

Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 08 Jun 2009 21:53

HeiligeH PinteleH Yid, Aaron4, Hoping, etc, etc.,

What I am about to share is for me, not necessarily for you. You may feel completely differently or flat-out disagree and **Kol Hakavod, precious brothers!**

This drash/mussar section of the thread is enlightening and really beautiful, as others have posted. **However, in the spirit of "veHachayos Ratzon Vashov"**, I need to take a deep breath and back up at times like this. I need to remember that (beautiful and true) Torah insights into what the YH is doing, what we are doing, how we do it, etc., never helped me get sober when I was acting out. They are just a luxury we can "afford" in sobriety. They still, are not my mainstay, just a chizzuk and part of my "pay'rosayhem ba'olam hazeh", perhaps...but...

Sof Davar, when a "nisayon" occurs for me, what saves me is **plain and poshut** the Ribono Shel Olam. Not **my** tefillah, nor my efforts against the YH. They may be hishtadlus, like going to work, battle, etc. All I know is that **I** let Him in, calling out to Him in my **worst** moment because **I** do not want to act out and (eventually) die. He does the rest.

In retrospect there is glory in recovery and I *can* appreciate the beauty of what has happened, yes. But in the moment (*and before it*) I can't afford to think of myself as doing any tikkunim, fulfilling a mitzvah/prophecy/whatever. The most frustrating days for my acting out used to be (bedavka) aseres yemei teshuvah, sefira (especially *yesod* days!). These things put the struggle on my plate. When I struggle within a **Torah** context it just proves too complicated for me and I struggle. When I struggle, I get in trouble. And "trouble" is *really* bad for my health.

I do not think of myself, in sobriety or in acting out, as reflecting anything good or bad about this generation or the Jewish people. I am a holy yid like you and any other yid, who is also just another addict in recovery. In that respect I am very much like the goy sitting next to me at the meeting, who may be my sponsor or sponsee.

Sorry if anyone finds this offending or upsetting. It is not the truth, just what works for me so far. It may change tomorrow! Still, today I need to be honest about what works and what doesn't, so far, for me. Much love and admiration for each of you - Dov

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by London - 24 Jun 2009 11:32

[battleworn wrote on 24 Jun 2009 08:04:](#)

That being the case, OF-COURSE the Gedolim have been encouraging people to go. It doesn't mean that they studied the whole thing in depth and came to the conclusion that there's nothing in all the AA tradition that's contrary to Torah!

Dear Battle

A few years ago I sat with R' Zvi Baskt a Mashgiach in Gateshead, who has sent many people to 12 step fellowships, he told me that he has been through the 12 steps with R' Matisyohu Salomon and R' Matisyohu confirmed that there is no part of the 12 steps that is contrary to the Torah.

[battleworn wrote on 24 Jun 2009 08:04:](#)

So let me rephrase my question: If, say, R' Don Segal would come and say "I have found that lust addiction is a big problem in the frum community. So I was choiker vidoresh the sources and B'H I came up with a system that will definitely work for whoever tries."

This question is academic as this does not exist, as I posted yesterday - if Torah and mussar works then great if not the Gedolim of today have advised to use the 12 step fellowships.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 11:46

I don't think there are any problems with the 12 steps. In Fact I agree with Boruch that they are

Torah as opposed to Chochma. What I want to know about is the rest of AA philosophy.

Much of that philosophy has been displayed a lot on this forum. I do not want to start a discussion about the philosophy itself. I'm doing that privately. I'm just trying to make clear that AA philosophy does not have a haskomoh from any Gadol.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 11:50

This question is academic as this does not exist, as I posted yesterday - if Torah and mussar works then great if not the Gedolim of today have advised to use the 12 step fellowships.

The question can be very useful to the GYE network, if we care enough about jews to want to help them in the best way possible.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by London - 24 Jun 2009 12:07

I was just looking through my paperwork to find a document, and I found a leaflet given out at one of the JSS (Jewish Spiritual Shabaton) weekends I attended, containing AA clich?s, which I will share a few as they made me smile:

? Anger is but one letter away from danger

? Before you say I can't..... say I'll try

? Change is a process not an event

? Don't quit before the miracle happens

? Every recovery from addiction began with one sober minute

? First we stayed sober because we have to... then we stay sober because we are willing to... finally we stay sober because we want to...

? Knowledge of "the answers" never made anyone slip - it was failing to practice "the answers" that were known

? (my favourite) - You need newcomers to tell you where you came from; old timers, to tell you where you can go, and a sponsor to tell you where you are at

? (another favourite) - A 12 step meeting is where losers get together to talk about their winnings

next installment tomorrow :D

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by the.guard - 24 Jun 2009 12:18

OOH OOh, I LOVE THESE LONDON. POST MORE!!

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 24 Jun 2009 12:21

The question can be very useful to the GYE network, if we care enough about jews to want to help them in the best way possible.

Which question? As London said, it does not exist. If it doesn't exist, then there is no question.

We all agree to what London said, that *"if Torah and mussar works then great, and if not, the Gedolim of today have advised us to use the 12 step fellowships"*.

