

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 - 27 Mar 2009 12:52

I think that concerned_yid's claims have been accepted unquestioningly on this forum for so long that many are unable to get beyond them.

Just like you were so sure that Kookoo was insincere without anything to back it up, again you are making far-reaching statements that have nothing to back them up. Where exactly on this forum have you ever seen anyone quote kookoo on this, or post [the URL](#)? Do you have evidence that even one person has been reluctant to join the groups because of it? I have never seen such a case. This URL was given very little prominence on our site. It does not even appear on the "12-Step" section at all. it appears only at the very bottom of Rabbi Twerski's page of links. The fact is, you had even gone to Rabbi Twerski's page and quoted things from it many times, and yet I had to point out this link to you before you even saw it. That just shows how few people find it...

I will be mekabel my onesh be'ahavo.

You gotta love Boruch :D. He's a storm, nay a hurricane, of passion for what he believes in. But this hurricane can change directions completely with one breeze of "truth", even from the flap of a butterfly's wings. There's a real beauty in that.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
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[guardureyes wrote on 27 Mar 2009 12:52:](#)

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Teire Reb Guard, you overlook one little thing, you did not keep this as much of a secret as you seem to think.

Why, there's one very obvious example of where this all came out that comes immediately to mind. Surely you realize that in response to concerned_yid's impassioned and lengthy assertions Rabbi Twersky briefly responded in light of his assertions that they should first go to the phone groups then. **That's what you were referring to when you posted a while back to battleworn that Rabbi Twersky agrees that the groups are not for everyone.** We both know now where that comment really came from. And that comment made it's mark here on the forums. And that became the Orthodoxy for you and others who saw that.

Do I need to remind you how this particular thread started? It was over confusion between you and battleworn on how to reconcile that isolated and brief comment from Rabbi Twersky, which you had referred to, with Rabbi Twersky's general stance. No wonder you had such a hard time trying to explain it to battleworn.

But it goes far beyond this one example. Let us face what really happened here. Initially as concerned_yid wrote, you as the site owner were referring everyone to the groups. Then came concerned_yid and you did a 180. Not only were you no longer referring everyone to the groups, you were now referring to the phone groups as first choice. Now, perhaps I exaggerate a little about a complete 180, but don't tell me that after concerned_yid's email, phone call and

the response from Rabbi Twersky there was no swing in the opposite direction.

There can be no question at all that you have tremendous impact on the site and concerned_yid had impact on you. He did not need to influence anyone else to influence everybody. So which URLs should I point to beyond your original post to battleworn and the URLs of this thread?

I'll tell you which URLs were impacted, every single post you made after that phone call and email that dealt with the groups.

So all the talk about rock-bottom on this forum, all the talk about being ready for the 12 steps, all the confusion and equivocation on when the groups are appropriate is all thanks to concerned_yid.

Is it so surprising that it is no longer obvious to some on these forums just how disconnected from reality concerned_yid's assertions were? They have become a part of the furniture over here on the forums.

But there is hope, we can make a new start, we can make it all very, very simple and cover all the bases.

If we have someone who seems to be mature and sincere:

1) We can discuss the nature of the addiction with him exactly as Bill W. referred to when he spoke about raising the rock-bottom.

2) If they believe that they may have a problem and seem interested we can tell them that there is a solution with a religious component of turning in deep sincerity to HKB"H for help and a moral component of a personal housecleaning, by which he would be ready to give up all his character flaws and a fellowship that works the solution. We can explain that this solution is not group therapy but a religious and moral program of action.

3) If they are still interested we can impress upon them the imperative of preserving anonymity within the group.

4) If they sound sincere and ready, then we can send them to SA, knowing full well that we were not born yesterday, someone would not get this far and fool us, no-one prepared to go this far would "out" anyone else, and no-one serious enough to still display interest having heard the religious and moral part would subsequently, just throw in the towel, stop going to the groups, take as much bad as they could from the groups and drop out of Yiddishkeit. Whoever concerned_yid is talking about that dropped out of yiddishkeit would never have agreed to going to the groups with any of the above conditions. Like almost every Frum Yid today in SA, the people that concerned_yid knows from SA were not even prepared to go to the groups on any condition at all, they had to be forced.

