

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 the.guard - 21 Mar 2009 22:23

I moved this thread from Yaakov's Log on the "Wall of Honor" board, to here. It's a wonderful thread, but it doesn't really belong on Yaakov's Log - especially since he hasn't even been part of this particular discussion really.

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

Posted by battleworn - 23 Mar 2009 12:53

I thought I wasn't going to reply here, but now I changed my mind. I see that although I yearn for the madreiga where I could just let it all roll right of my back, I clearly have not gotten there yet. I want to make it very clear that I do not think there's any to'eles to this debate and the only reason I right the following is to get it off my chest instead of keeping it inside.

- 1) We should not express our own opinions on addiction for those who are struggling.
- 2) We need to be humble enough to realize that we are not experts.
- 3) You have stated opinions about everything from SA groups and 12 steps to Rav Tzvi Meir.

Here are my answers:

1) No I don't agree at all. We definitely should express our opinions. That's the point of the forum ,there's even a special section called "What works for me".

I agree that we should not stuff our opinion down other people's throats.

I also agree that we should not express opinions which can jepordize someone's chances of getting help. That is why I (unlike some other people) have allways tried to be careful and to think before posting what the effect of my post might be. IF ANYONE FEELS THAT I EVER POSTED AN OPINION WHICH DISCOURAGED THEM FROM GOING TO THE GROUPS, PLEASE SPEAK UP.

2) Yes I agree but I have absolutely no idea what it has to do with anything. If you mean to say that I need to be humble enough to recognize that R' Twerski is not an expert, then of-course I disagree.

3)Being that I don't know exactly what you're reffering to, I'll try to cover all the possibilities.

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.

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.

So I want to make the following suggestion: Let's all continue to share our wisdom and experiences -others can learn a tremendous amount from them- but please don't stuff other people in to your mold. Thank you!

I made it very clear that I'm not pushing anyone anywhere. All I did was use R' T' M' as an example of how I don't tell other people what to do. I did not discuss people who are suffering and in addition I even said that I may be wrong about yaakov who is B'H **not** suffering. I Also made it clear that I'm not interested in debating anyone.

But boruch and Rabeinu Guard felt thought that it would be le'to'eles to force me to discuss what I don't want to.

(a) 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.

Please read that again. He B'chcodo u'vi'atzmo is asking me. Is this communist Russia over here? You ask me a question and then you have taynos on me for answering you honestly? You definitely could have kept quite; there was nothing forcing you to ask me this question.

If you're asking me, the answer is a resounding yes. For me, learning Tzidkas Hatzadik of R' Tzadok Hachohen provided me with all that and a lot more. (I had very special siyata dishmaya to understand and connect with the sefer and I'm not ready to suggest that it will work for others.) Going to R' Tvi Meir did a whole lot more than that. The advantage of that over the groups is -in my opinion- so great that it can't be described.

Notice that I made it very clear: "If you're asking me"

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.

Again it was not my choice to discuss this but rather yours

For now I'll just trust Rabbi Twerski. The following is a quote from Rabeinu Guard.

Quote

Rabbi Twerski agrees that the groups are not for everyone. He suggests that someone struggling start first with the 12-Step phone group that Elya arranged, and the other tools on our website, and if that doesn't work and he is sincere and determined that he **MUST** break free, and he feels that it's a matter of life and death for him - then he is ready for the groups.

I did NOT offer any opinion over here. These are Guards words, not mine! I thought that was clear!

Apparently Guard misunderstood the point of this quote, and thought it was about the first question [(a) above]

So he posted this:

The quote from Rabbi Twerski above was only in the context of two very real fears.

- 1) that someone who is not sincere may learn WORSE things from the groups.
- 2) someone not sincere may breach the anonymity of others in the group and cause them untold suffering.

However, Rabbi Twerski still holds that, other than these two concerns, the groups and the steps are the best and most reliable way to break free of this addiction.

It seemed to me to imply that R' Twerski holds that the steps are lichatchila which I know not to be the case. Being that this was said in a discussion with me, I could not remain silent. So I responded NOT with my opinion but with plain facts: A quote from guard and simple undisputed Torah Hashkafa

Quote

The 12 Steps groups around the world are intentionally mixed, even though it is known that the opposite sexes do trigger each other in group support - especially for addicts. And yes, this can -and has - led to trouble, but only with those who hadn't really hit bottom or weren't really ready for the groups yet...

HOWEVER - and this is a big HOWEVER, as frum people, we can't take these kind of risks, even if there is some benefit to be found in it. The risk of even one person falling is not worth

the gain.

I want to clarify a Hashkafa point over here. For Holy Jews that were commanded by Hashem "Kidoshim tih'yu" the problem is not only the risk of falling. Kol makom she'atoh motzei GEDER ervah atoh motzai kidusha. The Chofetz Chayim said: the more geder; the more kedusha and siyata dishmaya. I think that if one goes to the groups unnecessarily he's probably over an issur di'oraisoh of kidoshim tih'yu. So even if someone doesn't fall, it's clearly not the ideal solution.

