

Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 08 Jun 2009 21:53

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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 Ratzo 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 battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 18:01

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As far as the titles, I'm not a rabbi or the son of a rabbi, and i am FAR from perfect. I went through he-- in my life and I am 50 and still trying to overcome and undo the effects from those bad times.

The Gemoroh says that Elazar ben Durdiyah was Titled Rav by the Heavenly Court. You out did him on a few accounts. First he died when he did Teshuva but you lived which is much harder. His Teshuva took a very short time (minutes or hours) while you've been sticking it out for months. Even if you only want to count the hardest part, it also lasted for months (beats me, how you didn't bring Moshi'ach immediately) And you are an active live inspiration, while he is only a passive one. So I think that should settle it.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 24 Jun 2009 18:07

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Moreinu verabbeinu Jack Shlita!!

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 24 Jun 2009 18:28

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[dov wrote on 22 Jun 2009 22:26:](#)

There are two parts to the 12 steps experience in recovery:

Part 1- quitting and not starting back up again (step one)

Part 2- learning how to live in such a way that the addict will never get so uncomfortable that he will need to use his drug, again. (all the other 11 steps)

Hello Dov,

I don't like getting into discussions with fellow SAers on the Steps, my comments here are more clarification than anything else but it is very important to address an all-too common fallacy and misconception in AA/SA that one can get by by two-stepping - Step One and Step Twelve.

The reality is that Step One is not about quitting at all. Step One is about giving up on all hope of recovery by non-Divine means. **A Step One, even a 100% Step One will never on its own keep anyone sober.** Powerlessness is exactly that - a lack of power to quit, and 100% Powerlessness is a 100% lack of power.

I had a sponsee who at a very early point in his recovery, each time he acted out, kept insisting that he needed to convince himself some more that he is powerless and once he realizes it enough he will stay sober. I explained the obvious, that no matter how convinced he is of his powerlessness, powerlessness by definition will never equal power. He and every other 12-Stepper needs a minimum of a genuine Step Three - a genuine surrender.

Even with a good Step Three it is only after Step Ten that the insanity of the first drink is lifted. So until Step Ten there is still serious risk of relapse.

As far as getting started by initially stopping his acting out, per the SA White Book that's Step Zero not Step One.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 24 Jun 2009 18:46

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[battleworn wrote on 24 Jun 2009 18:01:](#)

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It is worth adding that although the warm wishes are very much well-deserved, as far as the facts R' Eliezer ben Durdiya was more addicted than anyone we know --- how do we know that? The Gemoro says that in general one can overcome aveiros, including sexual aveiros, but R' Eliezer ben Durdiya was different because, having slept with every single prostitute he was extremely addicted on a level that others are not.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps  
Posted by London - 24 Jun 2009 18:56

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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.

Dear Battle

You contradict yourself in this post - you write that the 12 steps are Torah, so why do they need a haskomoh from a godol. Are you suggesting that R' Twersky is not a godol? He endorses AA and its offsprings 100%. Further there are many other Rabbonim who send people to the various fellowships, do you think that they are doing so blindly?

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by London - 24 Jun 2009 19:20

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I have been reflecting on this post for a while, and it has occurred to me that perhaps the people like me who are not the world's biggest talmedai chachomim, (I cannot quote not even a fraction of the sources that are constantly on this post), will find it easier to get recovery. I am simple person, I was told that for me to get well I need to go to a fellowship, I was told by me therapist You should change your name as you most certainly are not worn at the time that the fellowships have the Haskomoh of R' Twersky. So I went to SA and got sober for 3 years, until I stopped working the program. For the most part of the 3 years I did what I was told and my life turned around like you will never beleive. Today I am back working the steps and the program and my life is once again getting back on track. I am working on putting my lust down trigger by trigger. I am working on my resentments, my character defects, I am working on becoming closer to Hashem, do to His will and to have complete faith in Him and accept life on lifes terms. I am learning to forgive and ask for forgiveness, and I am trying to be of help to my fellow man. All this is really really simple, in fact you cannot get simpler than this. I ask Hashem that I should be able to live my life like this one day at a time.

