program for 16 years. I began my association with the "Recovery community" with much skepticism and asked many questions and challenged many of their concepts and premises. Over this time period, I have done much research into the compatibility of "Program" with Yidishkeit. Suffice it to say at this point, that any concerns that are raised by well-meaning people (and I certainly was one of the more vociferous critics) about 12 step programs are simply just NOT shared by Normative Halocho. What Normative Halocho teaches will be elaborated upon below, BUT there is one overarching concept that I need to address first.**

**One of the most fundamental principles of Torah is Areivus - “Kol Yisroel Areivim Zeh l’Zeh! I AM responsible for the welfare - both spiritual and physical - of my Jewish brothers and sisters. This is diametrically opposed to the prevailing attitude of our culture “NIMBY” (Not In My Back Yard). For those who may be unaware, NIMBY translates into, “just let me protect my own Daled Amos, and let others suffer, whatever may happen!” The Torah teaches the very opposite – that in attending to my own needs, the impact of my actions on the welfare of my brethren needs to be taken into account BEFORE I proceed. Moreover, in our specific case the principle of Areivus is further reinforced by the Mitzvos of “Hashevosu Lo” (returning lost property etc to the rightful owner) and “Lo Sa’amod Al Dam Reacho” (It is prohibited to standby idly and allow injury to befall another.) (Sanhedrin 73a)**

**A classic application of this Halocho would be the following:**

If an elderly or sickly Jew is instructed by his doctor and Rov that he needs to eat for health reasons on Yom Kippur. And the patient, not out of malice but out of simplemindedness, refuses to eat unless the Rov also eats, then the Rov would be required to eat in order to induce the patient to save his own life. Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky, Zatzal used this concept to explain the actions of Rav Yisroel Salanter in that famed episode of his Kiddush on Yom Kippur. And moreover, Rav Yaakov himself invoked this principle when, as a Rov in Toronto, he acquiesced to an earlier (earlier than would be acceptable by our standards) ending of the Yom Kippur fast, out of consideration for those in the community who would be in jeopardy by extending the fast.

**With the inception of TLC, 3 and a half years ago, I pleaded with the participants to consider the impact that their actions may have on their not so fortunate brethren. I posited then, “Indeed TLC *perhaps* may help Jews in large metropolises but what of Jews who are in smaller towns? Are you not invalidating 12 step recovery in their eyes? This is so- even just for food addicts.**

***“Moreover the undermining of 12-Step recovery will surely carry over to the programs of recovery from drugs and alcohol which is certainly Cholim She’Yesh Bo Sakana!” and TLC is not offering an alternative for them!***

**Grievously my prediction has come to fruition:**

**I am personally, and painfully, aware of alcoholics and drug addicts in the Chareidi community of Monsey who have either refused to engage in, or worse, have dropped out of their AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and NA (Narcotics Anonymous) programs due to this lack of foresight. We cannot help them and they are now doomed to die of their disease! This is only in Monsey; who can project what has occurred elsewhere?**

So unfortunately, even though some well-meaning, but short-sighted, people may consider the TLC activities as “Mili d’Mitzvo v’Chasidus”; anyone with a little broader perspective and understanding knows full well that it is an Aveira of jeopardizing the lives of a significant segment of our community.

Space restraints due not allow me to demonstrate in great detail that:

- 1) The overwhelming majority of the 12-Step Program and its Spirituality fits very well with rigorous, well-researched and knowledgeable Torah Observance. And
- 2) that the very small part that may not be fully acceptable at first glance, does not override the considerations that for Refuas Choleh [healing of the Sick] and Pikuach Nefesh [saving lives], Normative Halocho directs us to be Maikel [lenient].

(Likewise, due to space constraints, I am unable to publish the support documentation-Halachic and secular - for what I state in this letter. However, I will gladly provide it (pgs 83-190; 21; 361-466 of this volume) and respond to any other sincere inquiries of any interested reader.

However, I will elaborate below on the fallacies of some of the more recurrent issues that are raised:

- 1) That to assert that compulsive overeating OR ANY OTHER ADDICTION is just a bad habit ("Ta'avos") is contrary to the findings of the most current medical research. MRI & CT studies have proven that there are physiological changes in the brain function of these afflicted people. They are truly **Cholim** [sick];  
And moreover, in most cases, if left untreated, their sickness will progress to the level of Choleh SheYesh Bo Sakana. [Life-jeopardy]
- 2) That until this present date, there is and has not been any alternative Refuah [treatment] for addictions - except 12- Step programming. And that in the past all attempts to "modify" the 12-step program have resulted in miserable failure.

**The above 2 points, I shared with Gedolei HaPoskim and they responded to me that they found it very informative and enlightening.**

- 3) **According to Shulchon Aruch the only occasion that we put people's life in jeopardy, "Yehoreg v'Al Yaavor", is for the 3 Aveiros Chamuros [Cardinal Sins]: Avoda Zora [Idolatry], Gilui Arayos [Incest or Adultery], Shefichas Domim [Murder]. I would ask of any critic to produce one item of 12-Step program that falls into any of these categories.**

**Furthermore, please keep in mind, that the clear Psak is that Yehoreg v'Al Yaavor even of these 3 categories does not apply to Issurei d'Rabonon [rabbinic injunctions] or Minhagim [proscribed by custom only] of these 3 Aveiros Chamuros. (YD 195:16, 17 Ramoh and Biur HaGro #21)**

**Moreover, I would ask any skeptic to produce anything in 12-Step programs, significant enough that it would prohibit even just a Choleh Kol Gufo She'Ain Bo Sakana [a common sickness that has no life-jeopardy] person from participating.**

- 4) A vague, emotional assertion that the program is just "Goyish" [not-Jewish] does not qualify to prohibit participation. To impose Mili d'Chasidus [super piety] on others when

it will jeopardize their lives and/or well-being, is castigated by Chazal as Chasidus Shel Shtus [Foolishness]! (Sota 20a, 21b)

- 5) If we have witnessed wayward behavior in some people in recovery; the fault is not in the 12-Step programming but in our Chinuch system that does not follow the instructions of Shlomo HaMelech, “Chanoch la’Naar Al Pi Darkoh [Individualized educational programming].