To this I would add the following quote from R' Twerski himself:

There is indeed the risk of "crazy house romances." Single gender meetings on sexual addiction is most advisable. There is also a risk of exploring the ideas one may hear.

There are deaths due to antibiotics or surgery, yet this risk does not stop people from availing themselves of the most effective medical treatment.

It is very clear that R' Twerski is recommending the groups not because he thinks they're lechatchila but rather because there's no other choice. This is NOT my opinion it's R' Twerski's.

I also saw that both Guard and Boruch were trying to shy away from R' Twerski's opinion that the groups are not for everyone. So I ASKED Guard to clarify.

I'm not sure what exactly is granted and what is not. If one did in-fact hit bottom and is ready to totally surrender BUT he has the option of doing it in a lichatchila way instead of going to the groups, then what do you say? And what would R' Twerski say? And what in the world do you mean by "maybe"?

Notice that I asked: **IF** there's a different option what would he say. I was not disscusing weather there is or not.

What constitutes a hard-core addict?

Someone who has reached their breaking point. See today's Chizuk e-mail (#434)

This is pathetic. You can't fool me. I read the book and according to his criteria no addict will ever come to the forum or website.

At this point Guard decided to challenge me about R'T' M'(This may have been due to the above misunderstanding)

And the reason for it is, as Rabbi Twerski once wrote:

- I have attended many mussar shiurim. Everybody understands the importance of mussar, but I doubt if many people walk away with the feeling, "If I deviate from this, I'm dead!" A person sincere in recovery realizes that his very life depends on following the program, not theoretically, but very practically. If people would accept mussar that way, it would work.

- No one in any mussar shiur I attended has ever spoken up and said, "I tried to do things my way, and I fell right back into my old ways." That helps bring home the message that one's life depends on following the program.

- I don't recall anyone in a mussar shiur being so touched that they began to cry. It happens often in the 12 step program.

- No one in a mussar shiur shares strength, hope and courage.

Rav Tzvi Meyer's Shiurim may be super-powerful, but I don't know if they have these above ingredients which are so vital to recovery for the hard-core addict.

You should realize that I saw this quote from R' Twerski a long time ago, and I didn't say anything. But now Guard felt that it would be beneficial to ask me if R' T' M' has these ingredients. So being that as far as I know, this is not communist Russia, I again answered honestly.

- I have attended many mussar shiurim. Everybody understands the importance of mussar, but I doubt if many people walk away with the feeling, "If I deviate from this, I'm dead!" A person sincere in recovery realizes that his very life depends on following the program, not theoretically, but very practically. If people would accept mussar that way, it would work.

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This is clearly the way yaakov and I and many others feel without having gone to any groups.

Quote

No one in any mussar shiur I attended has ever spoken up and said, "I tried to do things my way, and I fell right back into my old ways." That helps bring home the message that one's life depends on following the program.

Yes it helps, and so does your holy forum in the same way only better and more balanced.

Quote

- I don't recall anyone in a mussar shiur being so touched that they began to cry. It happens often in the 12 step program.

That's how I know that R' Twerski was apparently never by R' Tzvi Meir

Quote

- No one in a mussar shiur shares strength, hope and courage.

I guess he's referring strictly to mussar as opposed to chizuk or chasidus. I think it's safe to say that there's more strength, hope and courage in a single shiur from R' T' M' than all the AA SA SLAA etc. groups that ever met.

Quote

Rav Tzvi Meyer's Shiurim may be super-powerful, but I don't know if they have these above ingredients which are so vital to recovery for the hard-core addict.

Not only do they have all the ingredients, they have a lot lot more.

I didn't claim to be an expert of any sort, all I did was answer the question that I WAS ASKED!

You are unfamiliar with SA groups and so it does not make sense to discuss criteria about them. You probably don't realize that until the time that you have been a part of SA you will most certainly be equally unfamiliar with the steps as long as and until you see how to do them lemaaseh and only then could you understand. Guard gets the steps much better than you do, ask him if I did not have to explain to him a fundamental part of step 3.

Are you nuts? Because I'm unfamiliar with the steps, I can't ask Guard to better explain his/R' Twerski's criteria for we should encourage to go?

Is there any sizeable data on recovery rates of struggling addicts who listen to Rav Tzvi Meir? If there is not, then suggesting it to someone who is being nichshal instead of a proven method is less than bedieved it's assidin liten es hadin.

Who did I suggest it to? Guard?

The phone conferences are certainly bediebed as I clearly explained, no-one would date over the phone instead of in-person.

