

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 briut - 19 Feb 2010 18:37

Happy to hear it was indeed a holy trip to the holy land. Tell us more after Shabbos. GS (it's already Shabbos on your side of the Pond, I suppose). - Briut

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by sonicReducer - 21 Feb 2010 15:10

Hi all,

Shabbos and today have been tough - not so much in terms of shmira but just how I've been feeling. Was pretty sick on Friday (and schlepped to work), so Shabbos night I was *exhausted* and didn't have much of an appetite. I think people I was with picked up that I wasn't in such a good matzav.

My father was also there (my mother is still at my sister's) - and I actually couldn't look at him. I just see years and years of abuse towards my mother, and emotional damage to me. He's laughing and schmoozing and I don't want to be near him. I've brought this up with my therapist and it's a pretty serious issue - it's affected my self-esteem, my self belief, ability to act, how I judge myself, that I purposefully look for unnecessary outside validation for all kinds of decisions, how I communicate, how I expect others will react towards me etc etc ad infinitum.

I don't want to sit and kvetch how my dad was mean to me so my bad actions are justified - I'm just aware that I have a bit of a steeper slope getting up to where some others find themselves naturally in terms of actions and feelings. I can't speak to my mother about it because she knocks my opinions aside and tells me I'm wrong or something.

Other people involved with me and my parents have said things that are also pretty scary. A rav of mine in Israel who dealt with me a lot when I was in yeshiva and is pretty aware of all these issues is surprised my mother doesn't want to leave as "she's in an abusive marriage". His advice to me was to get as far away from them as I can and just do damage control I guess. He said in all seriousness I should try to get a transfer to the US or back to South Africa or something. I know this would - in the long term - probably be very good for me, but it would break my mother's heart and the guilt would be crazy (it was bad enough moving a few blocks away, never mind overseas). Have been considering aliyah too.

Another local rebbetzin who's been mediating between them for a good few months also told me she thinks I should be in therapy so I don't turn into my father once I'm married / with kids. This was really really scary. I know I'm very different in personality to him but 24 years of a constant role model will often come out when I least expect it - as I've heard from other married guys who had difficult relationships with their fathers.

I feel cursed. My father grew up in an emotionally unhealthy home and he's done the same to me - and now my challenge is to break the cycle. This is scary. I'd rather die alone than have my own children feel about me how I feel about my father. I'm terrified about getting married. I don't know how to get passed this. All this stuff that's happened in the past few months has just made me realise what the home I grew up in was really like from more objective perspective. I doubt any woman would want me after I open up to her about all this stuff. I have no idea what H' Yisborach wants from me, I don't know how to approach this, who to talk to, who to get advice from, who to look to as a role model, how to approach this when dating. I feel lost in the woods.

I'm pretty sure I'm depressed. I've felt really down the whole day - quiet, no appetite, no energy, tired, can't concentrate.

Seeing my therapist on Thursday - hope the week goes quickly.

Anyway, baruch H-Shem for GYE, so I at least have somewhere to get this off my chest. Even for that I'm exceptionally grateful.

kol tuv,

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by sonicReducer - 21 Feb 2010 17:19

Are my posts becoming wildly off topic for this forum? ???

Just wanted to check

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by sonicReducer - 21 Feb 2010 17:44

Mazel tov! My sister had a baby girl - 3 girls now!

My poor brother-in-law is outnumbered 4:1

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by sonicReducer - 21 Feb 2010 17:59

I just emailed my filter password to my rav (he didn't really understand tho), and deleted it from where I kept it.

Strange amount of resistance to this, enough to be noticeable.

Anyway, onward

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by imtrying25 - 21 Feb 2010 22:04

No such thing as an off topic post on tis forum!! :D :D :D :D :D :D :D :D :D :D

Bigtime move, SR!!!!!! Keep on going. I had read earlier your post, but honestly didnt know

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by briut - 22 Feb 2010 02:01

SR-THE-HERO:

I hear your fear about turning into your father, or at least inheriting some of his many misguided traits. Whether those traits are nature or nurture, you've been around them.

There is one nearly sure-fire defense (defence, I should say perhaps?) and that is: knowledge, awareness, commitment. If you know that's what you DON'T want to be when you grow up, you'll be able to avoid it. Without years of therapy. Without too much angst. Just through your own self-awareness. You'll NEVER be able to do to another person what he did to you.

