

SonicReducer's story so far

Posted by sonicReducer - 04 Jan 2010 17:16

Evening all (;

I only discovered GUE a few weeks ago, but it's been such a huge help to me. I thought I'd post my own story.

I'm a baal teshuva, and I've been shomrei mitzvot for about 5 years. Becoming frum has been both the most fulfilling and difficult journey I've ever undertaken (still on it!). Although it can be very hard day-to-day, and I've had more than a few moments where I wanted to throw off my yarmi, the Aibishter has helped me to keep going.

My family emigrated from Johannesburg, South Africa, to London when I was about 14. This move was very, very hard on me, especially socially. I left behind a lot of my friends I grew up with, and struggled to rebuild in the UK. For the past ten years (I'm 24 now), I've been quite lonely, and my self-esteem took a lot of big hits (although Baruch H-Shem therapy has helped a huge amount). I was unhappy with my situation, and unhappy with who I was. I think I used p**n and shfichas zera as a pick-me-up, and as an attempt at some kind of intimacy, besides the usual urges and curiosities of a young man.

This continued when I become frum, although frequency decreased (and guilt increased). University was a very difficult time, fashions left very little to the imagination, although I managed to avoid getting involved with all the shmutz that goes on.

I spent a year at a well-known baal teshuva yeshiva after uni. This was to be my greatest length of shmira - just over a year. I fell badly when I came home for pesach - after 9 months in Yerushalayim, the fashions and posters in the UK were just far too much to handle, along with my PC that I had left behind.

Since then, I've really fought (and fallen), and GUE has given me a lot of inspiration. I was quite happy to realise I had been mechavin to the Guard Your Eyes Handbook already about 3 years before I had read it! My browser opens onto the chizuk list, which is really handy.

London is a tough place for shmiras eynayim, and I really daven hard that H' should help me. Baruch H-Shem I'm usually ok but sometimes the y'h just gets too much. My recent best period is about 6 weeks. I found a good filter and I'm really considering accountability software, but I'll see how the next few months go.

A big challenge at the moment is shidduchim - I'd really like to get married (and feel emotionally I'm finally in a good place to deal with it properly). I don't fit in very here - I'm too 'modern' for a chareidi girl, but too chareidi for a modern girl, so it's been hard meeting girls that are shayich. That sneaky y'h gets me here a lot - telling me that it will be years before I find someone and in such a tough environment, who can blame me for giving in? Positive thinking and bitachon are really my biggest weapons here, but they don't come easily.

One thing that really surprised me reading others' stories is how widespread these struggles are, and how wide a cross-section of yidden it affects.

May the Ribono shel Olam give you all the beracha and hatzlacha you all deserve for your truly super human efforts!

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by sonicReducer - 04 Mar 2010 22:38

I saw my therapist tonight. It was quite a difficult (but productive) session. We discussed intimacy in relationships - not physical intimacy, but rather more generally building relationships with give and take and different issues.

I understood it pretty well and seemed okay with it all, until we started discussing these issues and dating, along with some of the un/subconscious stuff that might be going on - fear of rejection, assumption of rejection, fear of inappropriate physical response, risk of loss ...

phew. Quite a list. Obviously awareness is powerful, and I'm usually okay on dates, although these things might hold back or slow down the process. Not saying that I'll never get hitched cos I'm a mess, rather that I have some extra hurdles for dating, and that things might take longer.

L'maiseh, I've decided to put dating on hold for the time being. Baruch H-Shem I'm young, so that's not such an issue, but I wouldn't feel confident sitting with a girl and having this stuff not so well resolved.

A big part of my physical frustration is 'waiting for marriage' - i.e. once I'm married, I assume physical intimacy will have its place and at least my teiva will have context. Whether or not this assumption is wrong or right, I have no idea. Putting things on hold ... I kind of feel that in a way I've moved the finish line further away, and I don't know where to. Getting married in itself might take a while, and actively slowing it down is a bit frustrating ... but I feel for the moment the more responsible thing to do.