Again with the phone conferences! I have never ever said a word about the phone conferences. If you have a problem with R' Twerski, take it up with him what lemaan Hashem do you want from my life?

None of us would walk into a Beis Hamedrash and start giving shiur on a sugya that we had not adequately prepared. On this forum it's pikuach nefesh.

When did I ever do such a thing? Maybe you're confusing with R' Twerski.

I have to run now so I can't check this thing over, sorry.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 23 Mar 2009 13:48

There's a battle to be fought and you are one of the generals.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by Ano Nymous - 23 Mar 2009 14:08

Can I be a general too?

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 23 Mar 2009 14:59

Hail to general Ano/Ammo!

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 24 Mar 2009 01:08

OK, Battleworn, your post was very enlightening, I am glad you answered and I am going to make this extremely simple, for you and anyone else reading this.

On the one hand there is:

Only if you change your name from Ano to AMMO. A general needs AMMO to fight.
1) Your **personal experience of what works for you** which is **what you know at first hand about how methods that you have actually used have worked for you.**

Then on the other hand there are your opinions of:

2) What you believe about other methods that you have not used.

3) Your opinions on how methods that you have not used compare with methods you have used.

4) Your opinions about whether methods that you have not used should be used.

On number 1, **what works for you** you have a lot of value to offer this forum that only you can offer.

You, for example, have an excellent opportunity to describe, in even the vaguest terms, if you prefer not to go into detail, how your struggle was before R' Tzodok and how it was afterwards. You could describe what it was that you believe did it for you and how.

The same would apply equally to Rav Tzvi Meir. Just hypothetically, if this were the case, you could describe how you used to be constantly fighting the yetzer hora of temptation every time you would be reminded of something and how after going regularly to Rav Tzvi Meir you would just think of this or that thought and the temptation would subside.

That is what I was eager to hear from you, that is no doubt what others want to hear from you, and that is what I am still waiting to hear from you. And when it comes to that, you are the undisputed expert. In the AA system they call that sharing **experience, strength and hope**. When you take that route there will be no debates at all. How could anyone in their right mind possibly argue with your experience of what worked for you?

That's what leads to achdus on the forum.

Here, in contrast, is what leads to debates, of your own making:

battleworn]

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.[/quote]

Imagine that you had never learned sefer mesilas yeshorim in your life.

Imagine that you saw on a website that it is a sefer on the ten steps in the Braisa of R' Pinchos b' Yoir.

Imagine that you looked at that list of 10 steps posted on that website without reading one word of the text of the mesilas yeshorim itself.

Imagine that you saw on that website a brief discussion, written by a contemporary author, of what chaburas and vaadim that work on mesilas yeshorim can achieve as opposed to other methods.

Would you feel qualified based on the list of steps in the braisa and the description of the contemporary author to express opinions on what could be achieved by learning mesilas yeshorim? Would you feel qualified to compare what such chaburas and vaadim could achieve as compared to what you could get from Rav Tzvi Meir?

I have a potentially surprising comment to your possible answer to the above question. It makes absolutely no difference what your answer would be. Regardless of whether or not you would feel qualified, you would be unqualified. Why? Not because you are too young. Not because you do not have sufficient experience. But because you have nothing useful to offer with your opinions on matters with which you are entirely unfamiliar.

Battleworn, you do not know this and it should not be necessary for me to explain it to you, but the list of 12 steps were never a program in their own right. The fact that you see them posted all over the web, including on this site, shows only one thing, how superficial society is today and how much people crave instant gratification.

Just consider what the 12 step system actually is.

The Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) system that everyone refers to as the 12 steps actually comprises of three parts:

1) Attending group meetings at which much of the time was spent on public readings from AA literature and the rest on individuals sharing their stories, focusing on solutions and not problems, often connected to what they had just read, on [i]how the AA system was working for them[/i]. As above they shared their experience, strength and hope. (As a rule they kept away from expressing personal opinions).

2) Having a sponsor, a fellow member, usually with a significant sobriety period, who supports and guides the AA member on working the 12 steps.

3) Working the Steps into daily life.

The AA member does not need to read the AA Book to work the system, the AA member does not even have to know how to read. He hears 20-25 minutes of AA literature read aloud in each meeting and many of his fellow members, especially his sponsor have read the book. He gets the system without reading the AA Book or any other AA literature by learning from everyone else.

Today many recovery groups such as NA - Narcotics Anonymous, OA - Overeaters Anonymous and SA - Sexaholics Anonymous use the same system for their respective addictions.

However, anyone who has neither read the literature, nor done the system as part of a group, not only does not have any personal experience of the AA 12 Step system, they have no idea whatsoever it is.