So, I think that there is a time for common sense, a time to relinquish old and broken ideas and a time to focus on what we should be doing, getting as much help as we can to the mature and sincere addict who suffers, and the sooner we can get them that help the better.

There is no need whatsoever to sentence people to the potential of unnecessary months of struggle on these forums and the potential of unnecessary months of struggle in the phone groups if they are ready today for SA. If Bill W. wanted to help the addict who suffers when that addict was so young that he had hardly gone beyond pre-addiction, what should we rachmonim bnei rachmonim say?

"Let them wait until they are suicidal"?

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 28 Mar 2009 20:19

The only thing Kookoo caused me to change on our site, was to remove the links to SLAA and SA from the main page of the "12-Steps" section of the site. He felt that the links shouldn't be displayed prominently for everyone who happened upon our site from various ads, such from www.theyeshivaworld.com or www.vosiznaeis.com etc.... He felt, and Rabbi Twerski seemed to agree, that we should first test the waters with these people, as you stated above. I agree with

you, and I am sure Kookoo agrees with you too, that the people who post on this forum **are** generally ready to be referred to SA. After all, if you read the posts of Kookoo (like I sentenced) you would see how many times he repeatedly, **almost annoyingly**, stated again and again that the groups and 12-Steps are the **ONLY** real solution.

And I too, continued to suggest the groups to anyone I felt was serious - **after** talking to him as well.
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I admit though, that I didn't have a total clarity on who the groups are for or not, and you indeed helped with this. And that is why I posted to Battleworn that Rabbi Twerski agrees that the groups are not for everyone. But the "great damage" you claim kookoo did, is highly exaggerated.

In any event, I think you helped us get a lot of clarity on this subject, and I appreciate that.

I still don't think though, that I should go and put back the links to SA on the main page for every Tom Dik and Harry who happens upon our site to see. It needs to be suggested to people only when they are feeling desperate and are truly serious. (The links do, however, appear in our "[Links](#)" section, if you scroll down).

And BTW, kookoo was the one to tell me to get rid of the links to SLAA - and FAST. He was the first to point out to me that SLAA is dangerous for frum Yidden because they are much too liberal. So all in all, I think he helped us a lot more than he did damage.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by battleworn - 29 Mar 2009 11:11

When you "Let Go and Let G-d" you can get big siyatta dishmaya. Look at the metzia I just

found, it is the most absolute proof you can get on the meaning of the First Step.

SKOI'ACH Boruch! That is indeed a metzia, as it's 100% clear. "Ein simcha ki'hatoras has'feikos" I love clarity. BTW this was also the maskono that we reached on my thread, but nobody was really sure that it was right.

(from Guard)And that is why I posted to Battleworn - when he seemed against certain aspects of the groups - that Rabbi Twerski agrees that the groups are not for everyone.

Rabeinu, I'm sorry for bothering you about this, but I really don't appreciate being misquoted or misrepresented. I hadn't "seemed against any aspects of the groups" at all. I simply asked the following question:

If I remember correctly, he said that anyone who does something against their better judgement, is addicted. Even if it's not very often. But I believe he also said that anyone that's addicted should go to a SA group. I know he doesn't mean that a bachur that is nichshal once in a while, should go. So there must be two kinds/stages of addiction.

If that is so what constitutes the worse one.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 29 Mar 2009 11:43

Sorry Battelworn, I fixed it above. (I didn't know where this had come up before and I didn't have time to go and find it, so I just wrote what I could remember).

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by battleworn - 29 Mar 2009 12:26

I wasn't sure where to post the following point. But when I saw this post from Boruch to Yaakov, I decided that this is where it belongs.

That said, it is more than a question of friendship, regardless of the external structure of our paths, I am convinced that there is much more similarity in content and tochen in our paths than there is difference, and one way or another we can gain a lot of chizuk and inspiration from each other.

[Boruch, I believe that there's a lot more in common than you think.]