So what is the question? Is it what I explained to Boruch here?

We are exploring if there might be some way to build a 12-Step program with all the same ideas, groups support, sponsors and all, but with a "Jewish Twist" - if you will. In other words, taking all the Yesodos of the 12-Steps, and taking everything about them that makes them work, and just "adding" to them words of Chazal, Mussar, whatever, to make them not only a powerful "medicine" like "anti-biotics", but ALSO bringing into them aspects of Ahavas Hashem, Emunah, Bitachon, Ahavas Chavierim, etc... In this way, the program will have an added element of power for religious Jews, by virtue of the fact that it isn't just "enlightened self-interest" anymore, it becomes true Avodas Hashem in and of itself, and not just a way to GET TO Avodas Hashem. It becomes true "Me'or Sheba Machzir Le'mutav" and a "Tavlin", etc...

Battleworn, you are confusing us. What is it exactly that you want to know/explore/ask/challenge in this thread, and in the other long thread you started? Can you ask exactly what you want to ask, short and sweet?

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 12:37

The question is not about R' Dan Segal, it's about the hashkafa of 12 steppers. I think that Boruch probably understands that very well.

This is not my thread. If you meant to ask about the other thread, I believe that if we can gather the information that I'm trying to gather, it will empower us in a great way and enable us to effect Klal Yisroel in a much greater way than we already are.

The only problem is that people are suspicious of me, because they think I'm on the other side. But in reality, I'm not on any side. My motivations are only Ahavas Hashem, Ahavas Yisroel and Ahavas HaTorah.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 24 Jun 2009 12:47

I know you mean Leshayim Shamayim, but I remain as confused as ever. Can you re-read what I wrote in reply #111 and answer please?

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 24 Jun 2009 12:48

Hi guys!

#1: In honor of London's post above, just a reflective vort from todays shir shel yom:

im omarti: "motosh raglee!", chasdecha Hashem yis'adeini!

Consider it as follows: Whenever (or "if" - *a t'nai*) I said (in my heart): "I'm slipping/tripping/falling!" meaning that I recognized and came to peace with the fact that I *can't make it* cuz my own best thinking got me to be a loser (to lust) (#1), *Your chesed*, Hashem, supports me and keeps me standing (#2)! Thank-You!

#2: It never occurred to me that there are any ingredients in the 12 steps that are inconsistent with Torah. As I tried to explain in my long poste on the page before this one, As far as I can see, there are two divisions of what we call the steps:

Step 1, which is totally different than any other step (it's all from/in *me*, *can* be done perfectly, and has nothing whatsoever to do with Torah because it's only based on what is *actually* inside me (**not** what *should* be inside me) growing out of my own nature and my own experience). It often takes time for us to admit our powerlessness, but it is our admission (*we admitted*), not a teaching or principle.

The other 11, which are the actual solution and are based on the oxford mov't teaching the AAs. Here is where I believe there may be tweaks needed based on Torah concepts, if you like. I, for one, feel no tweaks are needed. And thank G-d, it works fine for me, today. I do not believe the 11 can stop me from acting out (only Hashem can do that - *if* I admit step 1 as in the vort above). Rather, they teach me a way to live so that I'll may never get *uncomfortable* enough that I'll **need** to act out. And that is basically what most of the Torah is about - instructions for **living right**, taylored for yidden. Does anyone take issue w/anything i've posted? Help me out and let me know...

So, what exactly do the interested parties here want to create? If you could spell it out it'd help me see if I can be useful (Who knows!). Thanks!

PS. I've been a few JSS's, have I seen anyone here over there? My name is really Dov...

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 12:59

Can you re-read what I wrote in reply #111 and answer please?

I just re-read it because you asked me to. But for the answer you'll have to be patient. The email is iy'H comming soon. Probably some time today. I really don't think you want me to post it here. And I'm absolutely sure that I don't want to post it.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 24 Jun 2009 13:04

[battleworn wrote on 24 Jun 2009 08:04:](#)

If, say, R' Don Segal would come and say "I have found that lust addiction is a big problem in the frum community. So I was choiker vidoresh the sources and B'H I came up with a system that will definitely work for whoever tries."

What will you do? A)Will you say it can't be because the big book says that you need experience?

B)Will you trust him because he's more worthy of your trust than the big book is?

C)Will you say that the big book is right for Goyim bur we have "Chochma Eloki"?

D)Will you say something else?

In addition to Reb Boruch, I address this question to all the 12 steppers. I'll be grateful to all those who answer.

None of the above. I will simply say that if any godol says that he has a system then it is certainly worth a try.

If HoRav Don Segal Shlit"a said that he had discovered the best system for an oil change I would look into it. But having not heard any claims on oil changes from gedolim I would not go from godol to godol asking about oil changes. The same is true for addiction. I have heard no claims that the gedolim have any system for overcoming addiction and unless I hear otherwise I do not expect that there is one.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 13:47

In other words even though the big book says "like no non-adict could" it's not an absolute, at least for you. That's all I wanted to know. I wonder if all the other 12 steppers here feel the same.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
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[battleworn wrote on 24 Jun 2009 11:46:](#)

I don't think there are any problems with the 12 steps. In Fact I agree with Boruch that they are Torah as opposed to Chochma. What I want to know about is the rest of AA philosophy.