They have no more idea of what the system is from looking through an online list of 12 steps

[than they could figure out the sefer mesilas yeshorim from the braysa of R' Pinchas ben Yoir.](#)

[Now, battleworn, you, Yaakov and many others on this site are not told this when you come on this site and it is not your fault. It is a fundamental problem with the site that Guard recognizes and he tells me it will be fixed in the near future.](#)

[But that is not even the point. Even if you had read the AA literature and even if you had knowledge of the system, since you have no experience of it, you are not offering an informed opinion when you try and discuss the merits of the AA system and when you try and compare it with methods with which you are familiar. And an uninformed opinion is worse than no opinion. Especially on a site where people are looking for excuses to not do what they need to be doing.](#)

[\[quote= wrote:](#)

You ask me a question and then you have taynos on me for answering you honestly? You definitely could have kept quiet; there was nothing forcing you to ask me this question.

If you're asking me, the answer is a resounding yes. For me, learning Tzidkas Hatzadik of R' Tzadok Hacohen provided me with all that and a lot more. Going to R' Tvi Meir did a whole lot more than that. The advantage of that over the groups is -in my opinion- so great that it can't be described.

So, battleworn once again, you say it gave you all that and a lot more. I was not asking for comparisons between a method you know and a method you don't. I wanted to hear from you with a little more detail than "all that" of what it did for you, not what you think that it gave you more than other methods of which you have no experience. Expressing your opinions on relative advantages over a method of which you have no experience is idle and uninformed speculation.

And battleworn, this forum is an opportunity for both you and Yaakov to learn one of the things that I learned from the Groups that you too can learn without having to actually go yourselves. When you focus on your own experience of "What Works for Me" you will be giving much more than opinions.

battleworn] It seemed to me to imply that R' Twerski holds that the steps are lichatchila which I know not to be the case.[/quote]

You are equating your understanding of Rabbi Twersky with your claimed knowledge of what he holds. If you actually knew what Rabbi Twersky held you would not have quoted Guard. You do not know what Rabbi Twersky holds, you think you know. Again, you never spoke to Rabbi Twersky about this, you have no first-hand knowledge of what he holds, all you have is your interpretation of what you believe that Rabbi Twersky holds. Now you may believe that your interpretation is well-informed and correct, but even if you were right, and you are most certainly wrong, recognizing the difference between knowledge and interpretation would save you much debate.

[quote= wrote:

Being that this was said in a discussion with me, I could not remain silent. So I responded NOT with my opinion but with plain facts: A quote from guard and simple undisputed Torah Hashkafa

You responded with your own reading into the quote from Rabbi Twersky and your own belief about Torah Hashkofo. Neither are plain and neither are facts. One plain fact is that there are conceivable circumstances in which the wrong person in the wrong group could lose out. Another plain fact is that you know nothing of the groups, nothing of the likelihood of problems in the groups and nothing at all about hashkofas haTorah on what risks are worth taking as is very obvious from this remark here:

[quote="battleworn]

The 12 Steps groups around the world are intentionally mixed, even though it is known that the opposite sexes do trigger each other in group support - especially for addicts. And yes, this can -and has - led to trouble, but only with those who hadn't really hit bottom or weren't really ready for the groups yet...

HOWEVER - and this is a big HOWEVER, as frum people, we can't take these kind of risks, even if there is some benefit to be found in it. The risk of even one person falling is not worth the gain.

I want to clarify a Hashkafa point over here. For Holy Jews that were commanded by Hashem "Kidoshim tih'yu" the problem is not only the risk of falling. Kol makom she'atoh motzei GEDER ervah atoh motzai kidusha. The Chofetz Chayim said: the more geder; the more kedusha and siyata dishmaya. I think that if one goes to the groups unnecessarily he's probably over an issur di'oraisoh of kidoshim tih'yu. So even if someone doesn't fall, it's clearly not the ideal solution.[/quote]

Before I speak about your lack of experience I will speak of my experience. I have gone to groups at one SA location and Shomer has gone to two other locations. There were no women at any of the meetings we have attended.

Getting back to the question itself, I assume that you do not think that you are HoRav Chaim Kanievsky and so you ought to realize that you are way out of your depth on she'eilos of this nature. You are suggesting that many addicts who are constantly being vaday nichshal in vaday arayos should across the board and as a rule avoid what has the best track record and the best chance of working for them because of the hypothetical risk that under the wrong conditions isolated addicts might be tempted to do **shelo kehogen and bring evil upon themselves**. The best geder erva is to get people who are constantly being nichshal in arayos to get the best treatment available.

Now it's not relevant how uninformed and misguided your comment was. It is not relevant that you call such ignorance "simple undisputed Torah Hashkofo". What is relevant is that you have no idea of the metzius of the nature of the various groups, that you do not know the halochos and hashkofos that are relevant to this question and yet you express opinions as if you are an authority on the subject.

What is relevant is that if instead of pontificating on issues on which you are totally unequipped to address you gave us some real details of your own experience with the methods you had tried and how they have helped you deal with your nisyonos we would all be better off.

