

Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by mifatfait - 16 Feb 2012 23:44

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I have a question. I may not be fair but it bothers me anyways, so I want to ask.

We know that everything is found in the Torah, not just halachos and hashkafos but also the *mitzvos* *mitzvos*. The Rambam devotes much of hilchos daas to midos and *mitzvos* *mitzvos* *mitzvos*, as well as in Moreh Nevuchim and *mitzvos* *mitzvos* and more. All of the greats concentrated much effort on teaching us the about the *mitzvos* *mitzvos*, how the *mitzvos* *mitzvos* should and shouldn't look (The Ramchal, Gr'a, R' Yisrael Salanter, etc.). And not just theory, but also fixing things that went wrong. It's all there.

What I would like to know is if and where in the works of the Rishonim or Achronim we find the concept of addiction as a illness that requires a special method of healing, different than the standard approaches that work for everyone else. True, all the 12 steps have there source, but what is the source for the source of it all, the basic attitude of addiction as a sickness? Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Please let me know what you think.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by Dov - 05 Oct 2012 20:20

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There is nothing in the 12 steps program that I and the dozens of other frum sober sex addicts I know use that is not found in Torah and Chaza"l. I would be happy to spend the time on the phone discussing the particulars of how and what. But this topic is actually not for the forum in my opinion, because it glorifies the antithesis of recovery:

pretending we are really philosophers. Until our behavior is really fully under the control of our seichel, Rav Noach Weinberg used to say, we are not *really* philosophers - just armchair thinkers like most people are.

If **knowing** the right philosophy (Torah philosophy) were the thing that could save us, then there would not be so many shtreimels, kolel guys, and b'nei Torah in SA, for example. I met together with at least 200 chassidim and litvishe guys over the past two years who are true sex and lust addicts. In recovery. Many more than that are not in recovery but still out there *thinking* they are alone.

Torah is not the answer, because the Torah is the **Truth** - but we, unfortunately, are not. And **that** is our problem. Forcing ourselves harder into Torah to 'fit the mold' is not the solution at all for anyone I know with this addiction. For that's *exactly* the game we have all been playing all along till now! And I do not know for certain, but is cognitive therapy developed by Torah

scholars? It may work great for many. But it is *therapy*. The steps are not therapy, nor are they 'self-help'. They are about getting our egos and crazy selfish thinking out of the way of Hashem so that we do the "Pischu li pesach kechudo shel machat (but this time, me'eiver l'eiver). In that way, it is a 'G-d help' program, not a religion to 'do commandments'.

In contrast to "A Torah Philosophy", the steps are all about taking action and gaining sanity and clarity *by taking those **actions***, not by figuring things out or philosophy. That's all. They are not 'understood' - they are *done*. There is no benefit in 'learning' them. The clarity comes after the unnatural actions are taken, because they are actions of sobriety and the opposite of the isolation and pride that characterize our 'going it alone' and religious fantasies that keep us from being clean and being *really* with Hashem, His people, and His Torah.

Though Torah is different because it is His Will *itself*, so learning it *is* precious and powerful, yet still in Torah we do say "ha'omer ein li ella Torah, af Torah ein lo!" - because he rejects mayseh mitzvah and holds only onto midrash. V'lo hamidrash haikkar ella hama'aseh.

1st step is admitting all the truth about the extent of our problem. Sobriety grows out of knowing and admitting we cannot afford to act out - or bring ourselves to it by enjoying lust - and all that hurts. But the steps do **not** bring us to stop acting out. Our pain does. But Pain will not keep us sober. For our real problem is not our lusting, yetzer horas, porn or any of that - our problem is living without them. Real, clean, normal life is unacceptable to us. And the steps are about bringing us the sanity and serenity that enables us to **stay** sober in real, clean, normal life. It's a miracle. And we hate to admit that.

2nd is admitting that my very **best** thinking (for years) is *precisely what got me here in this mess such as it is* and that I lack the power to gain sanity. So I need a Power greater than me to *give* me the sanity I seek. That has nothing necessarily to do with our sex or lust problem - it is about sanity in general - our crazy thinking that leads us to resent, fear life, G-d, our spouses and families, and run away from good living. Those who twist the 2nd and 3rd steps into the way to fight 'falling' are shortchanging their program and themselves. "Kafui tova"

3rd is to agree to begin growing along truly honest spiritual lines and accept that my G-d knows exactly what is best for me. Again, not just about not acting out our lust - but about being real people again. Life with a capital "L".