Much of that philosophy has been displayed a lot on this forum. I do not want to start a discussion about the philosophy itself. I'm doing that privately. I'm just trying to make clear that AA philosophy does not have a haskomoh from any Gadol.

Battleworn,

There is no single AA philosophy any more than there is a GUE philosophy. AA and like-minded

12 Step fellowships are movements to which anyone who says they are serious about becoming sober can belong to, without ever attending a meeting, without ever paying dues (there are none), without ever signing up, without ever doing anything other than believing that they are a member.

My personal belief from first-hand experience is that there is nothing questionable in hashkofo in the first 164 pages of the Big Book, Bill W's 12 Steps and 12 Traditions and the SA White Book. That is more than enough literature and philosophy for any decent recovery.

Additionally I believe that there is much valuable material to be learned from AA's early history, especially the approach of what was called "Orthodox AA" in Akron and Cleveland Ohio. New York AA was significantly different, less religious and never had the success results that the Orthodox movement had. It could be argued that this was an effect rather than a cause -- perhaps it was nothing to do with the methods or philosophies of NY AA as opposed to OH AA, it is just that more religious people will do better than less religious people. Maybe. But one thing is certain, NY AA was geared for a less religious crowd and OH AA was geared for a more religious crowd.

I am going to continue with something that could be extremely controversial and even potentially divisive, but I believe that I need to say it for the benefit of those not yet in the fellowships. To all those already in the fellowships I say that each fellowship is independent, each group is independent and every individual is independent. The thoughts below are just an honest share from just another guy who is far from being any guru or expert. They are just my own views for whatever they are worth, I have goodwill to ALL in the fellowships and you are certainly entitled to disagree with me and you may even be right.

With that disclaimer I will say my piece.

In my opinion it is self-evident that for those with a background of frum yiddishkeit OH AA is far more appropriate than NY AA. I have spoken to a very prominent and frum Rov within the 12 Step movement (he has 17 years of sobriety from lust and crack), arguably he is looked at as the "godol" of the movement and I asked him for his opinion on Orthodox AA and he had no idea what that was. I have learned that "attraction and not promotion" is key and therefore I did not try to either educate him or convince him. I just asked him about his mehalech in doing the Steps and he said that it should be "Keep it Simple".

Here in my own belief are some key elements of Orthodox AA:

- 1) Daily Study of religious literature such as the Bible (for notzrim) and strong affiliation with organized religion
- 2) The program is all 12 Steps and the rest is only tools, an early slogan is "When should I do the Steps? - When do you want to get better?"
- 3) Step work is more important than meetings

Here in my belief are some beliefs that seem to me to have come from non-Orthodox AA:

- 1) Go to 90 meetings in 90 days
- 2) Don't rush to start the Steps
- 3) Don't rush to complete the Steps
- 4) Don't think and don't ask too many questions
- 5) Take anyone you feel like to be your sponsor (regardless of the sponsor's "G-d consciousness" and religious attitude) and follow whatever they tell you blindly
- 6) Keep focusing on your powerlessness
- 7) It's not your fault you have a disease
- 8) You are not ready yet, you have to relapse some more
- 9) Therapy is an integral part of AA
- 10) The God of your understanding should be someone other than the G-d of your Tradition

And I could go on... I do not claim to be objective at all (I certainly am not) but I remain very underwhelmed by some of the things that I have heard within the movement that in my opinion have no basis at all in AA literature, no basis in AA history and no basis in common sense.

In my own opinion Roy K's statement in the White Book explains some of the results I have

seen and heard about - he said that the right kind of meetings are important because right fellowship with G-d depends on right fellowship with man. Groups with a history of large numbers of atheists, agnostics and secular people (some NY Groups) may be a step forward for non-AA agnostics and atheists but in my opinion they are a massive step backward for religious Jews.

Fortunately there are many groups with predominantly from Yidden that have many fine qualities, but in my opinion to a greater or lesser degree there is much residual influence from NY AA in these groups and in my opinion there is room for improvement by sharing a better way with them, one person at a time - that is attraction and not promotion. I am convinced that head on arguments will only be divisive and counter-productive. So, I will share the way I got from my sponsor and they will share what they got and it will not be what either wants but it will be what Hashem wants that will win.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by boruch - 24 Jun 2009 14:07

[battleworn wrote on 24 Jun 2009 13:47:](#)

In other words even though the big book says "like no non-addict could" it's not an absolute, at least for you. That's all I wanted to know. I wonder if all the other 12 steppers here feel the same.

The main reason, aside from experience, that one addict can help another as no other can, is that an addict will fail to listen to non-addicts by rationalizing that the non-addict cannot and does not understand. So Rav Don Segal could create the ideal system but no-one could give that system over like one alcoholic to another.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 14:14

That's fine! Again, my question was if the words of the big book are an absolute to you or not. And I understand that the answer is no.

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