[battleworn\]](#)

[At this point Guard decided to challenge me about R'T' M'\(This may have been due to the above misunderstanding\)](#)

[\[quote\]And the reason for it is, as Rabbi Twerski once wrote:](#)

[- I have attended many mussar shiurim. Everybody understands the importance of mussar, but I doubt if many people walk away with the feeling, wrote:](#)

You should realize that I saw this quote from R' Twerski a long time ago, and I didn't say anything. But now Guard felt that it would be beneficial to ask me if R' T' M' has these ingredients. So being that as far as I know, this is not communist Russia, I again answered honestly.

This is clearly the way yaakov and I and many others feel without having gone to any groups.

Ah, finally some experience. Please battleworn, when it came to your opinions, you did not spare us the word-count, if you would only give us half as many words on your experience with the musar groups, how you felt beforehand, how you felt at the time, how the musar groups have changed the way you deal with the addiction, then we would really be getting where we need to be.

[battleworn\] \[quote\] No one in any mussar shiur I attended has ever spoken up and said, wrote:](#)

Yes it helps, and so does your holy forum in the same way only better and more balanced.

So let us apply the message that should now be obvious. Your experience says that this holy forum does it. Your opinion, or rather since your opinion is based totally on ignorance, your prejudice, claims that it is better and more balanced. Which do you think we want, your experience or your prejudice?

[battleworn\]](#)

[\[quote\]](#)

[- I don't recall anyone in a mussar shiur being so touched that they began to cry. It happens often in the 12 step program.\[/quote\]](#)

[That's how I know that R' Twerski was apparently never by R' Tzvi Meir\[/quote\]](#)

[OK, and you were, so tell us more.](#)

[\[quote= wrote:](#)

- No one in a mussar shiur shares strength, hope and courage.

I guess he's referring strictly to mussar as opposed to chizuk or chasidus. I think it's safe to say that there's more strength, hope and courage in a single shiur from R' T' M' than all the AA SA SLAA etc. groups that ever met.

So go ahead, battleworn, and share the strength, hope and courage you got from there with us .

battleworn][quote]

Rav Tzvi Meyer's Shiurim may be super-powerful, but I don't know if they have these above ingredients which are so vital to recovery for the hard-core addict.[/quote]

Not only do they have all the ingredients, they have a lot lot more.

I didn't claim to be an expert of any sort, all I did was answer the question that I WAS ASKED![/quote]

You do not know and cannot know what they would do for wrote:

The phone conferences are certainly bedieved as I clearly explained, no-one would date over the phone instead of in-person.

Again with the phone conferences! I have never ever said a word about the phone conferences. If you have a problem with R' Twerski, take it up with him what lemaan Hashem do you want from my life?

You were the one who quoted Rabbi Twersky about the phone groups and said you would rely on his judgement on that.

[quote="battleworn][quote]

None of us would walk into a Beis Hamedrash and start giving shiur on a sugya that we had not adequately prepared. On this forum it's pikuach nefesh.[/quote]

When did I ever do such a thing? Maybe you're confusing with R' Twerski.[/quote]

No confusion here at all. Rabbi Twersky is a little older and wiser than you. True, he is not an addict, he doesn't know a lot about the groups and he has not always answered the questions in the clearest way, but at least what he wrote is largely based on experience and commonsense. By contrast, you, with all of your enthusiasm, have rushed to judgment, with neither knowledge nor experience.

So how can I make it more simple?

Sharing [b]experience strength and hope[/b], means sharing [b]what has worked for you[/b].

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by battleworn - 24 Mar 2009 11:53

I'm glad you got that off your chest, dear Battleworn. Now, let's move on!

As you can plainly see, Boruch won't let. By the way did he ever read my story?

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 13:11

Boruch, you can see Battleworn's VERY inspiring story [over here](#), and you can also see some of WHAT WORKED FOR HIM [over here](#).

Battleworn has much experience and he has shared a LOT of it with us over the past year. I ask you please Boruch, to answer him on the forum with utmost respect and love, as if you were talking to your best friend. After all, you and him are both searching only for the truth and how to best help people. And both of you are from Hashem's most precious and greatest warriors in this area of Shmiras Habris. There's no point in continually quoting what the other has said and then refuting it. Instead, both of you, I would just write things the way you see them, without quoting anything said in the past. (See my next post for something along the lines of what I mean).

Just one more comment Boruch, on what you wrote:

Rabbi Twersky ... is not an addict, he doesn't know a lot about the groups

Boruch, from what I understand, Rabbi Twerski is/was the head of one of the largest Alcohol rehab centers in the U.S and he has extensive and intimate knowlege on the groups and steps, having helped thousands of people through them. That is one of the biggest reasons that his guidance to us is so precious.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 13:26

Between the quotes and mutual recriminations above, I was able to take out some beautiful points from Boruch's post. I edited it a little, and I hope to post it on our site somewhere or send it as a Chizuk e-mail sometime:

The list of 12 steps were never a program in their own right. The fact that you see them posted all over the webshows only one thing, how superficial society is today and how much people crave instant gratification.

The Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) system that everyone refers to as the 12 steps actually comprises of three parts:

1) Attending group meetings, at which much of the time is spent on public readings (out-loud) from AA literature and the rest on individuals sharing their stories, focusing on solutions (and not problems), often connected to what they had just read, on how the AA system was working for them. And they shared their experience, strength and hope.

2) Having a sponsor, a fellow member, usually with a significant sobriety period, who supports and guides the AA member on working the 12 steps.

3) Working the Steps into daily life.

The AA member does not need to read the AA Book to work the system, the AA member does not even have to know how to read. He hears 20-25 minutes of AA literature read aloud in each meeting and many of his fellow members, especially his sponsor have read the book. He gets the system without reading the AA Book or any other AA literature, by simply learning from everyone else.

Today many recovery groups such as NA - Narcotics Anonymous, OA - Overeaters Anonymous and SA - Sexaholics Anonymous use the same system for their respective addictions.

However, anyone who has neither read the literature, nor done the system as part of a group, not only does not have any personal experience of the AA 12 Step system, they have no idea whatsoever it is.

They have no more idea of what the system is from looking through an online list of 12 steps than they could figure out the entire sefer mesilas yeshorim from the braysa of R' Pinchas ben Yoir (which contains ten steps, upon which the Mesilas Yesharim is based).

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

Posted by boruch - 24 Mar 2009 15:00

[guardureyes wrote on 24 Mar 2009 13:26:](#)

Between the quotes and mutual recriminations above

Guard, mussar taken, my tone was definitely too harsh, and as much as the inner "addict" in me could find 150 ways to be metaher the sheretz of kaas and gaava, you are 100% right.

To me there is one yesod in Yiddishkeit that demands and requires that we addicts and this addict, me, use the 12 steps.

Our own daas, yes this was my daas too originally and it is the daas of almost everyone on this site (which often falsely appears to us as daas Torah, see the Gr"o Mishlei 16:2 that our daas is possul and we should not rely on it at all) is that the addict needs more Torah and more Kedusha, and that is how we will be saved from our yetzer hora.

The Eibishter's daas is very different. As the novi says in Yeshaya (55:8,9):

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My thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not My ways, Says Hashem. Just as the Sky is higher than the Earth so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts.

The Rambam says in Hilchos Talmud Torah (4:1):

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One can only teach Torah to either a talmid that we know has appropriate behavior, or someone whose nature is not apparent (see Kesef Mishna). However, if a talmid is on a derech lo tova you do not teach him Torah, you first have to return him to the path of tov and guide him to the path of yashrus. Then we check that he is sound and only then do we teach him.

The Gemoro in Shabbos (31a) speaks of someone who has Torah without Yiras Shomayim:

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Rabbah bar Rav Huna said whoever has Torah without Yiras Shomayim is like the treasure keeper who has the keys to doors of the inner vault, but does not have the keys to the outer doors. How is he to get access to the treasure?

Rav Avigdor Miller Zt"l was once asked, the sefer Chovos Halevovos constantly refers to the chiyuv of hakoras hatov to Hakodosh Boruch Hu as being the yesod and basis for our chiyuv to do all mitzvos. The questioner asked, I did not ask Hashem to create me, so why should I be grateful to Him? Rav Avigdor Miller Zt"l answered that the Chovos Halevovos is only written for "mentschen" it was not written for someone who is bichlal not a "mentsch".

His answer was clear. The Chovos Halevovos assumes a certain madreigo, a certain level of character. If someone is so ungrateful that he cannot have gratitude for his life, the greatest gift imaginable, simply because he never asked for it then he is not even a mentsch.

The message is clear. Torah, Yiras Shomayim and Mussar all require as the Rambam says a minimum of behavior. They were written and given for "mentschen".

But as Rabbeinu Yonah says of the choteh in Shaarei Teshuva 1:10, and this certainly is true of an addict who has lost self-control:

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I have been like animals... and furthermore I have sunk to being less than an animal...

And there is no point fooling ourselves or making self-serving excuses that we only need to give ourselves more chizuk.

The one thing an addict who wants to cure himself needs much more than any chizuk is a good hard dose of honesty and a sobering dose of reality. Without brutal honesty the addict will never recover. So let us be brave and let us be honest.

Yes, we need to say this loud and clear:

We have been less than animals

Now that we have been honest, we need some more honesty and we need some action.

How is the addict who has sunk below the level of an animal supposed to get back to being at the level of a mensch?

It is not his kedusha, or his top floor that has a problem, it is not his Chochmas HaTorah, or his first floor and not even his Yiddishkeit, his basement, that is broken.