We do not teach, in a manner specifically tailored to each individual, the deeply meaningful spiritual experience that should be intrinsic in all Mitzvah performance. Were we to do so, and had we done so, these individuals would not be so bitter towards Yidishkeit [Jewish religious] Observances, that at their mere introduction to spirituality, that they would abandon Kiyum HaMitzvos [fulfillment of Torah Observance].

- 6) The essence of the 12-Steps, as Rabbi Twerski so effectively demonstrates in his book "Self Improvement? I'm Jewish!" is identical with a program based on Mussar. As a matter of fact, it has been quipped that 12-Steps is the “Americanization of Mussar.”

- 7) The idea, that the 12-Steps is Christian, stems from:

(A) The mistaken assumption that step 5 is the ‘Catholic’ confession. - The Gemoro (Sota 32b) clearly says to the contrary! The Gemoro states that one who brings a Korbon Chatos [Sin Offering] needs to reveal his Aveira [Sin] to the Cohein [Priest] and possibly to all present in the Bais Hamikdosh [Temple]. And this is part and parcel of the atonement process!

And Reb Elimelech of Lizansk includes it as mandatory in his Tzetel Koton [“Short List” of daily character inventory].

AND

(B) The regular use of the lord’s prayer. - This is a very minor detail and not of essence to the program. Anyone who does not want to say it can substitute any Jewish Tefilla instead and is perfectly acceptable by program rules and custom. **Moreover, it is stated clearly in the 12 Step literature (A.A. Big Book 3<sup>rd</sup> edition pages 10- 11) that the founders of 12 Step recovery were M'vatel their religions and specifically "Oso Ha'Ish".**

**The Halocho is quite clear that when that occurs, even the "Getchka" [Idol] itself becomes permitted for use- certainly a benign prayer that contains no objectionable content.** (See pgs 150-160 for further elaboration.)

- 8) **“Powerlessness”** - An article was published about 15 years ago. It adequately explains how terms and words used in AA jargon have different meanings than the way they are used by social workers and other mental health professionals. One such word is “powerlessness” (see page #174 of the article – pg 172 of this volume). Consequently, unless a social worker or other mental health professional has especially studied and experienced 12-Step Recovery, he or she are totally incapable of making any judgment

call concerning addictions and the recovery therefrom. Moreover, articles from US News and World Report and from

[http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/12/ff\\_dsmv/all/1](http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/12/ff_dsmv/all/1) adequately describe the Ziyuf (counterfeit) nature upon which Mental Health professionals have been operating. Their attitudes and bases of information and treatment are based on data that is far from rigorously honest and therefore undependable and unreliable.

It appears quite clear that Rav Tzadok HaCohain. (Resisei Layla, Pg 6a,b,c – pg 187 of this volume) and the Chazon Ish (Igros # 2 - pg 186 of this volume) are teaching the same concept of “powerlessness” as in 12-Step Recovery - that without Hashem’s help we are absolutely powerless to accomplish anything. This is further supported by the Gro’s comments on Mishlei 16:1 & 17:2.

9) The commonly used expression “Ain Dovor Omed Bifnei HaRatzon [“when there’s a will; there’s a way”] is NOWHERE to be found in Chazal. The closest is from the Zohar P’ Terumah and there it coincides with 12-Step Program. See pgs 189-190 The Ratzon [Will] being referred to, that overpowers everything, is the Ratzon Elyon [Divine Will]. And we need to be Machniya [humble] our own ratzon [will] to the Elyon [Divine will]- and do so b’Ahava (Attitude of Gratitude); to be Me’Orer [“arouse”] the Ratzon Elyon to accomplish what He desires.

10) Among the letters quoted in the above referenced issue of “Binah” is the statement, “Torah transmits Kedusha [Holiness] only when it is transmitted thru pure conduits” [and therefore it is prohibited to learn Torah from a Goy--non-Jew]. And quoted as a source reference is Yoreh Deah 179:19. It is intimated that this Mekor [source] is the support for this position.

**However, I am sorry to say that the opposite is true.** Not only does the source reference that is quoted NOT support this position; BUT most accurately and precisely, it contradicts this assertion!

The Halocho in question states: “one who studies Torah from an ‘Amgushi’ is Chayav Misa” (culpable of a death penalty). Obviously the Shulchon Aruch is stating that it is prohibited to do so; and the stating of the consequence is intended to give us a sense as to the magnitude of the prohibition. However to posit from this Halocho that one can derive that “Torah transmits Kedusha only when it is transmitted thru pure conduits” is woefully inaccurate, as I shall presently demonstrate:

What is an “Amgushi”? The commentators to Shulchon Aruch (Poskim) disagree:

The Shach, Gro (Vilna Gaon), and other later Acharonim state that the category “Amgushi” only includes a missionary (either Jewish or non-Jewish). This indeed is also the simple, unforced rendition of the Talmud, Gemoro Shabbos 75a, which is the origin of this Halocho.

The Bais Yosef, Levush and Darchei Teshuva include within the Category of “Amgushi” (besides the missionary above) also a Mechashef, a sorcerer, someone (Jewish or non-Jewish), who is skilled in the ‘dark arts’ (a la Harry Potter).

However, what is absolutely clear according to ALL opinions is that there is nothing wrong with learning Torah from a plain non-Jew. Otherwise, why isn’t this also stated in Shulchon Aruch and Poskim? According to none of the Halachic authorities is he included in the “Amgushi” classification NOR is it proscribed; even though he certainly isn’t pure (by Torah standards). So “Torah transmits Kedusha only when it is transmitted thru pure conduits” is just, plain and simple, inaccurate.

Sincerely,  
Rabbi Yehoshua Kaganoff



**RABBI YEHOShUA KAGANOFF**  
Passaic, NJ 07055  
973.614.8446  
rabbiyehoshuak@gmail.com

*The following is pages 115-116 of my book/sefer:*

**Are the 12 Steps Kosher?**

-----Original Message-----

From: kaganoff <kaganoff@juno.com>  
To: [co13@aol.com](mailto:co13@aol.com)  
Sent: Fri, Sep 4, 2009 12:58 pm  
Subject: Fw: RE: the 12 step programs

Lichvod Rav Twerski, shlit'a

Are you able to comment and clarify on the correspondence and its conclusion?

The other Rabbi Kaganoff in the correspondence is my brother Yirmiyohu in Neve Yaakov, Yerusholoyim.

Thank you very much.