I have found over and over that when I'm speaking to Net -giving him chizuk, I have Si'yata Dishmaya to come up with thoughts that I would otherwise never think of. The other day while we were speaking, a thought came to my mind which is so simple and so true.

If you were to hear about a person that wants to run the world (yes, I mean exactly what I said, he simply wants Hashem to step aside and let him run the world instead) what would you say? Maybe you would say that he's so far-gone that there's no way to describe it? [The truth is, that it's so utterly ridiculous that you might not even know what to say.]

Well, a person is an olam koton and just as complicated. If you want to control your own life then you are being no different, than the hypothetical fellow that wants to run the world. Think about that. Then think about it some more.

It's very important to realize that "Im ein ani li mi li" does not contradict this at all. Im ein... is referring only to "Ratzon" (will/desire) and to "hishtadlus" (effort)- inasmuch as hishtadlus is the manifestation of ratzon and it solidifies and defines ratzon.

[This is a great and deep yesod and is not really for crushing in to a few sentences. But because it's so crucial I have to do what I could. In Shir Hashirim it says "Im to'iru vi'im te'oriru es ha'ahava ad she'techputz" Tzadikim explain that "she'techputz" can also mean "that you make for it an object, meaning a vessel to hold it. Any "awakening" that we have in our relationship with Hashem, must be "clothed" in something concrete.

For example Pesach is coming. On Pesach and especially by the Seder we can experience a tremendous awakening. But C'V if we don't do something with it, then not only will we lose it but we also will feel "let down" afterwards. We can make a "Cheifetz" either by making a kaboloh or by learning Torah on the Yom Tov and after it. (R' Tvi Meir always says in the name of the Ramban and also the Kedushas levi that the posuk "Kol chafotzecha lo yishvu bo" -which is referring to Torah, means even "Cheftzei shomayim". In other words the best way to make a "vessel" is by learning Torah, nothing else can compare to it.)]

Getting back to the point, every ratzon (at least in ruchnius) must be manifested in hishtadlus which is the cheifetz-the vessel for ratzon, otherwise it's not the real thing. (The Zohar says that no ratzon is lost, but that doesn't mean it has the power of real ratzon. Real rotzon -which is real powerful, is only that which is backed by action.) That, is what Im ein ani li mi li means. Not -Chas Ve'shalom, that I can actually have any control at all on my life. Control belongs only to Hashem.

I hope I got the messages across properly.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 29 Mar 2009 13:29

Battleworn, Please may I add to this fundamental principle:

The Gemara (makos 10b) states "the path in which a person **wants** to go **they** take him". The meharsha asks who is the "**they**"? He answers: **They** are the melachim that are created when a person does a mitzvah. [The chidushei Harim that Guard was fond of quoting today is based on this maharsha as is evident]. This means that to create the special melachim all we need to do is **want** the mitzvah. When a person **wants** to do something, malachim are then created that assist him in that very task. However, what does it mean to **want**?

So the meharsha in Sota reveals the answer. The mishna towards the end states that when a dead man is found near a city, the elders of the city must bring the eglarufah and then declare that they were not the murderers. The mishna explains the meaning of this strange declaration; that they did not let the man leave without providing food and properly escorting him. Meaning, had they not escorted or properly fed the guest the man is prone to death and they would therefore be held accountable. The maharsha and others ask, what would it help had they escorted the man? The mitzvah of escorting is only 4 amos. How would escorting him 4 amos protect him from getting murdered on the entire duration of the trip? The maharsha answers that by escorting the man, they express their **will** that they want to help him. By doing so they create the wonderful malachim. It is those malachim that will ultimately protect the man on his way. This is precisely the principle in makos, "the path in which a person **wants** to go **they** take him". But we learn from the gemara in Sotah that mere inner desire is not enough. We need to put that ratzon into actions.

By putting the gemara in makos together with the gemara in Sotah we understand that to create the malachim one needs to just merely do an action that expresses his ratzon. But without the actions [the hishtadlus], the ratzon is not enough. We see how even a small action of walking 4 amos can do so much.