His very yesodos and foundations are broken, not only is he not a kodosh, not only is he not a talmid chochom, not only is he not a poshutte yid, he is not even a mentsch -- even a goy should not be a sex addict, he is less than a decent goy, less than an animal.

And I will say it myself, difficult as it is to say.

I was an addict for many many years, until only very very recently and for all that time I was not a kodosh, not a talmid chochom, not a poshutte yid, not even a mentsch - I was less than a decent goy, and even less than an animal.

And when the foundations are broken, when the yesodos are bad, we don't use the top floor or kedusha to build foundations, you don't use Torah to build foundations as the Rambam says in hilchos Talmud Torah, you don't use musar seforim that were written for mentschen, you need to go back to the very foundations that even goyim can understand and start rebuilding new foundations.

You need to go back, not to protim like mikva, tikkunim, chumras in zivug and shmiras ainayim which belong on the top floor of kedusha, not to klolim like limud haTorah which are for the first floor. Not to mussar seforim which are for the basement.

We addicts need the most basic yesodos of mentschlichkeit, we need the avnei yesod so basic that even sex addicts and alcoholics get them. We need to look out for which avnei yesod which basics of mentshlichkeit, which fundamental moral principles worked for addicts to help them recover.

The record is clear. The addicts who, in the first 20 years of AA, were the most successful in recovery, used, what AA literature again and again stresses are **moral principles so basic that every religion agrees to them.** As the AA motto goes, Keep it Simple.

That is how you build new foundations. With brutal honesty and absolute humility.

Yes, let us be very honest here. It is "passt nischt" for us choshuve yidden, many of whom feel we are talmidei chachomim to admit that we have been less than beheimos. It is "passt nischt" for us choshuve yidden, some of us, myself included, who felt that we were talmidei chachomim to admit that we need to recover like goyyishe addicts.

And Hakodosh Boruch Hu laughs at us, lovingly and says "and it was passt yoh, to be addicted to sex?"

So teireh brideren, dear brothers, I mean this from the very depths of my heart and I mean this out of love, let us stop fooling ourselves.

Whether we have recovered entirely from our addiction, whether we are in active recovery without recent relapse, whether are in active recovery following a recent relapse or whether we have not begun recovery at all. By all means let us not wait another day to build a path of kedusha, let us not wait another day, to build a path of Torah, let us not wait another day to build a path of mussar. But we do not want our efforts to be in vein. A building without foundations can be torn down by the first strong wind. We do not want chas vesholom to be vulnerable and to risk all of our efforts, to lose all of our Kedusha, Torah and mussar to the first relapse.

So let us not ignore the foundations of basic mentschlichkeit. Let us learn the lesson of the drunks of AA. Let us Keep it Simple.

The yetzer horo knows that once he can make it complicated he will win. The foundation of our binyan, of our migdol to fight the yetzer hora has to be made from steps so simple, so basic that you can do all 12 steps wherever you are, in any time or place, without any inherent madreigo or level required. Steps that are so yesodosdik that everyone, even the drunk, even this drunk, me, gets them.

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

Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 15:19

This post of yours, Boruch, is so beautiful, so enlightening and so true - that it brought TEARS to my eyes. You have literally shined a new light of understanding on this entire struggle for me and - I hope - for everyone on this forum!

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

Posted by aaron4 - 24 Mar 2009 15:51

I just read this thread from beginning to end and, at the risk of violating one of Boruch's rules (please disregard if I didn't understand it correctly) against expressing personal opinions on the forum, I LOVE EVERY WORD! Here's why (personal experience here, good old "experience, strength and hope"). It's clear that both Boruch and Battleworn have sweated for significant periods of time, investing tremendous energy, effort and life into understanding themselves, how they were affected by lust and how to overcome it. This is magnificent!!! This is what the forum is for. I received tremendous chizuk from reading this thread because I feel part of this group too. I too spend a lot of time every single day, thinking about how lust affected me and how to overcome it. I too put effort and toil into understanding myself and how to live the words "sur merah va'aseh tov". Feeling part of a group is a key to Recovery. In fact, it's a key to healthy living generally and is one of the main drawbacks of the free and open societies in which we live today – you can live on an island in the middle of millions of people and if you don't actively reach out to make yourself part of a community or group, you can lose out and risk falling into negative habits and behaviors. Here we share experience and insight and help each other by doing so, but similar to the AA member who is helped even without knowing how to read, if you only get the feeling of being part of this forum without understanding or focusing on a word that's being said, you gain immeasurably (although the words too are pure sweetness and understanding them adds greatly to the benefits).