A Guten Shabbos,  
Mechabdo u'Maaritzo,  
Yehoshua Kaganoff

-----  
**From:** kaganoff [mailto:kaganoff@juno.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 09, 2009 9:23 PM  
**To:** [ykaganoff@013.net](mailto:ykaganoff@013.net);  
**Subject:** Fw: Re: the 12 step programs

Rabbi Twerski called me back on Sunday 17 Elul (6 sept).  
The content of the conversation is below.  
Sincerely, Yehoshua Kaganoff

"I was never in contact with Rav Elyashiv shlita. It was an oversight on my part for leaving you with the impression that I had.

The essence of the 12 steps, as I pointed out in my book "Self Improvement? I'm Jewish", is identical with a program based on Mussar.  
However, anyone who has already made up his mind will not be receptive to logical argument."

The idea, which someone told to Rav Elyashiv, that the 12-steps is Christian, stems from:

(1) The mistaken assumption that step 5 is the Catholic confession. - The Gemoro (Sota 32b) clearly says to the contrary! And Reb Elimelech of Lizansk includes it as mandatory in his "Tzetel Koton".

and

(2) The regular use of the Lord's Prayer. - This is a very minor detail and not of essence to the program. Anyone who does not want to say it can substitute any Jewish Tefilla instead and is perfectly acceptable by program rules and custom. Moreover, it is stated clearly in the 12 Step literature that the founders were M'vatel their religions and specifically "Oso Ha'Ish". The Halocho is quite clear that when that occurs, even the "Getchka" itself becomes permitted for use- certainly a benign prayer that contains no objectionable content. [ed. Note – see pgs 150 for further elaboration]

Insofar as Internet pornography is concerned, I suggest referring to [www.guardureyes.com](http://www.guardureyes.com).  
Twerski

***[ed. note - More on the "Kosherness" of 12-Step Recovery see Pgs 42-56]***

**RABBI YEHOShUA KAGANOFF**  
Passaic, NJ 07055  
973.614.8446  
rabbiyehoshuak@gmail.com

*The following is pages 118-134 of my book/sefer:*

## **WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?**

The Edification of a Rabbi

*A Rabbi's Complaint:*

Rabbi Yehoshua Kaganoff  
7939 Dorcas Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19111  
215.742.8421

29 Cheshvon, 5757  
11 November, '96

Dear Rabbi Twerski,

I am writing to seek guidance from you. I believe the issues I will raise require a Psak from my Posek, but I believe that I should have your input before I ask the Shaaloh.

In keeping with your suggestion in connection with my pastoral relationship with alcoholics in my congregation, I have been attending JACS meetings once a week here in Philadelphia. Besides the education I receive from the experiences of the people in recovery who attend and share, I also contribute almost weekly a thought of Torah, usually on the Parsha (usually as a handout for later review). The focus and purpose of my Divrei Torah is to either impart some basic Judaism to these people who, for the most part, have no idea of what Yidishkeit is all about, or more importantly to show them how the 12 steps and spirituality is very much a part of traditional "old-fashioned" Torah thought and observance. All of this is done at the encouragement of the Rabbi who started the group.

(As an aside to the theme of this letter, but of equal importance is my expression of Hakoras Hatov to you. I personally have grown from the experience and I also am 'working the STEPS' as attempting recovery from addiction to the Yetzer Harah. Y'yasher Kochachem for your manifold illuminating books and your personal help.)

The JACS meeting meets in the basement of a Conservative Temple which in and of itself does not disturb me. (There are Piskei Halacha concerning churches and other functions in Conservative and Reform Temples and this is not worse). However because of my input and guidance, many in attendance begin feeling an affinity for Judaism etc. and have begun attending services at this Temple. The Rabbi of the Temple is the one who started this JACS group and also

attends in a similar capacity - just that Judaism in his perspective is presented as humanistic, social justice etc.

This leads to my first question. Am I not, de facto, assisting these people from one self-deception into another? Spirituality is defined as choosing to follow Hashem's will. To deceive oneself as to the nature of Hashem's will is again an addiction - a spiritual addiction - which is even more insidious than a hedonistic addiction. Since the basis of all spirituality and recovery is absolute honesty, my gut reaction is to speak out - gently, of course - and reveal that God's will for Jews is very clearly enunciated in the Oral and Written Torahs. To posit that they are not the Word of God is really another form of denial as can easily be proven by attendance to a Discovery Seminar of Aish Hatorah etc. or reading any number of books like Uri Zohar's "My Friends We've Been Robbed".

Especially bothersome to me, is the knowledge that no matter how hard these people strive for spirituality; their Jewish soul will not be quieted of its yearning until it does receive the spiritual nourishment that Mitzvos and Torah provide. I am not being honest with them unless I share with them the truth.

On the other hand, I am reluctant to tell them for fear of losing them. They are struggling to stay sober. Often times this very struggle alone is a daily overwhelming fight. Will it be counterproductive to reveal the whole truth? The question itself is frightening because if not now, then when? And if not, then I am accomplice to a deception that is blasphemous negative spirituality!

The second issue is in regard to the JACS retreat.

I went to the recent JACS retreat. It really brought to the fore the above turmoil that had been percolating in my head.

For Elisheva it was a wonderful experience. I also learned from a number of the meetings and personal sessions that I had with some of the attendees. I also feel that I was able to help some of the people with information and counseling.

Elisheva came back raving about the spirituality. I personally did not feel the experience spiritual at all. (Of course, I didn't tell her that!)

The following were particularly distressing to me:

Women singing loudly with men present and women dancing in close proximity and in public view of men without a Mechitza. Both of these were at the Shabbos meals and at the Havdolo ceremony. Also, men and women (not husband and wife) embracing in front of the entire audience on the public stage, are to me not Kosher spiritual experiences at all.

I was perturbed by the official policy of JACS that there is "no correct way to worship". Unless I am from another planet we know that this is not true.

Granted the source of my difficulties is my knowledge of Halacha and Hashkafa, but are we not exhibiting Codependent behavior by our tacit consent to this statement and these behaviors? Please refer to the accompanying short essay that expresses succinctly what is in my heart. It is by Shimon Apisdorf.

Above all I was upset that the spirituality of Mitzvah performance and Torah study were not further explored at the Orthodox level for the Orthodox and for the non-religious at their level.

