

The almost unassailable way to stay clean.

Posted by Will - 14 Aug 2009 13:07

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We all know how tough it is to break that initial cycle after a fall. We fall once...we feel down. It happens again....we feel worse...if we haven't done something to counter the mess-ups, we suddenly find ourselves in a downward spiral- and it is very hard to climb upwards. This technique makes it much easier to get on your feet and stay there. I've been using this approach for a while now, and I was recently delighted to find it quoted in the Handbook from a bochurs letter to GYE (end of Tool #10)...But I figure its worthwhile posting my variation of it, along with the thought process that led me to it, for the benefit of anyone who has not seen the Handbook or would like to see some of the mechanics behind this technique.

It came as a complete chiddush to me one day as I was listening to a shmuz. The shmuz was talking about how money makes most people make decisions that aren't necessarily for that persons good. For example, if Im living in Shmutz La'aretz, I might decide not to move to Eretz Yisrael because "I'll be giving up too many 'luxuries' that Ive gotten used to...like my car, my very comfortable house, and American coleslaw. So no, right now is NOT the right time to move to Eretz Yisrael, because after all I *need* my luxuries (i.e. more money)!" When a persons line of reasoning follows a similar route, he is essentially giving up what he **knows** to be better for his neshama in exchange for money or comfort. So a lot of times, money has enough pull **to make a person make detrimental decisions for himself**.

When I heard this I thought to myself: if money is so important to the human, why cant it be used conversely as a *positive* tool to prevent aveiros? For example: lets say Shloimie has a serious taivah for Burger King. Every time he walks to Kollel, he passes by the neighborhood Burger King... his mouth starts watering, his nose turns up to catch a whiff of that scent, and he begins to dream about what it would be like to bite into a juicy double decker from the king of burgers. Ok, now lets say Shloimie's walking past Burger King one Erev Shabbos and the taivah is just way too much for him to handle. At that moment, the only thing he wants and "needs" is Burger King. He walks inside. As he hungrily scans the menu he asks the clerk "Ummm...How much issssss A DOUBLE DECKER BURGER?!". The clerk looks at him and replies "Well unfortunately our prices have just gone up...theres a shortage of growth hormones so...a double decker will cost \$155.89- without lettuce, ketchup, or pickles. Because our vegetable garden blew up, and the ketchup industry has gone bankrupt." Shloimie's mouth drops, "\$155.89?! WITHOUT LETTUCE KETCHUP OR PICKLES??!!" "and without tax of course..." she interjects. "NO WAY LADY!" and out storms Shloimie, disgusted.

But wait a second...what just happened here? A second ago Shloimie *needed* a double decker from Burger King! All the times he passed by and craved Burger King contributed to this one moment of real 'need'...and as soon as he heard the price he walked out without a second thought! What gives?

What happened here is, Shloimies value of money overcame his "need" for a burger. He was able to look at the burger, think about the detriment to his wallet, and come to the conclusion that he doesn't '*need*' it anymore! Incredible! The Yetzer Hara injects this feeling of need into a person to the point where this poor Shloimie has no control...but suddenly, as soon as Shloimie can measure his 'need' against another 'need' that is more tangible, he breaks free!

Well, this got me thinking even more... How can I apply this powerful weapon to my situation? Then and there Hashem smacked me with a revelation. If I were to "boost the price" of being pogem HaBris, to the point where I could weigh it against something tangible that I don't want to lose, something just as powerful in the hardwiring of my gut...I could be like Shloimie in my situation! He was flabbergasted by the price of a simple burger and walked out on his 'need'! That was it, I needed to counter this powerful base desire of acting out with an equivalent base desire of money. But then I thought...there are addicts out there who will sell their last pair of shoes for just one more hit of crack. Maybe money can't match up to such a powerful taivah of acting out? How was Shloimie able to walk out? Ahhh...**it was the lettuce, ketchup, and pickles**. The burger no longer seemed as rewarding as it did a moment ago to Shloimie, because there were none of his favorite things in it!

That's when it all clicked. In order to really match up against the Yetzer Hara in this area, I need to **take away the lettuce, ketchup, and pickles**- and I need to "boost the price" of the burger...i.e. I need to truly work on the lust inside of me- recognizing how there is **nothing I want** on this burger of lust (by working with the GYE handbooks)...and suddenly the burger is much less appealing. Couple that with a boost in price, and when a taivah to act out comes your way....FOGEDDABOUTIT...nothin' doin'.

I immediately decided to test this theory out with a friend of mine that I knew was also having issues with Shmiras Habris. We made a 'wager' with a few tanaim:

-In the event of a slip, the slipper would need to pay a predetermined crippling sum to the other person.

(Definition of 'crippling': Let's say a person is left with \$100 dollars after all of his expenses at the end of the month, he should pledge \$85)

-We were not allowed to cancel the wager until it ended

-If we even *clicked* on something online that we knew at the time of clicking would excite us, it counted and we needed to pay the full amount.

Well, this wager worked wonders! Like, fantastic! The beautiful thing is, if you "boost the price" by taking this neder upon yourself (which is somewhat easier than completely ridding the burger of its condiments), you have already won half the battle- and you will then have room to maneuver against the Yetzer Hara! You'll see that when you find yourself feeling weak, and you fall into thoughts of acting out- you'll immediately think about the crippling blow to your wallet...you'll be able to weigh the acting out against the very tangible loss, and it will suddenly become MUCH easier to change channels.

So guys, if you're really serious about getting rid of this destructive habit, lets "boost the price" of acting out IMMEDIATELY, thereby giving us room to **blow up the vegetable garden** and **make ketchup go bankrupt!**

Hatzlacha!

Will

P.S. Try to make the Nedarim for relatively short periods (i.e. 1-3 months) at a time, that way it doesn't seem like forever. Also, be sure you renew your neder *before* the current neder is up....(I believe Ive seen Reb Guard give this bit of advice.)

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