The Taharas Hakodesh writes that everyone has hirhurei teshuvah even Reshaim. Everyone's inner desire is to do good. But the tzadikk believes that he can do it and ACTS on this ratzon. He does something about it.

Bringing us full circle, the gemara in kidushin states that when it comes to the yetzer hara a person must constantly daven to be protected and be saved. The maharsha asks what purpose is there to daven as we know, "all is in the hands of hashem **except** yiras shamayim". He answers just as the 12 steps states, "only hashem can save you". However, all we are responsible for is having a ratzon. Having the desire to conquer the yetzer hara. Having the desire to only serve hashem. Only then will hashem save you. By davening we express our desire. And then **Haba Letaher, mesayen Oso....** He who comes to purify, **THEY** will help him.

May we all be zoche to express our proper ratzon and to do proper hishtadlus and be zoche for help from Hashem as we watch him rid us from the yetzer hara.

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

Posted by the.guard - 29 Mar 2009 18:30

All I can say to Battelworn and Yaakov is that [this Posuk](#) surely meant you two.

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

Posted by boruch - 29 Mar 2009 23:00

[battleworn wrote on 29 Mar 2009 12:26:](#)

If you were to hear about a person that wants to run the world (yes, I mean exactly what I said, he simply wants Hashem to step aside and let him run the world instead) what would you say?

Maybe you would say that he's so far-gone that there's no way to describe it? [The truth is, that it's so utterly ridiculous that you might not even know what to say.]

As a matter of fact I would be totally unfazed, I would simply tell him not to bother, I have been there and done that, why, I have even tried that here on this forum, and **I can tell you from bitter experience that it doesn't work at all, it's not worth it at all, and all you get in return is addiction.**

Now, I know you were speaking literally and not figuratively, but there is a very important mid-point between someone who, at one end of the spectrum, aspires to rule the entire Universe, as only rare meshogoyim like Nimrod, Paroh and Nevuchadnezzar have done, and thinking at the other end of the spectrum, that at least we can be in control of ourselves.

There are a significant number of people, who think that they can control, not only themselves, but the people and circumstances around themselves and many are, like I was, driven out of frustration to addiction.

This too, has more to it than meets the eye. At face value it seems like simple cause and effect. But **addiction, like the makkos that Paro got, like the onesh that Titus got, and like tzoraas, is the Eibishter's way of showing us, you think that you can control everything, I will show you that you cannot even control yourself.**

[battleworn wrote on 29 Mar 2009 12:26:](#)

Well, a person is an olam koton and just as complicated. If you want to control your own life then you are being no different, than the hypothetical fellow that wants to run the world. Think about that. Then think about it some more.

This is very well said and once it is said, it is very self-evident, vehadvorim brurim lechol meivin.

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[This is a great and deep yesod and is not really for crushing in to a few sentences. But because it's so crucial I have to do what I could. In Shir Hashirim it says "Im to'iru vi'im te'oriru es ha'ahava ad she'techputz" Tzadikim explain that "she'techputz" can also mean "that you make for it an object, meaning a vessel to hold it. Any "awakening" that we have in our relationship with Hashem, must be "clothed" in something concrete.

For example Pesach is coming. On Pesach and especially by the Seder we can experience a tremendous awakening. But C'V if we don't do something with it, then not only will we lose it but we also will feel "let down" afterwards. We can make a "Cheifetz" either by making a kaboloh or by learning Torah on the Yom Tov and after it. (R' Tvi Meir always says in the name of the Ramban and also the Kedushas levi that the posuk "Kol chafotzecha lo yishvu bo" -which is referring to Torah, means even "Cheftzei shomayim". In other words the best way to make a "vessel" is by learning Torah, nothing else can compare to it.)]

Getting back to the point, every ratzon (at least in ruchnius) must be manifested in hishtadlus which is the cheifetz-the vessel for ratzon, otherwise it's not the real thing. (The Zohar says that no ratzon is lost, but that doesn't mean it has the power of real ratzon. Real rotzon -which is real powerful, is only that which is backed by action.) That, is what Im ein ani li mi li means. Not -Chas Ve'shalom, that I can actually have any control at all on my life. Control belongs only to Hashem.