The Orthodox Davening was, pardon me, very uninspiring. Singing was at times spirited but what about the Words! What about the sense of conversing with Hashem and being in His Presence? I am aware that this may seem as an unfair demand. After all what Shul in America really possesses this. But then again who in American Jewry really understands spirituality. But we in the program know and understand differently and therefore do promote and seek spirituality.

It is my opinion that at a JACS Retreat, Orthodox observances should not be business-as-usual but every effort should be expended to demonstrate and teach how the Mitzvos and Torah study can be spiritual in their Halachic context.

The davening should be uplifting. Those who understand Shabbos in its traditional context should be allowed to lead the Zemiros and other Mitzvah performances. Maybe your brother, Rav Michel or someone of similar qualifications (Halacha, Avodah, Kiruv) could be enlisted to coordinate this endeavor. I certainly will give any assistance that is deemed appropriate.

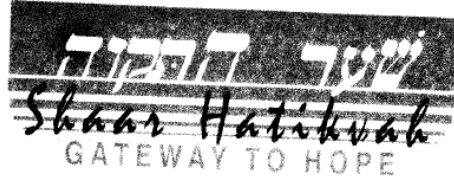
Again the Shaaloh that I will place in front of the Posek will be, "should I continue to participate in these functions as they presently exist?" As I mentioned earlier, I would very much appreciate your input on these matters before I ask the Shaaloh. Also, if you are aware of a Posek who understands the world of recovery, I feel it would be most appropriate to ask him the Shaaloh. I generally ask my Shaalos to Rav Dovid Cohen of Brooklyn, who has experience and sensitivity in Kiruv, mental health, and Avodah.

As always, I am very grateful for your straightforward, constructive counsel and guidance.

Respectfully,  
Yehoshua Kaganoff

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**Rabbi Twerski's response begins on the next page:**



ABRAHAM J. TWERSKI, M.D.  
PRESIDENT

MICHAEL PASTERNAK  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

3rd night of Chanuka, 5757

Rabbi Yehoshua Kaganoff  
7939 Dorcas Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19111

Dear Rabbi Kaganoff, ג"י:

Believe it or not, this is the first opportunity I have to respond to your letter of 29 Cheshvon. After returning from Israel and South Africa, and struggling with a 7 hour jet lag and catching up with a huge backlog, I have been twice to New York, and also to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Atlanta, Detroit, and Boston. If it were not for Chanuka, I'd probably be somewhere else today.

This frenetic running around is due to my seeking support for a drug treatment project I have started in Israel, and also to call attention to my recently published book on spouse abuse in the Jewish community. If you think there was denial about alcoholism or drugs, it pales in comparison to the DENIAL about spouse abuse. Our brethren rabbis wish to continue to ignore it. I contend that they are in violation of a דאורייתא, לא תוכל להתעלם.

Now to your letter. It is ironic that the problem exists because the group meets in a conservative temple. Is this perhaps because the orthodox shul would not welcome them?

I see no problem with your stating what you believe to be G-d's will. The steps leave it open as "G-d as I understand Him," and you certainly have the right to clarify what orthodoxy explains as G-d's will. I do not believe it will be counterproductive. You are not condemning anyone, merely stating a position. They can accept it or reject it as they wish.

This raises another issue. I believe we have an excellent entre to people in recovery. At one retreat, there was some criticism about orthodoxy's recalcitrance. I told the group this story:

A number of years ago, because of the lack of awareness of AA by physicians, several of us decided to try and educate doctors. We made a documentary about AA, by filming excerpts of talks by various members, showing who comprises AA-lawyers, executives, doctors, nurses, housewives, judges, laborers - a cross section of the community. To preserve anonymity we bleeped out all names. We showed this film to medical groups, giving a "before and after" questionnaire, which demonstrated that their attitude about AA was definitely changed for the better by this film.

We then received a call from World Headquarters that this was in violation of the tradition

preserving anonymity in the media. The fact that we bleeped out the names did not help. We were told not to use it again. The four of us who made this excellent film had invested \$4000 of our own money. Out of respect for the tradition, this film was never shown again. (AA subsequently made a similar film, using actors).

I told the group that we accepted this painful decision out of respect for the AA traditions. We considered AA too valuable to be tampered with, even if we did not agree with the ruling opinion. I can ask at least that much for Jewish tradition. There was not a single dissenting voice.

With all the people I have helped in recovery, I have never imposed my opinion about Jewish observance. Why? Because the inordinate success of AA is based on attraction rather than promotion. If you like what you see, you can come and get it.

While I am supportive of people who do *kiruv*, I have not been assertive in this respect. If my observance of Torah is not adequate to attract them, then I must work on myself.

There is a story about the Baal Shem Tov who once observed someone violating Shabbos. The Baal Shem Tov taught that the world is a mirror, and since we are generally blind to our own defects, Hashem shows them to us in others. The defects we see in others are our own. He therefore wept and did a thorough "inventory" to see where he had violated Shabbos.

It disturbs me greatly to see people shouting "Shabbos" at drivers. The Baal Shem too shouted "Shabbos", but at himself rather than at others.

Just imagine. Shabbos is supposed to be *מעין עולם הבא*. "ויכולו" means that when Shabbos arrives, one puts the worries of the work week totally aside. The work week has been closed and completed. Shabbos is a spiritual experience where man and G-d are united as bride and groom. If we glowed with the joy of Shabbos and radiated the bliss of *עולם הבא*, wouldn't people be running after us to learn our secret?) If those who see me are not observant of Shabbos, I need to improve myself rather than chastise them.

Here, too, there is a valuable lesson from the program. Abstinence is not sobriety. Someone who has not had a drink for years but has not made any characterologic changes is a "dry drunk." Families will tell you that it is easier to live with an active drinker than with a dry drunk.

Transgressing a negative prohibition of Torah is an *עבירה*. Failure to perform a required mitzva is also an *עבירה*. When we avoid all the *לאווין* and fulfil all the *עשה's*, we are essentially abstaining from *עבירות*. Unless we make the requisite improvement in *midos* we are the equivalent of a "dry drunk".

There are many fine observant people who have exemplary *midos*. Unfortunately, we cannot deny that there are more than a few people who observe glatt kosher and are dressed in the *most frum* garb, but who are sorely lacking in *midos*. At the retreats, much of the anger is directed at parents or others who were very rigid and restrictive in their demands, but their *midos* did not keep pace with their ritual observance.