In regards to my shmiras habris, doing this I feel a little bit more at the mercy of my y'h. He get's me a lot with arguments of 'who knows how long it will take, you cant be expected to be shomer for 5 years'. I think the key is to take things one day at a time, not worry or think about it so much, be a bit easier on myself, and otherwise keep busy! Work and Torah (and hobbies) means no time for aveiras.

to briut and trying123 - I definitely hear what you guys are saying, and its something I should think about. Will peruse your links trying123, they look interesting.

Derech agav, just wanted to say how precious this forum and everyone here is to me. I feel so much better about this fight knowing that people are rooting for me (and I'm rooting for them), and that I have a place where I can really just open up to people who are struggling with the same thing.

kol tov everyone, have a good night (or morning or afternoon depending on where you are :D)

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by trying123 - 04 Mar 2010 23:06

Keep us poted Buddy...

Don't always have comments but I'm following...

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by silentbattle - 04 Mar 2010 23:33

You're pretty awesome - I like rooting for a winner! And no matter what, you, my friend, are definitely a winner!

I can totally feel you, man - When I first started actually facing my issues, and stopped dating...well, after a few weeks, I felt that I'd moved on, and was ready to start dating again...but I'm glad i didn't - a good amount of distance is important.

And I can certainly understand your feelings of "who knows how long it will take, you cant be expected to be shomer for 5 years." I recently posted about that exact feeling. And I realized, as you did, that it's just the Y'H talking - and I don't need to do it for 5 years, just for today. One day at a time.

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by sonicReducer - 10 Mar 2010 18:39

Been a while, so here's a bit of an update

Have been clean for about 3.5 weeks. Earlier this week was thank G-d easy, today I've been feeling really frustrated. Not just desire to act out, more just loneliness through tough times, no feminine affection, no love, etc. Really stuff that I hope I'd get in marriage that I feel is missing. Anyway ...

Found a gaping hole in my browser filter a few days ago. I won't go into details in case someone has the same issue. I did look for a few minutes at one or two 'lad's mags' sites (nothing extreme basically). After a few minutes I found myself thinking urgh, this is pathetic, these people are so fake, its not even attractive, they sell the most intimate parts of themselves for nothing That at least felt like a bit of an intellectual victory over p**n, even though the teiva is still there a bit.

Got miffed with my sister when I was 'asked' to do a 'favour' (i.e. instructed), and really reacted quite annoyed, which is not like me. My relationship with my sister and my father come up a lot in therapy - lack of validation, being bossed around, no respect for me, etc. I feel like I kinda acted like I did as I've seen their treatment of me as something very negative (one of the reasons I'm sitting with a therapist), but don't really know how to deal with it. My sister is very domineering - saying no to her is like signing your own deathwarrant. I dunno, another point of frustration I guess. Will probably discuss this tomorrow with him.

Dating is on hold - its definitely for the best at the moment but was a disappointing decision to make.

kol tov everyone,

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by briut - 10 Mar 2010 22:10

Good to see you posting.

Your ability to take a step outside "yourself" and see a bigger perspective to these goings-on is a good thing.

You know I'm part of your fan club.

Keep going.

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far

Posted by sonicReducer - 11 Mar 2010 18:00

Felt like the loneliness, frustration, wrestling, bombardment, whatever, just got too much to deal with.

Even before it happened I thought "you'll regret this, you know it doesn't pay off, etc". Still went ahead - felt like I really just needed to let go. Obviously I was right beforehand, but my timemachine is still in prototype so I can't really go back for a redo.

All that's left to do is **go veiter!**

Personal question for you guys; what do you do after a fall? I usually make sure I take a shower and say Tikkun Klali ASAP (usually while the y'h bombards me with the usual "you're dirty, don't bother, etc").

I worry about some of the things I've read about the consequences of shfichas zera - klipot

grabbing souls, pain after death, poverty, kareis, and whatnot. I've discussed this with my rabbonim and the usual consensus I get is "make an effort to do your best, keep up a few tikkunim, go veiter". I do however try to keep in mind something that my rav taught me in the name of Rav Yisroel Salanter - that the 'punishment' (if that's even the right word) for an aveira is inversely proportional to the nisayon - the harder the test, the smaller the putch.