4th is to admit that though I want #3, I have too many sick middos and goofy expectations to really *live* that way fully, so I write out all my complaints with this life He is giving me and clarify what my part in the pain in me is - what my defects are that make the life He is giving me unacceptable or painful.

5th is to admit that openly to another person so I can then begin to *finally* get honest with myself and with my G-d.

6th is to decide whether I am ready to actually live without the coping mechanisms I have chosen and learned (my defects of character) and really abandon myself to G-d's Will for me in guiding my life and caring for me.

7th is to let my defects go and sincerely ask my G-d to remove them from me by helping me

learn a new way to deal with each situation and person that used to vex me.

8th is to face what and how I have wronged others and make a list of that in writing.

9th is to take responsibility and directly apologize for anything I did that hurt them.

10th is to keep that cheshbon up as a daily practice.

11th is to ask G-d to *help* me mevatel myself to Him and His Will for me and actually join in His plan every day.

12th is to use all these principles/tools as they come up through the day and through my life, as though I were a newbie, never sitting on laurels and never fantasizing that "I've made it", and to freely share these tools with anyone who wants them.

What's goyish in any of this?

The truth is that debate on this will get nowhere but very deep into personalities. Taking action would mean that we are all more interested in admitting the truth about ourselves and working these steps right now, rather than figuring out a master plan or why there is no mesechta for addicts.

But this discussion is so much more fun.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by nederman - 05 Oct 2012 22:22

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If you are looking for the truth read Feeling Good by David Burns. Whenever you feel anything you will know how to figure out what you are telling yourself underneath that is making you feel that way, and you will know how to argue with yourself. You can use it to get sober or to become the president of the united states.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by mifatfait - 06 Oct 2012 18:22

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Several days ago a dear relative of mine who is not religious brought a friend of his to visit in the Sukkah. This friend learned in a real yeshiva for several years, then dropped off the derech big time, and now is starting to come back. But he has a serious issue which got me pretty annoyed - he found the truth. He explained to me in no uncertain terms that the Torah of all yeshivos today is simply not Torah, he even elegantly misread a Rambam to prove his point. I couldn't get in a word edgewise, he wouldn't listen with even half an ear to someone who would dare argue with the truth.

I learned a big lesson from this. Blind dedication to the ultimate truth cannot be the driving force in our lives, we are too far from the true ??? to dare to think that we will find the end of the truth. Gotta chill a ton, do the right thing when able, and most important live with the realization that without Hashem's help all my rational and cognitive thinking will get me nowhere.

In this vein, I don't really know too much about the ultimate "truth" of the 12 steps, just that the attitudes of "addiction is a sickness" and "powerlessness" have helped me and several million others a lot to restore sanity to our lives, so even if it's all a hoax and just a figment of Bill Wilson's imagination, I don't really care.

Better yet, we are Jews and we believe that the only truth is Hashem's torah - ??? ??? ?????? ???. I have not yet ever succeeded to observe the commandments involving my sexual behaviors, if this will enable me to, it is by definition the most true thing in the world.

Dov, maybe this is similar to what you meant? Or maybe not?

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by nederman - 07 Oct 2012 00:50

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I think that is a rational approach, focus on what works, but honesty is never really a mistake. There is a truth about what you believe, and lying to yourself about it cannot give the best results. But even in that case, if a person finds true peace, it's hard to argue that he should go after greater truth. Even the love the truth is a belief that you can choose to have or not.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by Dov - 07 Oct 2012 04:44

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Agreed, Nederman, and CC too! Will try to apply that now, be"H.

Bob found the "truth" and is at peace - now he is a Christian...could happen, no? Hey, it probably happens every day. So?

Here is my point, after a short hakdomah:

In recovery from addiction and in finding Truth in general, there are some who demand going a way that hardly any else goes. 'Organized Religion' turns them off terribly - "If a *group* is doing it, then count me out!". Anything that involves other people is untrustworthy to them, for many reasons that are valid to them.