You may find yourself one day with a harder task -- realizing that there are some aspects of him that you might want to emulate. Even some aspects of his most terrible qualities. Sometimes, bad things are only bad due to their extremeness going out of control. When taken in small doses, they may in fact be good or even necessary. Like, maybe, anger. So you might find yourself some day realizing that you're in need of a small dose of what you promised to stay away from because it's what HE did. This is trickier. But not scary. You'll be able to do this also at the right time.

But as to your question of whether you are going to turn into your father -- you've already set the answer because you're already setting a good path for your life. Don't worry - neither his genes nor his influence on you is going to explode when you least expect it. You are already too self-aware.

And how dare I say such things when I barely know you? Because you've already put your life onto the screen where we can see your strength first-hand.

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by silentbattle - 22 Feb 2010 16:17

Your posts are about you, your life, your struggles. That's what it's all about - you're totally on topic.

It definitely sounds like you've got a lot to deal with - and it also sounds like while your father has hurt you emotionally growing up, your mother wasn't exactly helpful, either. A point from experience - unhealthy relationships usually have two sides, both unhealthy.

As far as moving away - that's obviously a decision you need to make for yourself. I would just point one thing out - do you really want to run your life based on how other people make you feel guilty? And how will you feel about that later, when you realize that you hurt yourself because of someone else giving you a guilt trip?

I'm constantly inspired by your growth and introspection - please keep up the good work!

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far

Posted by sonicReducer - 22 Feb 2010 18:51

Thanks for the kind comments and chizuk guys. Baruch H-Shem I definitely feel much much better, more positive, not so worried.

silentbattle - My parents' relationship is..... interesting. Definitely not ideal, but at the same time my mother is a special lady. It could be that she's had to form her own way of dealing with things, and that might've steamrolled over onto me.

I'll probably stay put for now - thank G-d I have a good job with a good company and it would be silly to jeopardise that. What the future brings is completely al yedei Shamayim, and I'll just roll with it as best I can.

Briut - funnily enough your words echoed those of my mother - I had a hard heart to heart with her last night and really opened up about how I'd been feeling. She heard what I had to say and replied similarly - that I'm my own person, and from her own experience a person is in quite a lot of control about the kind of person they become in relation to their parents.

I've had the advantage of having dealt with this both with a therapist in Israel (who, honestly, changed my life completely) and within mussar schmuzzen at yeshiva - that there are opposing forces within a man: teiva, emotion, habit, but ultimately it should be his da'as that runs his engine as it were.

There's a sefer by Rav Wolbe zt'l called Pirkei Kinyan Da'as that deals with this - really about the first steps to becoming a ba'al da'as and what the real power of da'as is. I recommend it if you can find a copy - it's very short but ideal for something like monthly chazara.

I'd learnt this and internalised it to some degree, but I think maybe the things in the last few weeks brought out a few more of the emotional responses. I think really I was dealing with things as well as I could as I was trying to use my rational thoughts as impetus far more than my emotions, but at some point 2 Sundays ago I become overwhelmed and crashed a bit, and it's taken this time and these issues to get back on track.

Nevertheless, I feel like I'm back at a decent place. Things have fallen much more into perspective than they were on the weekend, and I feel like in a few weeks time please G-d I should feel confident enough to consider shidduchim again. My parents' problems are far from solved, but it's something I'll need to distance my self from regardless of when it happens.

Regarding shmira, today wasn't easy. Baruch H-Shem I've been clean now for over a week, but there just seemed to be pretty girls wherever I went today. Well, there usually are pretty girls pretty much everywhere but it's usually an issue of how much attention I pay and how much I have to push myself not to look. Today wasn't my worst day ever but it was uncomfortable. When I see someone my response is probably 25% lust, 75% thinking "I wish I had someone special in my life - you remind me of a big hole in my existence". Could be this is one of the things that's driving me towards marriage, so it might not be all bad depending on how I use it.

Thanks again everyone for your support and chizuk, kol tuv

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by briut - 22 Feb 2010 18:57

SR:

Sorry to give a 'me too' post, but silentbattle has it exactly right. The work we do about the 'rest' of our life outside of our (thoughts of) sexual acting out -- that IS the work we need to do to win

against the acting out. It's one and the same. Nothing is off-topic.