Any comments?

kol tov,

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by briut - 11 Mar 2010 19:06

[sonicReducer wrote on 11 Mar 2010 18:00:](#)

my timemachine is still in prototype so I can't really go back for a redo.

All that's left to do is **go veiter!**

Personal question for you guys; what do you do after a fall?

SR: Sorry about the fall. We both now know that my first-ever post to "I'm about to fall" was about the same moment as your fall. It could have been either one of us (or Ch'V both).

What you asked about recovering etc spoke to me very deeply. As I understand the Breslev approach, at least from Rabbi Arush (Garden of Emunah etc), the answer is that all those terrible things (creating trapped souls etc) are things to think about BEFORE THE FALL, and

that the thing to think about after the fall is SIMPLY STANDING UP AGAIN. Period.

No guilt trip, no yelling at yourself, nothing. You had free will BEFORE so Hashem gave you the 'bad' images as well as the 'good' in the hope you might beat the Y'H. But once it's over with, your free will is GONE: you CAN'T change what is past. And obviously what happened still plugs in somehow to His master plan. So just ACCEPT it, STAND UP, and as they say KOT.

I am a BIG BIG enemy of taking on personal guilt in situations where there is no personal responsibility. Lessons for the future, yes. Chances to take 12-step inventory and make corrections, maybe. But raw guilt over what your Fall might have done in other realms? Heck, no.

Stand up (as I think you've done), re-set the clock to Day 1 (as I think you're doing), QUICKLY jot down anything special you think you could avoid next time from a lesson from this time, and then move on.

If I were you, I'd be falling twice an hour, not twice a month. Celebrate.

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far

Posted by silentbattle - 11 Mar 2010 22:57

A few thoughts in response:

1) I agree with Briut, if possibly for slightly different reasons; the punishments, or rather, consequences, are tremendous - but focusing on them is counterproductive. A huge guilt trip is probably going to hurt you spiritually in the long run, not help. So we say fell, shmell, and we move forward. Not because we're taking the easy way out, but because we want to grow, we want to become healthier in every way, and closer to hashem. This is not a modern psych thing - the "nesivos shalom" says this is the correct approach after a fall, and I've heard that R' volbe says the same thing.

2) What do I do after a fall? I focus my energies on figuring out how to make sure I don't fall again. If your rabbeim have told you to do tikkun klali, then that's fine - but very often, we can feel like doing things (going to the mikva, etc) "cleans" us of what happened, and so we can forget about it. Whatever you do, make sure you're moving forward, and learning from the experience.

3) When you feel yourself starting to slip, that's when you need to have someone to reach out to - whether here on the forum, over the phone, or in person (in ascending order of effectiveness). The same line that I can say to myself about how "I know this is wrong, and I'm going to be upset afterward, but I just can't stop" - saying that out loud to a friend makes me see how ridiculous it really is. And that helps me avoid falling or slipping.

KOT - you've had tremendous success, and please remember that one fall doesn't change that - nothing can change the success you've had! For every second that you didn't give in, more than 3.5 weeks...the chofetz chaim quotes a midrash that says that for every second we resist, we get a reward beyond the comprehension of any creation!

He's talking about lashon hora, but I've been told that the original midrash was actually talking about our issues! That's a lot of personal growth, a lot of closeness to god, that can never be taken away!

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by briut - 12 Mar 2010 04:08

so, what is the best possible thing you'd like to bring into your life right NOW. Something you are capable of doing. Something that would fill you up enough that you'd have less room remaining for anything wrong?

IMAGINE ONE SUCH THING, THEN GO MAKE IT WORK.

BOLDNESS HAS POWER.

Have a great day and Shabbos.

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by sonicReducer - 12 Mar 2010 15:42

thanks for the replys :D

Good to get a perspective from someone who's dealing with the same thing.

