

Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by boruch - 18 Mar 2009 21:25

[battleworn wrote on 18 Mar 2009 16:36:](#)

Think you can do this without the 12 steps groups? Do you think that you can serenely learn the Eibishter's Torah while the yetzer hora disturbs you with the most profane temptations? I wish you the best of luck, but it is at very least, much easier said than done. And it is certainly a lot easier to do it a lot more effectively by joining a 12 step group.

I've kept silent on this issue for a long time for two reasons. First of all, I try very hard to avoid confrontation. I've learned from a lot of experience that debate gets you nowhere at best. So, as much as I have said on this forum, there's just as much that I've refrained from saying.

Second of all, before commenting, I took a lot of time to make sure I really understood the issue properly.

It's plainly obvious, that the 12 step groups are an absolutely amazing thing.

Battleworn, since that first quote was from me, I'll say a few things.

Firstly, I apologize to you Yaakov for having gotten into a vikuach with you on your thread. I certainly meant well, but at the time I did not at all anticipate how it would come across. There is a time, place and way to share a message and the key to making sure that the message is on target is to focus totally on the person with whom you want to share it. I did not realize that then and I realize that more now.

Secondly, since I created a discussion of the steps and the entire system as first practiced by Alcoholics Anonymous, the steps, the sponsors and the groups, I am going to ask you Yaakov for a little patience to allow me to undo some of what I posted earlier.

The first thing I want to share is how that system is changing the way I am posting on this forum.

But before I do that I need to share with you how I have come to see an approach that was after all is said and done, totally conceived by goyim.

The Maharshal in teshuvos (98) said that the author of the sefer hakrisus, the Rash Mikinon, had studied all of the hidden mysteries of Kabbala and yet, when he davened, he davened like a one-day-old baby.

What could a one-day-old baby possibly teach Rash Mikinon that he did not know from Kabbala?

I will tell you how I now understand it. There is knowledge in all its complexity. And then there is behavior. Someone who has all the knowledge of hilchos shechita who has never seen a shechita will have no concept of how to shecht. That is shimush. Learning the behavior.

So knowledge of tefila is in Kabbala, but learning how to behave? Rash Mikinon chose a one-day-baby as his model.

Why?

There are two things about a one-day-old baby.

1) He is totally dependent on his parents and has no hope of taking care of himself.

2) He only has one option of self-expression. He cannot choose how to approach his problems. How to present them. What words and expressions to use. No complications. He just opens his mouth and cries. Straight from the heart, honest and direct.

That's how Rash Mikinon davened. With the same total dependence on Hashem and with the same simplicity as a one-day-old baby.

Now, if we wanted to visualize for ourselves, the behavior of a one-day-old baby we could walk in to any maternity ward anywhere in the World. The baby doesn't have to be Jewish. It could be a Mexican baby, a Vietnamese baby, it makes no difference whatsoever.

That's exactly how I understand the original AA groups and the 12 steps. The alcoholics of AA were, just like the one-day-old baby. They were totally desperate, they knew that Hashem was their last and only hope and they knew how they needed to come humbly to Hashem for His help. They needed an approach so simple that even a drunk could get it.

Now, we Frum Yidden are not short on knowledge of how to Return to Hashem. We may not be Rash Mikinon but we do have Shaarei Teshuva of Rabbeinu Yonah, we do have hilchos teshuva from the Rambam. B"H knowledge we have in plentiful supply. And knowledge of hilchos teshuva we will not find among goyim, Torah bagoyim al taamin. But where are we addicts to learn how an addict who is returning should behave? Certainly not from a one-day-old baby.

I have found that, as a Frum Yid, I can learn the *behavior* with which an addict should return to Hashem from the early founders of AA. I can learn a set of behaviors so simple that even *this* drunk (me) could get it and implement it.

Does it matter whether the AA founders were Jewish? Absolutely not. Whether they were American, Mexican or Vietnamese? Absolutely not.

Certainly the AA founders wrote the steps in English and certainly they were to an extent influenced in some of their external presentation of the steps by their religion and culture. But in essence the 12 steps represent a Path of Return to Hashem so simple that even a drunk could get it. That's why it can work for me too.

And if you want to see the steps working, you need to look no further than the latest change in my style of posting.

When I wrote that piece above I had not gone beyond working steps 1 through 3, and most importantly, I had not read the primary text of Alcoholics Anonymous, commonly referred to as the AA Big Book (it's available online, in PDF and as a Palm DOC). In SA, the working assumption from the beginning has been that whatever is true for alcohol and liquor is true for lust. They commonly read directly from the Big Book, replacing the words alcohol and liquor with the word lust, and replacing the word alcoholic with sexaholic.