I hope I got the messages across properly.

You could not have been clearer.

And Rabbi Twersky would doubtless, say, turn the page and you will see the First Step. But more about that in my response to Yaakov BE"H.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 29 Mar 2009 23:12

[guardureyes wrote on 28 Mar 2009 20:19:](#)

The only thing Kookoo caused me to change on our site, was to remove the links to SLAA and SA from the main page of the "12-Steps" section of the site. He felt that the links shouldn't be displayed prominently for everyone who happened upon our site from various ads, such from www.theyeshivaworld.com or www.vosiznaeis.com etc.... He felt, and Rabbi Twerski seemed to agree, that we should first test the waters with these people, as you stated above. I agree with you, and I am sure Kookoo agrees with you too, that the people who post on this forum **are** generally ready to be referred to SA. After all, if you read the posts of Kookoo (like I sentenced) you would see how many times he repeatedly, **almost annoyingly**, stated again and again that the groups and 12-Steps are the **ONLY** real solution.

And I too, continued to suggest the groups to anyone I felt was serious - **after** talking to him as

well.

I admit though, that I didn't have a total clarity on who the groups are for or not, and you indeed helped with this. And that is why I posted to Battleworn that Rabbi Twerski agrees that the groups are not for everyone. But the "great damage" you claim kookoo did, is highly exaggerated.

In any event, I think you helped us get a lot of clarity on this subject, and I appreciate that.

I still don't think though, that I should go and put back the links to SA on the main page for every Tom Dik and Harry who happens upon our site to see. It needs to be suggested to people only when they are feeling desperate and are truly serious. (The links do, however, appear in our "[Links](#)" section, if you scroll down).

And BTW, kookoo was the one to tell me to get rid of the links to SLAA - and FAST. He was the first to point out to me that SLAA is dangerous for frum Yidden because they are much too liberal. So all in all, I think he helped us a lot more than he did damage.

Thank you, Guard, for "moderating" (small 'm') this discussion so well. I believe that we are now all on the same page.

[guardureyes wrote on 28 Mar 2009 20:19:](#)

Excellent, truly excellent. (Edit: Actually, I will be honest here, and say that I was originally writing about today's email when I wrote that, and today's email was really a masterpiece. But then on the other hand that turn of phrase that you coined on Friday, helping you hit rock-bottom while you are still on top, has a lot going for it too. So Friday's email was truly excellent

too, and today's email...)

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

Posted by boruch - 30 Mar 2009 00:19

The Eibishter showed me beChasdo haGodol that yes, it is true that I am not R' Eliezer b' Durdiya who, even after crying out to Hashem, was unable to get past first base and attain zehirus. But I am not that much further. If I was an addict, which I most certainly was, what that meant was that I had sunk so low, that the 1st Step of zehirus had become as far from me as kedusha, the last step was from the Chosid of the Mesilas Yesharim.

My addiction had progressed to the extent that to attain the very first level of zehirus, was no longer within my reach at all, other than techiloso hishtadlus. And if I was to get it at all it would have to be sofo matono, odom nizhar atzmo me'at umin HaShomayim mazhirim oso harbeh.

Now the Gemoro tells us that Rabbi (Rebbi Yehuda Hanosi) points out that the bas kol called him Rebbi Eliezer b' Durya. The implication is clearly that he was called Rebbi because he is a Rebbi to all of us. The question is obvious, in what way is he a Rebbi to us, his case was so different than ours that he was unable to withstand the nisoyon and had to die. What lesson is there for us in that?

And I believe that there is a very powerful lesson that we can all learn from Rebbi Eliezer b' Durdiya. Imagine what it was like for Rebbi Eliezer b' Durdiya to realize that he was so addicted that all of his tefillos would not be able to change the fact that he had to die and that he would not be able to overcome his aveiros in his lifetime. Imagine that hopelessness. Talk about being absolutely and totally powerless. Once he was following through with his teshuva, as he had already decided he must, he was as good as a dead man walking. With such powerlessness, is it any wonder that he turned to the mountains, to beseech rachamim for him, because, they like him were and are paralyzed and unable to move? Reb Eliezer felt that just like the mountains are a kidush shem shomayim just in their existence so could he continue to exist powerless and paralyzed, but nevertheless alive and in his continued existence be a kidush shem shomayim.