Worked hard yesterday not to beat myself up (and not to fall again), and baruch H-shem was ok. My tendency to collapse after a failure is something I'm discussing with my therapist, could very well be related to my relationship with my father (I tended only to get any congratulation/attention after exceptional success, so I take failure quite hard). Will see where that goes.

At least I'm feeling better today, a bit more relaxed. Hopefully Shabbos will be good - I'm eating with my parents tonight (not so good) but I'm spending most of tomorrow with a friend (much better :D)

Keep reminding myself - as you've both said - that I'm doing much better than I think I am. My therapist repeats a lot that I've dealt with heavy issues extremely well, but I have a tendency not to give myself any credit (see above).

Wishing everyone a good Shabbos, kol tov,

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by briut - 12 Mar 2010 19:12

[Briut wrote on 12 Mar 2010 04:08:](#)

so, what is the best possible thing you'd like to bring into your life right NOW. Something you are capable of doing. Something that would fill you up enough that you'd have less room remaining for anything wrong?

IMAGINE ONE SUCH THING, THEN GO MAKE IT WORK. BOLDNESS HAS POWER.

Hmm, from your last post it sounds like maybe that "one thing" could just possibly, maybe, be something like:

MAKE YOURSELF GIVE CREDIT TO YOURSELF.

It's bold, it's powerful, and it let's the Y'H know who he would be dealing with if he comes any closer. Do just before mealtime (3x/day); repeat as needed.

Just a thought. Hope the UK is giving you a great Shabbos.

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by silentbattle - 12 Mar 2010 19:19

Have a great shabbos - hope all your meals are good!

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by sonicReducer - 18 Mar 2010 18:22

Been a while :D

This week has been okay. I've found my teivas nashim kinda cooled off because of something my therapist said last week that we need to discuss in our next session (in about an hour's time incidently); that I've had quite a lot of negative images of marriage presented to me more or less my whole life, e.g. intermarriage is up, divorce is up, my own parents' marriage is awful, etc.

Since then I've found myself looking at a pretty girl and thinking

"she's pretty, wish I had someone"

"wait, marriage is risky/horrible/destructive/a cage/etc"

"wanting her can't be such a good idea, I'll probably just end up regretting it ..." - and so my teiva settles down.

I see it a lot - my boss constantly complains about his wife (they're jewish, not frum tho), a guy I work with who's been married like 9 months sighing when he gets off the phone, the jokes and complaints everywhere ...

I'm not saying marriage is bad, evil, destructive (obviously it can't be, seeing as how the Ribono shel olam told us pretty explicitly He wants us to get hitched), but I realised I've had a heck of a lot of negative reinforcement about it.

The positive side has been that my teiva hasn't been so bad.

The negative side is pretty obvious.

Anyway

I started a drawing/painting class about 10 weeks ago, one evening a week. I have quite a bit of artistic talent, but never really found a good avenue for it. I generally tend to want to draw/paint in a realistic way, and judge myself very harshly on the results i.e. if it looks good, I'm happy, but if not, not. I didn't enjoy the *process* of drawing (didn't do much painting until recently), and tended to drop it after just getting frustrated.

This class has been good for me - the teacher himself comes from an impressionist/expressionist background, so it's really opened some avenues for me.

I think the best thing for me is keep practicing (especially sketching) aiming for a high level, and then experiment with painting. I think impressionist leanings (what I think I'm heading for) are really tempered and dependant on good skill at realistic work.

Anyway, a bit off topic but its something I'm throwing myself into at the moment

Hope everyone else is doing ok :D

kol tov!

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by briut - 18 Mar 2010 21:19

Your clarity of purpose is impressive.

Yeah, I think I 'hear' the irony of losing the taiva by seeing so many examples of folks who are messing up with it. And yeah, I think I hear that you're not going to stay in that ironic place for very long.

Good for you.

Would you be willing to take the emotional risks of sharing your next round of insights on this one? I bet it would enlighten many of us. Or, at least, me.

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