I was the first orthodox rabbi to appear at a JACS retreat, and my initial appearance almost caused an upheaval because of the bitterness to orthodoxy. Fortunately, together with a few other well chosen rabbis we were able to achieve a change of attitude. One time an orthodox rabbi came who did not obey the instructions to remain silent at his first retreat and just listen. He gave a sermon according to rabbinics 101 which went over like a lead balloon.

Davening should be spiritual. Just how spiritual is the davening in the average shul? I have davened in any number of shuls and shtiblach, and they rush through the davening at 100 mph. If, God forbid, the baal-tefillah is a bit slower and the davening takes 35 minutes instead of the 30, it is simply intolerable.

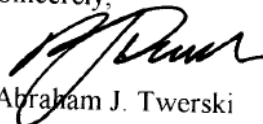
But aren't we those who preach emunah and bitachon? We say that every person must do some hishtadlus, but that it is not the degree of hishtadlus that will determine his earnings. Then why the frenetic pace? Why rush out of shul after 30 minutes to spend nine hours in the business or office? If we do not practice what we espouse, how can we expect others to respect our ways? I am not referring to others, but to myself.

I believe we can get the message across to people in recovery that the easy way is rarely the true way. All their lives they have been looking for the easy way, and when they hit rock-bottom they realized it doesn't work. What are all the changes in Judaism if not looking for an easy way? I think we have an opening here to argue well for full Torah observance, unless of course, those who claim to be totally Torah observant are also looking for easy ways. I suspect this may be true, in which case we have no argument.

There is certainly much in JACS that can be improved, and I think that with patience we can do it. I don't know that there is a posek who can really address this. Sorry to say, some of them are the equivalent of "dry drunks," meticulously observant and very knowledgeable, but thoroughly unaware of what feelings are all about, and how people can be paralyzed by emotions. Some may be totally alienated from their own feelings.

Love to hear from you.

Sincerely,



Abraham J. Twerski



On Mon, 6 Jun 2005 12:11:57 -0700 (PDT) >

Parent of a client, (with whom I had shared excerpts of Rabbi Twerski's above letter), writes:

Dear Rabbi Kaganoff

I didn't completely understand the Twersky letter excerpt. Please explain further

Have a nice day.C. X.

I acquiesced to the request.

Please see next page (pg 130 in my book/sefer) for the explanation.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Kaganoff

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***The previous correspondence (pgs 118-127) was excerpted and faxed to Rav Dovid Cohen, Shli'ta for Psak and guidance. His response:***

16 Jan, '97

8 Shvat 5757

Phone conversation with Rav Dovid Cohen, Shlit'a.

In response to Fax of 13 Jan, Rav Cohen said, "

- 1- "Wanted to call but overwhelmed with time constraints.
- 2- By all means! Be Mamshich! (Continue). You're doing Meshunadikeh (extraordinary) things
- 3- The Kiruv and Kiddush Hashem far outweigh your discomfort. (The hesitation is Bottel (negated) compared to the good.)
- 4- The fact that you're uncomfortable is good. It is a good Mehalech (approach)– Be uncomfortable and Be Mekarev & Mekadesh Hashem.
- 5- I am Mekaneh (jealous of) your big piece of Leviyoson (reward in world-to-come)
- 6- I want to be Meoded (encourage & motivate) you as much as possible."

12 June, '05, Erev Shevuos

Dear Mr. and Mrs. X,

In response to your request, I will explain (give a shiur upon!?) Rabbi Twerski's letter [Pg 123-127 in this volume] (the original excerpted text is in italics and smaller font, my comments in regular and larger font):

*3rd night of Chanukah*

*Dear Rabbi Kaganoff,*

*".....Here, too, there is a valuable lesson from the program. Abstinence is not sobriety. Someone who has not had a drink for years but has not made any characterologic changes is a "dry drunk." Families will tell you that it is easier to live with an active drinker than with a dry drunk"*

In this Paragraph, RT is laying down a vital program principle. Alcoholism (addictions) has 2 parts: the alcohol (abused substance) and the "ism". It's the "ism" that's at the root and base of the alcoholic's (addict's) problems. As the Big Book and the 12 & 12 book describe at length, it is the characterological changes that are what recovery is all about, not just abstaining. Getting rid of the substances without the characterological changes creates much more difficult interpersonal relationships rather than reconciling them.

*"Transgressing a negative prohibition of Torah is an "Aveira". Failure to perform a required mitzva is also an "Aveira". When we avoid all the "Lavin" and fulfill all the ""Asseis", we are essentially abstaining from "Aveiros". Unless we make the requisite improvement in midos, we are the equivalent of a "dry drunk.""*

Here RT, is alluding to a very important and basic premise in Torah-observant Judaism. Throughout the ages (Vilna Gaon in Even Shleima 1:1, Ramban on Devorim 22:6, Rambam in Mishne Torah very end of Korbonos:Temura and Teshuva 7:3, just to cite a few sources) it has been emphasized that G-d's purpose in providing us with the Mitzvos is not intended to be dry mechanical activities. They are intended to encourage, cultivate and induce us to make requisite characterological changes. The activity of the Mitzva or the desistence from a prohibition are supposed to be accompanied by a psychoemotional component that is supposed to touch our inner being and refine it. The goal is that a contact with a Torah observant Jew should inspire the other person to remark, "What a refined, cultured and sensitive person (s)he is! (S)He is a wonderful Human Being." (I can send you the original resource materials by PDF file, upon which RT is premising his remarks.)

In his final sentence, he points out that (s)he who performs the Mitzvos but does not engage in the characterological improvement remains the equivalent of a "dry drunk"

*"There are many fine observant people who have exemplary midos. Unfortunately, we cannot deny that there are more than a few people who observe glatt kosher and are dressed in the most frum garb, but who are sorely lacking in midos. At the [JACS] retreats, much of the anger is directed at parents or others who were very rigid and restrictive in their demands, but their midos did not keep pace with their ritual*

*observance."*

In this Paragraph, RT decries the mottled state of affairs that we find in present day Orthodox world. Although the previous stated overarching goals of Mitzva performance is recognizable in many Torah Observant persons, nevertheless regretfully, being totally honest with ourselves, we must concede that there is a significant portion of Torah observant persons who have completely "missed the point" about the overarching goals. They subsequently perform the Mitzvos (and sometimes even with great fervor and punctiliousness) in conjunction with very reprehensible Character traits ("Midos"). (Please see Chazon Ish Emuna uBitachon C. 4 for great elaboration on this point).