And the mountains told him, no, we need to ask rachamim for ourselves, meaning, you think

that you can become like us, but you are wrong. We were at least initially put into this powerlessness by Hashem, that is our role. You however were not created to be powerless, Hashem gave you bechira and you squandered it, you chose to lose your free-will, you chose your powerlessness, and therefore yes you are powerless like us, but powerlessness will not help you, because that is not your avodo.

And it was in that very powerlessness, in which the only option that was left to him was death that he said what we would never imagine.

[b]When all hope is lost, when all power is lost for ever, when life is over and there is nothing more that can be done, the best that most human beings could strive for would be to mekabel yissurin be'ahavo, to accept the pain of death with love.[b]

But Rebbi Eliezer b' Durdiya, in ultimate powerlessness, was able to realize what the mountains were telling him. As much as he had to accept his powerlessness, the powerlessness was not his tachlis, that was not his avodo. And it was then that he realized that there was still one thing left that he could do. He could scream.

And he realized that however small his avodo was, and however short-lived it would be, these few moments of screaming were to be his life's avodo... and that is what he meant when he said,

"ain hadovor toluy elo bi" -- I can only rely upon myself

What he meant is that he cannot look to what is avodas Hashem for others, like the mountains or even non-addicts. He had to serve Hashem with whatever he could do, regardless how temporary and futile it seemed, and no matter how powerless he really was.

And that was why Rebbi cried, yesh koneh olomo besho'oh achas... not the fact that he was ready to do teshiva, not the fact that he was ready to die to do teshuva, but that he realized that as powerless as he was, if he did the one thing that he could still do, no matter how short-lived it would be, that was as crucial and as important as an entire lifetime of avodas Hashem, **and it was for that sho'oh achas of go'oh bivchiyo of screaming out from the depths of his heart that he got an olom habo for a lifetime of avodo**, as Chazal say, echod hamarbeh

ve'echod hamamit, uvilvad sheyechaven libo lashomayim.

And so to us. There are some who are tempted to say, as I did not so long ago, that we must not say we are powerless because then we will lose heart and give up. This is a lie. Do you know how we know that it is a lie?

Because R' Eliezer ben Durdiya will be mechayev anyone who claims that once they realized that they were powerless over their addiction, they lost their cheshek for avodas Hashem. L'achar meioh ve'esrim Hakodosh Boruch Hu will bring the example of R' Eliezer ben Durdiya and say, were you more powerless than he was? **You are only powerless over your addiction he was powerless over his life. And yet he did whatever little he could, no matter that it only took a few moments.**

Why did you not do the little that you were able to do? You were able to do much more than R' Eliezer ben Durdiya, you could have put filters on your computers, you could have had an accountability partner, you could have gone for help and listened to the advice you were given. Hashem will say, I allowed you to live, I allowed you to Daven to me, to put on tzitzis and tefillin, to learn, keep Shabbos and do all of the mitzvos and that is not enough for you? Why could you too not have accepted that echod hamarbeh ve'echod hamamit, uvilvad sheyechaven libo lashomayim? Why did you not understand that **lo olecho hamlocho ligmor -- it is not your job to do everything, velo ato ben chorim lehibotel mimeno -- it is not because you cannot do everything that you should do nothing**

The answer will become very clear then in front of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and the Beis Din shel maalo, le'achar meioh ve'esrim, even if it is not yet clear now. A true eved Hashem is happy with whatever avodos Hashem he can get, no matter how seemingly small and unimportant it may seem, and he understands that yesh koneh olomo besho'oh achas, that to the Eibishter a few short minutes of humble avodo can be worth a lifetime of avodo in ordinary circumstances.