Now for some opinion (sorry Boruch). Just to be clear, I have never attended a 12 step program and will not offer an opinion as to the benefits or drawbacks of this particular path. However the idea of "doing whatever it takes" and doing it as designed, correctly, without any deviation based on personal judgment, is something I can speak to from experience. In fact, any serious member of this forum can do so. We're here because we've fallen, to one degree or another, for the temptations of the Y"H and lust. Furthermore, we've tried to control ourselves, we did not want to continue those behaviors, however we were not as successful as we hoped we'd be. After going through this cycle many times (sometimes over several decades and sometimes with extreme highs and lows) we found our way here because we needed, at a minimum, an

understanding ear, support and encouragement, because we needed this site (**Thank You Guard**) to in order to grow and we take growth seriously. No one wants to acknowledge sins of the flesh, even anonymously, but here we are. So we can all appreciate the need to “do what it takes”. And where indicated, we all agree that there’s a rightful place for 12 step programs, at least for some of us. For others, R’ Tzvi Meir does the trick. But if the 12 step program is the right answer, then I agree with Boruch that meeting over the phone, or with modified steps, is not lechatchilah. By tailoring the 12 step program even an iota, you’re exerting control over how you cope with the addiction...exactly the opposite of step 1 (correct me if I’m wrong here Boruch). In that case, making a cheshbon based on frumkeit falls under the prohibition “al tehi Tzaddik harbeh”.

I believe that determining whether the 12 steps are indicated or not depends on the extent of the addiction and whether your life has truly become unmanageable as a result. The primary issue is uncontrollable acting out and therefore the focus is on “sur merah”. However if the addiction has not progressed to the point of impacting your life to this degree, or (and this is an important “or”) if you’ve recovered sufficiently so that your life is **no longer** unmanageable, then the focus must be on “aseh tov” – ie. filling the void that used to be filled with lust. And that’s where going to R’ Tzvi Meir (I have never gone nor read or heard any shmuzzen although I’d **love** to so please let me know if there’s any way to get them) can be 100 times better (again, Boruch, I’m talking about people who don’t need the 12 steps so please overlook the implied comparison to something I don’t know directly). In my experience, being chained to lust meant that I was deprived of a connection and true appreciation of the magnificent, positive and nurturing properties of Torah and Ruchniyus. I could not fathom the feelings of purity, love, and yearning for Kedusha that are bringing me to tears as I write these words. The feeling cannot be described adequately on paper...and the biggest chidush in my case is that at one point in my life, **all** emotion was absent and I would go about my daily activities by rote, without feeling, almost like my body was there but I was somewhere else (usually wherever the Y”H wanted me to be). So this is literally something I was incapable of even dreaming about because I could not conceive of it. This is brought about through active participation in davening and learning – my own version of R’ Tzvi Meir. For me, this cannot be achieved without Torah and therefore cannot be realized through any 12 step meeting.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 16:28

Ahron, thank you for your beautiful post.

When you wrote:

For me, this cannot be achieved without Torah and therefore cannot be realized through any 12 step meeting.

You are right that filling the void, once you are well on the road to recovery - like you are, can and should only be through Davening and learning (for a frum yid). However, like Boruch explained so well in reply #25 above, the 12-Steps are to pull someone up from being an animal to becoming a person. You can't work on Torah and teffilah if you're an animal. You can't even be Jewish if you are not a human. First become a mentch (which **you** are already Ahron!! :-)) and **then** you can start to look how to fill the void by growing every day through Torah, teffilah, Mussar and Chassidus.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by battleworn - 24 Mar 2009 16:58

All R' Tvi Meir's schmuzen (Yiddish Hebrew and English) can be heard by calling

(02) [or 9722] 658-1000

His natural language is Yiddish, so if you understand Yiddish it's way better than the other languages.

R' Tvi Meir invests unfathomable efforts to try to be a "clean channel" so that when he speaks it can effect those listening. I believe that much of it is lost if you don't hear him live. Every erev Shabbos he says a shmuess in kolel Ramah on Rechov beruchim #12 (at around 12:45) The erev shabbos shmuess can be heard real-time by calling the above number.

The "real thing" is to participate in Sholosh Seudos (which is in the T.T. Viznich on rechov Chana) it goes on for very long so you have to free up the whole Motzei Shabbos. One time I came in after the shmues and I observed the early minyanim for Maariv (the people that are in a rush and don't have time to stay till the end) If most people would daven Maariv like that on Yom Kippur we would be much better off. (when I'm part of it I don't realize the contrast)

Rabeinu Guard, I must say that you have no idea what it's all about. Going to R' Tvi Meir is a complete way of life (for those that are serious) For example, once someone is ready for the next step, there's a whole chaburah system which can turn any serious person in to a Tzadik Gomur.

I don't think it's for everyone. If for example someone is very arrogant, I don't know what will happen.

But for someone that is looking to grow, he can take you from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high. I don't know why you think I suggested R' Tvi Meir for hard-core addicts. It never would have occurred to me to do such a thing.

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