And some searching people see Orthodoxy as a strong point - one that helps them know if they are just following out of convenience...after all, with a little humility and searcher can see that comfort - whether emotional, philosophical, financial, or social - twists our minds to see the truth in the easier way. And twisting for any reason is treif to them. They want a life of truth and see a Rule Book as the only way to get there.

Most do a bit of both, being part of an organized religion - but in a disorganized way..."the way of every man is straight in his own eyes", or as R' Tzvi-Meyer Zilverberg (and lhbc'l, R' Noach Weinberg a"h) put it, we tend to see our own selves as centrist/moderate, and most others as more toward the good or goofy extremes". I am promoting either side here, but here is what I'm getting at:

In choosing a group or tool for finding the Truth, it is probably a good idea to look for a success record. Torah has a very good success record at growing decent people.

When it comes to helping drunks get sober, I do not know what success record Torah nor any particular therapy or book has. But I *do* see many, many sober drunks who claim AA showed them the way. And it did not turn them Christians, Jews, or whatever. It made them fathers, mothers, whatever they believed they were *supposed* to be.

And the reason that AA and the 12 steps do not produce Christians is simply because organized religion is not what the steps are about at all. They are not about any kind of religion at all. They are a chance to study *the most important mesechta of all*: the truth about ourselves. Or what some sifrei mussar called "meseches atzmecha".

If you, Reb Dovid, want to make a recovery program that creates *frum* Jews - then you have made self-honesty a *secondary* goal. And for an addict, it does not typically work that way. It's putting the cart before the horse. Instead, when a Jewish drunk becomes *really* honest with himself (which can **only** happen if he is first sober) then he comes to see the Truth of Torah much more clearly. For the Torah *is* true!

Sadly, when non-addicts try to apply 12 steps to their lives, they get all confused. They confuse religion with recovery. But they are not sick! The only fuel of the steps is the drunk's natural motivation to save his or her life from the dustbin of history. Who else would let go of a resentment or desire and depend on G-d? Very few. Most average religious folks see trusting G-d with their personal lives as an *obligation* - not as a real personal need. That's why so many goyim achieve the total dependence on G-d in AA, even though they have never seen a Torah...while so many frum people who possess the True Torah do not: they don't **need** to! Sure, we are told we need to need to - but until a person or his wife or child has cancer, G-d forbid, they do not often really need to need G-d.

Sorry.

To recap:

Religion is for meaning. 12 steps is for sanity. They are completely different.

Unfortunately, so many people use twisted logic and get their undies all bunched up by making the silly inference that this is to say that Religion has no sanity in it, or that the principles behind the 12 steps cannot grow out of religion. Nonsense.

The truth is found in the Torah - but is our **honesty** found in Torah?

No, it is not.

Hashem's honesty is.

Our honesty is found in **us**.

It's only in us - as long as we want it and work for it. Goyim can have it as well as Jews. It is a skill that *can* be learned or cultivated through Torah - but is not guaranteed by it nor by any book. And we addicts are so full of lies that actually lying is much more our ikkar problem than anything remotely related to 'kedushas haBris'! Especially us *frum* porn users - we hide and fake all day long and with everyone. It is the frum porn user's way of life...lying. So openness and sharing the truth of ourselves with others is the bedrock of recovery in the 12 steps way.

I believe that reading a book - even the *Torah* - cannot give that to anyone. Boruch Hashem for that - for if it could be, then the addicts would not need G-d. This is the *p'soless* that becomes our *schach* - our relationship with Hashem *grows out of our mistakes*. Very beautiful, especially on Succos.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by nederman - 07 Oct 2012 07:00

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I would like to know the real numbers. The guy at [orange-papers.org](http://orange-papers.org) actually got the stats for chips given away at AA and the results are posted there, like what's the probability of being sober for a year etc. I don't think the results are impressive there. I have been to SA and I have seen a lot of people come and then disappear. I saw several people relapse after years of sobriety. One guy relapsed and then he lost his family. The only way to discuss this topic is to know the numbers, and I don't think we are going to know them. Usually the reaction is "that guy didn't make it because he didn't put in the effort." And I don't think that's wrong. I think it's a self-selecting group and it doesn't work very well, but still the only question that really counts is whether it's working for me. I was pretty happy in SA, sobriety was good, and I left for other reasons.