RT shared with me in this letter the empirical observation that much of the anger and bitterness towards religious observance that is to be found amongst recovering addicts (the "ism" of their alcoholism) is a reaction to the dominance in their earlier lives of people of the second type described above.

*"I was the first orthodox rabbi to appear at a JACS retreat, and my initial appearance almost caused an upheaval because of the bitterness to orthodoxy. Fortunately, together with a few other well chosen rabbis we were able to achieve a change of attitude. One time an orthodox rabbi came, who did not obey the instructions to remain silent at his first retreat and just listen. He gave a sermon according to rabbinics 101 which went over like a lead balloon."*

Here RT shares from his personal experience, how he "Knows" that the empirical observation stated earlier, is indeed a fact and should be heeded absolutely, if someone wants to attempt to influence the people in recovery to reconsider their opinion and attitude of their native religion and its adherents. Since the Sine Qua Non of recovery is Rigorous Honesty (Big Book Chap. 5), if we ignore this warning, then they "see right through" us and our facade and they consider us nothing but a sham!

*"Davening should be spiritual. Just how spiritual is the davening in the average shul? I have davened in any number of shuls and shtiblach, and they rush through the davening at 100 mph. If, G-d forbid, the baal-tefillah is a bit slower and the davening takes 35 minutes instead of the 30, it is simply intolerable."*

*"But aren't we those who preach emunah and bitachon? We say that every person must do some hishtadlus, but that it is not the degree of his hishtadlus that will determine his earnings. Then why the frenetic pace? Why rush out of shul after 30 minutes to spend nine hours in the business or office? If we do not practice what we espouse, how can we expect others to respect OUR ways? I am not referring to others, but to myself."*

Here, in these 2 paragraphs, RT gives a concrete example of what he has stated as only theory till now. An example that 1) is almost universal in the Orthodox world and can only be finessed by the use of "denial" and 2) is a commonly heard gripe from people in recovery. If we preach the belief in a very personal G-d, then why is it that our prayers aren't an experience in communication? Why is it that they feel more connected in prayer (the "Serenity Prayer" or the "Lord's Prayer" with their higher power and with spirituality in rooms of recovery with people in

recovery? (*"If we do not practice what we espouse, how can we expect others to respect OUR ways?"*)

In the last sentence (*I am not referring to others, but to myself.*), in the tradition of Chasidic Rebbes, upon realizing that perhaps one has spoken too harshly, albeit truthfully, in judgement of others and indeed the matter requires proper airing for reassessment and improvement, one refocuses the criticism on oneself so as not to alienate the audience.

*"I believe we can get the message across to people in recovery that the easy way is rarely the true way. All their lives they have been looking for the easy way, and when they hit rock-bottom they realized it doesn't work. What are all the changes in Judaism if not looking for an easy way? I think we have an opening here to argue well for full Torah observance, unless of course, those who claim to be totally Torah observant are also looking for easy ways. I suspect this may be true, in which case we have no argument....."*

Here RT makes 2 very profound conclusions. There is only one way to influence the community in recovery. We, the Torah Observant ourselves, need to "walk the walk". Then, when we "talk to talk", it is perceived and received as something sincere, honest and from the heart. It can then penetrate the hearts of the others who are in recovery. If however, we only "talk the talk" but our actions don't match, then we have no avenue to bridge the gap. (RT alerts us that his observations and experience seem to indicate that the latter is sadly the case. A clarion call to anyone, who wants to address the problem, that he first needs to straighten up his own act, before he embarks.)

*".....Sorry to say, some of them [Rabbis, Rebbes, Teachers] are the equivalent of "dry drunks," meticulously observant and very knowledgeable, but thoroughly unaware of what feelings are all about, and how people can be paralyzed by emotions. Some may be totally alienated from their own feelings."*

*Sincerely,  
Abraham J. Twerski*

In this final paragraph, RT alerts me to the fact, that in the cadre of people from whom we are supposed to seek guidance, there is unfortunately, a great paucity of competency in this area. Consequently, be on the alert when seeking guidance, that this incomplete erudition and comprehension may lead to some very ill-advised suggestions and responses. This only further magnifies the sense of distance, alienation and isolation of the people in recovery from their community of origin. These phenomena can be attested to by both the people in recovery and Rabbis etc. who have troubled themselves to "Walk the Walk" and not just "Talk the Talk".

I hope this has been of help. As I have said, I believe it is critical for us to recognize and integrate what Rabbi Twerski has revealed to us here in order to facilitate Yocheved's recovery and return!

*Sincerely,  
Rabbi Kaganoff*

**RABBI YEHOASHUA KAGANOFF**

**Passaic, NJ 07055**

**973.614.8446**

**rabbieyehoshuak@gmail.com**

*The following is pages 150-155 of my book/sefer:*

**Prayer at AA Meetings – an Addict’s Perspective**

I was the rabbi who posed the question to Rabbi X on the problem of a Jew praying with the group at meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous (spring '87). Usually, one of two prayers is recited: 1) The Serenity Prayer or 2) The Lord’s Prayer. (ed. Note - texts attached pg 153)

The response of Rabbi X was that the profound Christian associations of the Lord’s Prayer- particularly because it is ascribed to the founder of that faith (even though its contents have nothing Christological) - “make its use unacceptable to Jews. It would, therefore, be wrong for Jews to recite it even in a non-religious setting, such as Alcoholics Anonymous.” He was much less certain and very undecided in regards to the Serenity Prayer.

Rabbi X then advised: “As it is recited at the conclusion of the meeting, there is really no reason to participate. One can stand in silence, and I am sure this would be respected and understood.”

Of course, it would be respected and understood by members of the group. Members of AA are accepting people. The credo of AA and all 12 step programs is to be areligious. The “God of each particular individual’s understanding” is one of the bedrock foundations of the fellowship. Attempting to influence anybody’s personal understanding of God or religious observances is totally out of the pale and severely censured.