Perhaps you'll find that in your individual situation there's merely some casual connection between wanting to make yourself feel good (in one way) and wanting to avoid feeling bad (in another area). Perhaps it's a deep connection. Perhaps they're not related at all. There's no way any of us could "know that for you," and even if we did it wouldn't matter because you'll need to learn it and apply it "all by yourself."

Except that it's not really "all by yourself" if you can find a support group with enough care & unconditional acceptance to allow you to "let it all out" and figure it out. I'm not sure if this forum will meet that entire need for you -- maybe yes, maybe no -- but you certainly have a good candidate for a group to take at least some of this on.

So, sof sof, your family stuff IS your persona, and your sexual stuff is ALSO your persona. Nothing's off-topic, except maybe discussions of bourbon brands (hint, hint). Go for it. - Briut

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by silentbattle - 22 Feb 2010 23:35

Exactly - there should be no discussion of bourbon brands - we should simply stick to woodford.

SR - it sounds like you're doing well in general - i would caution that when the primary force driving us towards marriage is the hole inside us, that can be dangerous. Not bad, necessarily, but dangerous.

As far as parents - every situation is different, and I can only share my own experiences - but I have the advantage of being many years past my parent's divorce, and having been through *many* awkward situations. Again - I'm sure your mother is very special. However, very often we tend to see one parent's side of things more easily, when both parents are very unhealthy - and from what you mentioned about your mother before ("I can't speak to my mother about it because she knocks my opinions aside and tells me I'm wrong or something."), well - I know that having a mother like that (purely theoretically, of course ;D) would certainly influence me!

All I'm saying is that when it comes to who's right, and who's wrong (or more right and less right, or more wrong and less wrong), sometimes it's very hard to figure that out. Especially from the perspective of a son, who's very emotionally involved and not-objective, in all sorts of ways.

Keeping a good job is very important, I agree. And distancing yourself from you parents and their issues is something you'll have to figure out as things go on. It's a process.

Things might be difficult at times, but you can always keep on rocking. And trucking. And rolling.
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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by briut - 24 Feb 2010 16:06

SR: how ya doin' ?

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by sonicReducer - 25 Feb 2010 15:15

tired! fasting tends to exhaust me or give me headaches.

Baruch H-Shem not too bad, although not very simchadik considering the zman. Not sure what will be with my folks, I don't think my mother has decided 100% what she wants to do but it seems divorce is likely. At the moment I think not feeling depressed is a bit of a victory in itself, considering.

I've been clean for about 9 days, but it hasnt been easy. My mood has also been yo-yo'ing a bit, so with that comes a desire for comfort that often got expressed via p*** and shfichas zera when I was younger, so my y'h has been nagging me quite a bit. Being bombarded by images

or near to people - like on the train - also really doesn't help. Where I work there is also a lot of dirty talk and joking around, which also sometimes is the last thing I want to hear.

I'm grinding on at the moment. I find my shmira is hardest when its something I dont *want* to maintain but feel I *haveto*, and much easier when its something that I *want*. At the moment I'm floating a bit around the 'have to' mark, so evenings and free time become a bit of a wrestling match.

I also find it difficult to relax, something I think I mentioned before, so my y'h just nags me about this.

Treated myself to a good bottle of whisky (a 12 year old single malt Balblair), so perhaps having something luxurious and enjoyable now and again will help me sidestep the 'relaxing' y'h.

Shidduchim are still in hold - something that is frustrating but recognizable as being necessary right now. Hopefully H' will soon get me to a place where I'm ready to start again.

Kol tuv, hope everyone is doing well :D

sR

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Re: SonicReducer's story so far
Posted by Ineedhelp!! - 25 Feb 2010 15:21

You're a true warrior sR. I know if I was in your situation I would have foiled to the yetzer hara by now. Thats why we are put in our respective situations. Because knows **ONLY WE CAN SUCCEED** in them. Hashem believes in you and knows you have the potential not only to overcome this, but also turn it into something good for the future. You can continue to be a source of chizuk for me and I am sure many other people on the forum. Keep it up!

-Yiddle

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