I do not think that going to SA makes people Christians. If you need the 12-step program it's because you have a belief that desiring sex makes you worthless and that is a Christian belief, so you are just joining a group to which you belong already. However the people in the group could be Christians, and you could have reservations about that. Often they are clergymen because addicts are people who have a strong moral judgement on themselves so by definition they are religious people (a phenomenon that is usually mistaken to mean that addiction is a spiritual challenge.) But if you are associating only with Jews then this problem isn't there.

It seems obvious to me that 12-step is a religion, so much so that I think for Christians to go to SA is a big improvement. They are right that they are looking for a faith that works. But if it makes you sober and it makes you recover so what? Rabbis know this. They cringe when they hear that someone goes to SA, but if it works are you going to tell them not to go?

As public policy surrender is a disaster. It makes people believe that they are powerless, so if at first they don't believe in SA pretty soon it becomes their only choice because powerless people need mommy. And powerlessness is not okay as public policy. As in all things, we Jews did it first, with nedarim. And nedarim are frowned upon. The nazir is a kadosh but he is also a choteh because he has not accepted that he is a rasha. A rasha can do teshuva. But someone who eternally tells himself he is not a rasha can never do teshuva. He goes to meetings instead.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by rebdovid - 07 Oct 2012 15:53

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Since there were a few lengthy posts and it is erev Yom Tov I will respond in short. And G-D

willing will respond more after Yom Tov.

The Yesod Hayesods of a 12 step program is that we are sick, and we have no control over our actions.

If you can stick to this question and actually answer it.

Where does this theory come from that we are sick? when does one become sick? I.e. what does he have to do to consider himself sick and not a regular sinner.

Just because you cannot find a source in Torah for a theory doesn't mean it doesn't exist, you and I may lack the proper knowledge.

It's not a matter of philosophy, it's a matter of a belief system that directly impacts our actions, if you don't believe in it, then it doesn't work. Meaning if I don't believe that I am sick then I cannot surrender.

(btw surrendering to G-D is what yiddishkeit is all about.)

[li]Torah is not knowledge is an action based religion, "Hammase hu haikor".

- "Lo nitana Torah lemalchei Hashors" Torah was not given to angles it was given to us living in this dark world surrounded with lies beginning with ourselves.

Part of what makes Torah emese Torah is that although one is required to follow what Hashem wants regardless of his own will, one has an equal obligation to learn and understand and question.

This is a response to Dov from Friday afternoon.

There are plenty of people like me who struggle with SA and yes they know they have a problem and would like to fix it, if you cannot answer the above question then perhaps (I will borrow a term you used) then admit you cannot and perhaps find someone else who can.

I may not continue to ask these questions here but rest assured there many many people like myself who question the core of SA 12 step program and need answers to get them sober avoiding the questions won't make the questions go away.

Please don't answer me that only when you hit rock bottom will you turn to the 12 step program since I doubt anyone wants to hit rock bottom.

A Gut Moed.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by rebdovid - 07 Oct 2012 16:21

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Just to add once more it seems to me that the 12 step program is a distraction from yiddishkeit. It doesn't have to be. It should not be.

Another point.

" Zoch nasses lo sam hachaim lo zoch nasseh lo sam hamoves" If you merited then Torah becomes a drug of life if not it becomes poison.

If Torah in the first place is a tool to get high or to distract you from you own issues then it's a selfish Torah and has nothing to do with G-D.

If you learn Torah with Hashem in mind then Torah becomes a drug of life, you are learning Torah not because this teaches you anything(of course it does but you are aware there is a deeper reason) not becomes of anything but because this is Hashem's Torah and I have a special zechus to have something to do with Hashem's Torah then it becomes a source of life.

The idea that many frum people have tried Torah and that didn't help them with Sex Addiction, this is not a reflection on torah it usually means we lack the means to properly mold Torah into our lives. Perhaps the proof is of the many that Torah is their only guide don't scum to addiction etc.

Again if you want to use numbers and statistics I don't think the numbers favor 12 step program. statistics are not good in this case for a simple reason if you have 100 people that SA worked for them for example and 500 people that it didn't, but they didn't work the program then it proves nothing. since you are not comparing apples with apples. And since we can never know how much a person really put into the program since it's an internal matter there is no way to really determine statistically whether SA is a valid program.