Today, having read the AA Big Book and working currently on all 12 steps, these excerpts from page 65 and on best capture how I have learned about self-will and it's impact on my life as a whole and even my posts on this forum:

"The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful...

What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well...

He decides to exert himself more. He becomes, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit him...

Is he not, even in his best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?"

Until now, in my posts on the forum *I have always been most mindful and have focused on how I wanted to post*, even though, and as much as, to a certain extent I have also tried to bear in mind, after the fact, people's reaction to my posts.

Being brutally honest with myself, as the AA founders say they were, much as I had taken notice of how people responded, I was still not getting beyond the description above in the Big Book. As the Big Book describes, my relationships, as my posts on the forum, were often self-serving and defined on my own terms, even when I thought I was being helpful.

Now I realize the difference and B'Ezras Hashem I will do whatever I need to in order to post with much more patience and with much more thought and attention to how others need to hear the message.

[battleworn wrote on 18 Mar 2009 16:36:](#)

But listen to this: To me it's seems clear that going to R' Tvi Meir *instead* of the 12 groups, is **at least a 100 times as amazing**. So why don't I push R' Tvi Meir, like some people push the groups?

The answer is, because I try not to project myself on to other people. In my humble opinion this truly wonderful forum could use a little more open-mindedness (I'm not talking at all about Rabeinu Guard) Just because ploni didn't have emunah before he went to the groups, it doesn't mean that everyone is like that. Just because Almoni suffered abuse, it doesn't mean that we all did. Etc... Personally, I don't believe that the groups are appropriate for ykv at all (The fundamental differences between him and boruch are quite obvious to me) But I know I could be wrong.

Battleworn, now that I have read the primary text on the 12 steps I can finally express what I had been unsuccessfully trying to say. Obviously different people are inspired in different ways and obviously you cannot stuff everyone in the same mold. But that is not the issue at all. What I was trying to share with Yaakov is something I later found in the AA Big Book describing the experience in the late 1930s of the newcomers who joined AA and worked the steps, p85,

"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone--even lust. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in lust. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward lust has been given us without any thought or effort on our

part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation."

So that's the claim printed in 1939. Is it true? Well, as I explained earlier on this thread, *before I had seen the piece in the Big Book*, I was most certainly *fighting* my addiction, I had been for 36 years. And losing. Then *before I had seen the piece in the Big Book* came SA and the day I called my sponsor. He told me to stop *fighting*, to surrender to my Higher Power and in a moment of temptation just work steps 1-3.

Of course, as many people on this forum have written the last thing on their minds in a moment of temptation is 12 steps, let alone the presence of mind to use them. And I was originally no different.

But I have since found that when I made my recovery the single most important thing in my life and I joined SA, when I took part in a weekly Back to Basics Step meeting that works through all 12 steps in 4 weeks in addition to a regular meeting, when I met and learned from people with 15 years of sobriety and more, when I was working the steps together with everyone else, much as soldiers march in step and find it easier to march together, doing the steps became the most natural thing in the World. And *before I had seen the piece in the Big Book* I experienced what I posted earlier in this thread. That I no longer needed to fight.

Are there other methods that are so effective in turning a losing fight into no battle at all? I can only tell you of one method like that, doing the 12 steps by working them with a sponsor and active 12 step group meeting attendance. If anyone else has another method with the same results, I would certainly be interested to hear about it. Not because I am looking for another method. The 12 steps are helping me change in many areas and I would not trade them in. But recovery from addiction is extremely important to me and I am interested in all things Recovery.

Now you raise a legitimate question, Battleworn. Are the groups for everyone? Is the SA 12 step program which is directly and totally modeled on the complete AA 12 step program for everyone? The best way to know the answer to that is to read the first 164 pages of the [Big Book](#). You can download it as a [PDF](#) or put it on your Palm OS device from this [link](#).

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by waydown - 13 Nov 2015 16:21

Cords,

An excellent thread and thanks for brining it up. I must admit I did not read thru all 9 pages of the thread. Rather than knocking the 12 steps I wonder what if a guy is just not ready for the 12 steps? One of the steps is realize life is unmanagable. Say life is managable? Or say one is not 100% fully committed to rid himself of lust. But he knows its wrong. He knows he shouldn't continue dopping himself. What should he do??? I don't know if I am the latter or not. But certainly as I posted in other threads is my life unmanageable? NO. As is often said. The 12 steps doesn't work if you are only doing it because you fear g-d and you know its wrong. Rather you to be in an unmanagable rock bottom state.

So now what??

And so is there an alternative plan thats perhaps not as effective but more open to people not "holding" by the 12 steps??? Or is there no hope?

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Posted by cordnoy - 13 Nov 2015 16:35

[waydown wrote:](#)

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There's always hope.

there better be!

Read the thread.

b'hatzlachah

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