We asked originally what we could learn from R' Eliezer's extreme and unusual circumstances that do not seem at first glance to have any relevance to us. We now realize that we can learn from R' Eliezer that **avodas Hashem means being able to accept that you are powerless and nevertheless putting everything you can into what you still are able to do.**

And that is the ultimate tikkun of the addict. The addict originally wanted to control his life, his circumstances and people around him, and as we said earlier, Hakodosh Boruch Hu showed

him by afflicting him with addiction that he cannot even control himself.

What is his teshuva? He has to learn that he can no longer be in control. He must serve Hashem, on Hashem's terms, with Hashem being in control and not him. He has to serve Hashem with the same zeal and eagerness, even when it means that he must give up on all the gaava and kovod, even when he has to stare his own powerlessness in the face. Once he can do this, he has begun to learn the great lesson of R' Eliezer ben Durdiya, **avodas Hashem is always worthwhile, especially when you cannot dictate it's terms.**

And there are no short cuts. We may be able, without admitting powerlessness, to be mesaken the chet of our addiction itself but if we cannot bring ourselves to admit powerlessness then we have not even begun to be mesaken the original chet that brought the addiction in the first place, wanting to be in charge. **And so not only is saying that we are powerless not an excuse to be demoralized, on the contrary, not being demoralized after we say that we our powerless is our whole teshuva.**

I, for one, still have much work to do on this one, we should all be zocheh to serve Hashem on His terms, we should all be zocheh to a teshuva sheleimo bekorov.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 30 Mar 2009 05:46

Boruch,

Truly unbelievable. This past shabbos I sat down to learn that exact gemara with the maharal from the nesiv hateshuvah. I have learned this gemara many times in the past. However, I wanted to understand it again. Being that I am now a new person I figured I would see things in that story that I never saw before. And indeed I have new insights. I have been doing this lots of other such gemaras. But this past shabbos was devoted to that gemara, being that it was 50 days from my first major call for teshuvah. Anyways, than you for sharing your perspective. I think we should an section to the site called midrashei chazal, where we present relevant gemaras in full and then offer important lessons that can be derived from the story.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 30 Mar 2009 12:40

Wonderful idea, Yaakov. And beautiful insight Boruch! Thank you!

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by battleworn - 30 Mar 2009 14:31

.... He has to learn that he can no longer be in control. He must serve Hashem, on Hashem's terms, with Hashem being in control and not him. He has to serve Hashem with the same zeal and eagerness, even when it means that he must give up on all the gaava and kovod, even when he has to stare his own powerlessness in the face. Once he can do this, he has begun to learn the great lesson of R' Eliezer ben Durdiya, avodas Hashem is always worthwhile, especially when you cannot dictate it's terms....

Boruch, thank you for this tremendous yesod. Actually, this is one of R' Tvi Meir's biggest yesodos. And he gives a fascinating illustration: We know that many Tzadikim went in to Golus. Obviously, they often ended up in places where they couldn't find what they "needed" for their avodas Hashem. (Like a decent minyan or some basic seforim etc. etc.) But because that golus is what they decided is Ratzon Hashem, they were happy to make-do with what they had.

But they weren't commanded by a navi to do it. There was always some possibility that they were making a mistake, by going to golus. Still, since they had decided that this is the way to go, they were happy to sacrifice many of their most basic ruchniyesdi'ge needs.

Now, if **Hashem** puts you in to such a less-than -ideal situation, then you can be absolutely 100% certain, that this is exactly what you need. It's just as if a Navi Emes came to you and said "Go in to golus for Hashem has said that that is your avoda and that is what you need for your tikun.

If one thought it is ratzon Hashem that he should (for ex:) learn for a few hours straight on the first day of Chol Hamo'ed, and then it just doesn't work out. He "gets stuck" spending that time

doing un-volunteered chesed for his wife or his kids. HE SHOULD REJOICE. Because he was planning on doing what he thought was (=sofek) Ratzon Hashem, and what he ended up doing was Vadai ratzon Hashem. And we have to thank Hashem for letting us know, what it is that we need for our tikun.

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