To most people who are really concern about changing their lives and stopping this addiction, stopping this destructive behavior over rides anything else.

And if there is a chance that the 12 step program works then they will go with it.

I don't question whether 12 step program works or not, though it's quite clear that it doesn't work for everyone. I think the questions I raised earlier need to be answered and have never been sufficiently answered, this will directly help many frum addicts.

A Gut Moed to you all and good luck in being clean regardless of what you choose.

Remember that Torah and Mitzvot should and are not a contradiction to you being sober unless you make it that way.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by mifatfait - 08 Oct 2012 20:50

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?  
Posted by Dov - 10 Oct 2012 04:08

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Hard time reading that in this fornats - will try, thanks.

Im in the middle of a response to "Reb Dovid", maybe tomorrow be"H

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?  
Posted by Holy Yid - 15 Oct 2012 09:02

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[ChaimCharlie wrote on 16 Feb 2012 23:44:](#)

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standard approaches that work for everyone else. True, all the 12 steps have there source, but

what is the source for the source of it all, the basic attitude of addiction as a sickness? Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Please let me know what you think.

Mahral Nisiv Hateshuva writes that for Rebbi Eliezar ben do'doiya to do teshuva he had to die. For one who is engrossed in the sin of lust cannot be freed of it entirely while they are alive.

that sounds like a lust addict to me.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by Holy Yid - 15 Oct 2012 09:04

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The truth is that for many of us here it is not a matter of where we find a Torah source. We are hopeless and this is the only hope we know of. it is not a religious matter - it is a matter of life and death.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by nederman - 16 Oct 2012 02:48

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[ChaimCharlie wrote on 16 Feb 2012 23:44:](#)

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Please let me know what you think.

Why, it's the nazir.

The nazir is sober through fear. The 12-step program also works through fear of embarrassment, it keeps you committed to staying on our toes to make the phone call or surrender.

I did that for five years. I had a neder to confess and regret lewd thoughts ASAP. I was clean for five years after masturbating for twenty and using porn for years.

So I think it's the nazir.

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Re: Where is Hilchos Addiction?

Posted by Dov - 16 Oct 2012 04:16

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[nederman wrote on 16 Oct 2012 02:48:](#)

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I did that for five years. I had a neder to confess and regret lewd thoughts ASAP. I was clean for five years after masturbating for twenty and using porn for years.

So I think it's the nazir.

What you are saying here, nederman, is that *you* used fear to keep you sober. And you are putting that onto SA. But it is not true. I know so many who are not sober out of fear - though many come to see that they were originally sober through fear...but not the fear of embarrassment in the group that you speak of. They came to see they were sober due to fear of acting out and getting into more trouble or emotional pain. Can you understand that? It is the pathway towards *integrity*. Pathways are not always that pretty, but they get somewhere better.

And I certainly cannot presume to judge why *others* are sober - whether it is fear that is really motivating them or not, as you have done. Yet I can suggest to you that projection is what is going on here. Since you operated through pride - and the fear of losing that precious pride of being a 'winner' in SA - it became the way you saw *others*. People like R Levi-Yitzchak of Berditchev taught that seeing the positive in others causes one to be moved *l'kaf zechus* oneself, and for him to also see the goodness in himself, too.

And the opposite is true, as well.

Maybe that is not your deal at all. I am just suggesting a possibility.

Regardless, I hope you leave SA alone. You cannot be smart enough to know what is motivating the majority of these people, and neither can I.

And as far as successful recovery in SA, I can safely say that most of the guys I know who are sober actually enjoy making those calls for they know they will be liberated through them. And true respect in SA -if there is any - is through freely admitting character defects and shortcomings. And one can always leave SA, AA, etc. And save themselves further 'embarrassment'...plenty do. Perhaps one reason is because they never grow up and get over the 'Joe program image' thing.

And anyway, failure is not real embarrassment. *Behaving* like a sicko myself *and hiding it* is the only real embarrassment. As Rav Amram chasida put it, (and I paraphrase) "I'd rather be embarrassed in front of people all my life than be a jerk before Hashem for a moment." The only real embarrassment is *doing wrong*.

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