That was not the issue for me then. My concern was my own feeling of guilt during my early days in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Meetings were usually in church basements. That was strange for me and left me feeling uncomfortable. Then, when the meetings concluded with the group’s holding hands and reciting The Lord’s Prayer, I just knew that I did not belong there. But I was wrong! Very wrong!!

What I have discovered, much to my surprise, is that not only has participation not caused a dilution of my Judaism as I had first feared, but much to the contrary, as strange as this may seem, (and this is an absolute truth that is experienced by most), my involvement in recovery has led me to a much more profound relationship with and meticulous observance of my Judaism/Yidishkeit

Now that I have been in the program of recovery a few years, I doubt whether I would even ask the question. It is obvious to me and others in recovery that complete commitment without reservation to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is vitally necessary for us to stay healthy, clean and sober. So, I recite that prayer at the conclusion (whichever one of the two happens to be chosen by the group at that particular meeting) so as not to separate myself from the group. It is helpful and necessary for my own program of recovery.

One could easily point out Jewish parallels to The Lord’s Prayer in older Jewish sources. Analogies to the *Kaddish* and to benedictions in the *Shemoneh Esreh* are obvious. So why did I even ask the question in

the first place? I should have heeded the Yiddish aphorism, "*Venn Mann Frekt, Es Iss Schoen Traif* – When one [has to] ask, it is already not kosher." Also, whenever one honestly asks a question, one should be prepared for a possible negative answer. So why did I even ask the question? It was, I believe, an expression of my own denial and my personal resistance to recovery.

One of the primary symptoms of alcoholism is denial. This is a disease that tells the alcoholic that he/she does not have it. Our Jewish folk tradition plays into this denial. After all, is not "*Shikker is a goy* – The drunkard is a Gentile?" And do we Jews not learn to drink only on sacred occasions, so we learn discipline in the use of alcohol? Immanuel Kant wrote in 1798 that Jews do not get drunk because they "are exposed through their eccentricity and alleged chosenness to relax in their self-control." We came to believe these myths. So, though denial afflicts all alcoholics, it afflicts us with a particular insidiousness.

Rabbi X gave his answer based on his best judgment and scholarship. This is to be respected. But in honesty, it was not really my concern then. I really was seeking an excuse not to go to meetings. But Rabbi X could not have known this. My personal experience since then in the AA's Twelve-Step Program is to enter fully and without intellectual reservations. Hence, I say The Lord's Prayer and I am comfortable doing so. The support of the group has been so necessary for me that I will not place now any obstacles in the way of my full participation. This is a matter of trust. Others may prefer to stand silently. I do not. I know very well that this is necessary for my own recovery.

Alcoholism is a disease that could be fatal for me. It is *pikuach nefesh*. Like medicine that comes from *traife* sources, I am permitted to use it to preserve my life.

Now that I have been in the AA program for several years, I am comfortable with this solution. But early on, I felt fragile and such a responsum was not helpful. So I urge Jews and others who are entering these proven self-help programs for their own recovery to suspend criticism until they have tried the program for a while.

Denial and early resistance to recovery afflicts all alcoholics. But we Jews seem to come by it with a vengeance. Whatever the cause of alcoholism, I have learned that it is "an equal-opportunity disease."

This responsum may have been based on sound *Halachic* scholarship. But I hope that Rabbi X will reconsider it in the light of what may be more vitally necessary to the recovering alcoholic who is Jewish.

Peloni Almoni

The Serenity Prayer:

God,

Please Grant me:

- The Serenity to Accept the Things I Cannot Change;
  - The Courage to Change the Things I Can;
  - And the Wisdom to Know the Difference.
- 

The lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done  
on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our wrongs  
as we forgive those who have wronged us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; For Thine is  
the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever,  
amen.

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----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** "B40AI82@aol.com" <B40AI82@aol.com>

**To:** b40ai82@aol.com

**Sent:** Thu, December 8, 2011 3:25:38 PM

**Subject:** Judaism and the Lord's Prayer AA Grapevine 1997

Judaism and the Lord's Prayer  
AA Grapevine, January 1997

As a Jewish member of Alcoholics Anonymous, I've been concerned about the fact that so many meetings end in the Lord's Prayer. While I was willing to go to any lengths to get--and stay--sober, I was worried about reciting a prayer that might in some way compromise my Jewish identity.

So I talked with my rabbi, who is knowledgeable not just about Jewish affairs but also about the Twelve Steps. He is Orthodox and the leader of an extremely large Jewish congregation. He does a lot of work visiting treatment centers, and he knows a lot about AA. Probably more than I do.

He explained to me that there is nothing in the Lord's Prayer--or in all of the Twelve Steps, for that matter--that in any way contradicts anything in traditional Judaism. He pointed out that many of the phrases in the Lord's Prayer actually come from Jewish prayers in use two thousand years ago and still current today. While the Lord's Prayer is used primarily by Christians, its origins are firmly rooted in the Jewish prayer book.

Now, I'm no scholar (although I've written a few books about Judaism), and I can't locate all of the

phrases in Jewish liturgy off the top of my head, but I know a few, and perhaps these will give some sense of how the Lord's Prayer was assembled.

"Our Father who art in heaven" = Avinu ShebaShamiyim

That Hebrew phrase, Avinu ShebaShamiyim, has been used for millenia to start prayers. The most recent use came in the Prayer for the State of Israel, composed after the founding of Israel in 1948.

"Hallowed be Thy name" = Yiskadal v'Yiskadash Sh'may Rabbo

This Aramaic formulation is extremely familiar to Jews as the first line of the Kaddish - the Mourner's Prayer and also the prayer that separates sections of the Orthodox prayer service.

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" = ba'shamayim me'ma'al u'va' aretz mitachas.

This line from the "Aleinu" prayer, said at the conclusion of each prayer service and in the important Mussaf service on Rosh HaShana (The Jewish New Year) and on Yom Kippur, (the Jewish Day of Atonement), translates as "in the heavens above and on the earth below."

"Give us this day our daily bread" = Hu Nosain Lechem l'Chol Basar.

This comes from the first paragraph of the Jewish Grace After Meals. The meaning is that God gives bread to all beings.

"And forgive us our trespasses" = She'tislach Lanu al Col Chatosainu

"Forgive us for all of our sins" reads this line, repeated many times in the Yom Kippur prayers.

"For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory" = L'cha, Adoshem, haGedula, v'HaGevura, v'haTiferes etc.

The Jewish phrase translates as "the greatness and the power and the glory." This is a line recited in a Sabbath morning prayer just prior to the reading of the Torah in the synagogue.

Forever and ever = L'dor va'dor

Literally, this means "from generation to generation."

Amen = Amen

Amen is actually a Hebrew word from the verb "to believe." In a prayer or a room--or in a Jewish court of law--to answer "Amen" after a statement is to say, "I believe this."

So you see that as a believing Jew, when I'm saying the Lord's Prayer, I'm saying a compilation of excerpts of prayers that are a part of the traditional Jewish prayer book.

I hope that this makes things more comfortable for other Jews.

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*The following is pages 161-163 of my book/sefer:*

**KNEELING**

Dear Rabbi,

I am having some difficulty proceeding in my recovery. My sponsor (not Jewish) is telling me that I should get on my knees (literally) and ask God to help me. I know that my mother always told me, "We Jews don't get on our knees, certainly not to Daven (pray) that way; that's what the Goyim do!!" I know that she would "turn over in her grave"; if she knew that I would consider Davening on my knees.

So Rabbi, What's the "real deal"? What does the Torah (Halacha) really say about this? Can I Daven on my knees? Etc. Is what my mother taught me another one of those Bubba Ma'aseh's; or is there some substance to it and if so, can you offer me a substitute for my sponsor and my recovery?

As always, thanks for your help.

Charna B.

-----  
Dear Mrs. B.

The great Halachic authority, Rav Yaakov Hagiz (early 1600's), in his famous work "Halachos Ketanos" poses this exact question. His answer is surprising so below I will insert the exact text and free translation. He, in essence, encourages it!

Only:

- 1-community leaders,
  - 2-when praying on behalf of the community
  - 3-in PUBLIC,
- should refrain from doing so.

Below find the exact text and here is a free translation: "Indeed the more humility demonstrated during Tefilla, the better; and therefore it is very commendable to Daven on one's knees. However, a word of caution to community leaders! Just as we find that other intense demonstrations of devotion such as Kida (bringing the head to the floor from a standing position) and Hishtachavoyo (Full prostration) should not be practiced by community leaders when Davening for the community in public, unless they are certain that Hashem will respond to them affirmatively, as experienced by Yehoshua ben Nun; so too this restriction would apply to Davening while kneeling as well."

צ"ד) שאלה אם מותר להתפלל בצריכה: תשובה כל  
 כמה דכ"ף איניש בתפילה טפי מעלי אלא  
 דמטעם דאין אדם רשאי ליפול על פניו אלא"כ מוכטח  
 לו שיענה כיהושע (תענית י"ד) מטעם זה אין להתיר  
 הצריכה. ואין לומר דהכורע על ברכיו אין קרוי עומד  
 דהא כיון דרוב גופו צעמידה יש להחשיבו עומד אם  
 נוסף ארכובותיו בארץ ושאר כל הגוף עומד והא דעמוד  
 על רגליך כל הרגל עד הארכובה נקרא רגל דהא ביבמה  
 כתיב וחלצה נעלו מעל רגלו ותנן (יבמות ק"ה) מן  
 הארכובה ולמעטה חלינתה כשרה והא דאמרנו [באהע"ז  
 ס"קס"ט ע"י ר"ב] ביבמה שלא תהא יושבת על ברכיה  
 היינו שהברכים בארץ והיא סומכת גופה ויושבת עליהן  
 ודוק. וכן בשלמה הוא אומר ויקם מכתע על ברכיו  
 וקרי ליה תפילה [ע"י שמש לדקה א"ח ס"י כ"ד]:

This Halachic position is vigorously corroborated by yet another Halachic authority, the Shemesh Tzedoko of the late 1600's (referenced in inset above and reproduced in inset below). This latter Rav and Posek actually records the objections that he had raised and that were refuted by the recognized Halachic authorities of his time.

מצטטה הכפרות בעיה"ך וסיים מי שדעתו רחכה מדעתי יתרון דברי הנאמר וישת  
 ברכה יולא מנע המנהג ולא לנגב עליו ואם נתבטלה הכריעה על הכרכים בטענת  
 התפלה כבוד הרב הג"ל במקומו מוכח לא משום אלא תלכו וגו' נגזרו בה לצטלה  
 אלא אי מפני שהיתה גזרה שאין רוב הגבור יכול לעמוד בה דטרחה להו מילתא  
 טובא או מהטעם עמזו דאין אדם רשאי ליפול על פניו אלא"כ מוכטח לו שיענה  
 כיהושע ויכמו שהסיב הרב בגל הלקט כס"י ג"ד. ימי לאו האי טעמא לא היינו  
 חוששי לחוקות העמים ראיה לדבר שבטנת תס"א עורנו עומד לפני ה' לשרת  
 בק"ק פאדווה אבר בו נהנו האצנונים מימי קדם שט"ב כחזרת תפלות יוה"ך  
 כשמניע להתודות ולומר העל"ח כל לו דרך ימין הבימה ומחזיר את פניו לצפון  
 וכורע על ברכיו ומתודה ואח"כ חוזר למקומו. ומשום מעשה שהיה טבעוה לריב  
 ומנה גמו בטנה היא והכו זה אל זה באגרוף רשע. מוה"ר יחכ"ם זל בקציה  
 מנח וגדרה ואון וחקר ומקן כמאז והלאה כל הקהל יתודה בכריעה עם הש"ס  
 בגל הד' תפלות והיה רע עלי המעשה הזה משום ובחוקותיהם לא תלכו והמתקתי  
 סודי עם מהר"ט ניב"ה זל בויניציאה ומוה"ר מרדכי באשן בויזוניה והסיפוני  
 שאין שום חשש איסור בדבר דנהרא נהרא ופטייה. ובמה שהעידו בשם ת"א

So Mrs. B., it seems quite definite that your mother's directions, albeit well-meaning, were, nevertheless, since it is concerning, 1) a "private citizen" 2) asking for one's self, and 3) in private; were overzealous and inaccurate; Or as you put it, another Bubba Ma'aseh! So by all means, if your sponsor is directing you, for the benefit of your continued recovery, to exercise greater humility and beg Hashem literally "on your knees", then do so! I know many in recovery whom experienced wonderful epiphanies, when so doing.