However I am sure that if I was well versed in Rambam, Ramban, Chofetz Chaim, Ramchal, Rashi..... I would constantly be asking does this fit in like this sefer, let me check to see, I will be so busy making sure what I am doing fits in to the Mesilas Yeshorim, Shaarai Teshuva that I will drive myself so crazy that I would act out again in frustration. Whenever I read a source from seforim quoted in the forum it gives me tremendous chizuk and that works for me. I do not need to look through hundreds of seforim to find a program that works, I have a program on a golden platter with a Hecsher from todays biggest Gedolim, what more can I want.

I bless everyone on this forum that they should find a simple program that works for them.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by aaron4 - 24 Jun 2009 19:53

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London,

I am touched by your honest self appraisal. I have no way of knowing if it's true but will take it at face value. I am not a Talmid Chochom either and do not have a wealth of sources to quote from or use as a tool to question advice given by those wiser than I. However I would like to share one small part of my experience during recovery that should help address your concern:

However I am sure that if I was well versed in Rambam, Ramban, Chofetz Chaim, Ramchal, Rashi..... I would constantly be asking does this fit in like this sefer, let me check to see, I will be so busy making sure what I am doing fits in to the Mesilas Yeshorim, Shaarai Teshuva that I will drive myself so crazy that I would act out again in frustration.

What I'm beginning to see is that, like recovery from the addiction, Torah works **with** your emotional makeup, not against it. When you learn with the right attitude (and the steps taken in recovery will help you gain this attitude), the words of the Ramchal **reinforce** your commitment to clean, honest living, they do not challenge the conclusions you've reached through the steps. If you find yourself struggling to reconcile what you're learning in Torah vs. what you've learned in recovery, stop learning that particular sefer, it's not speaking to you right now. Perhaps (hopefully) one day it will, because you will have grown and will have the right perspective, but for now, find something that speaks to you and you'll find tremendous strength that will help you immeasurably on your path of recovery and growth.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 20:12

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You should change your name as you most certainly are not worn

Reb London, you are not the first one to say this. The difference is, that last time, my answer was that it does describe the way I feel and I'm not yet ready to change my name. Now, B'H, although I'm in more pain than ever in my life, I b'h feel rather fresh and young.

My only question now is: Won't it confuse people if I change my name after posting for about 10 months under the old name? So if the chevra don't mind giving me their opinions, it will help me decide what to do.

You contradict yourself in this post - you write that the 12 steps are Torah, so why do they need a haskomoh from a gadol.

In my opinion, they don't need a haskama.

I don't know how to say this more clearly than I did: It is the rest of the philosophy that is not even alluded to in the 12 steps, that can't possibly have a haskama from any Gadol including R' Twerski. As Boruch explained, there is no way in the world to know what traditions are being handed down in the various groups. It is likewise perfectly impossible for anyone to give a haskomoh on whatever your sponsor tells you. All this is obvious, I'm not saying any big "chidushim"

He endorses AA and its offsprings 100%. Further there are many other Rabbonim who send people to the various fellowships, do you think that they are doing so blindly?

As I said already a few times: It's always been the only choice, so of course they send people to them. What then should they do. They're obviously not just going to let them rot away.

If I'm still not being clear, please tell me exactly what it is that wasn't clear.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 24 Jun 2009 20:20

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If I'm still not being clear, please tell me exactly what it is that wasn't clear.

Dear BattleFRESH,

No, you're not being clear at all, and I think you're driving me, Boruch, Dov and London up the wall trying to figure out WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANT ALREADY??????? Are you intentionally holding us in suspense, or are we just all not hearing something you're saying? Could you PLEASE just ask already what it is you want, bottom line, short and sweet?



Much obliged.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 20:48

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Rabeinu Hagadol, B'michilos k'vodcha I was answering London's question and not yours. It's very important to differentiate between the question of what my ultimate goal is [that's what you are trying to figure out; and the question of what did I say [that's what London was asking]. I believe that I answered London's question very clearly.

About your question: I'm very sorry. Past experience has shown, that I have a lot of trouble making myself clear to you. This time, I can't afford to be misunderstood. So after writing what I plan on sending you, I first sent it to Yakov and asked him to please help me make it as clear as possible. He was eager to help, but being that it was late at night, he said that tommorrow [today] he'll work on it. Then he dissapeared. He hasn't been on line at all today, I have no idea why. So again, I'm sorry.

But why don't you take the time to appreciate the things that were nisbarer here in the meantime.

If you read through everything you can -for ex.- learn the difference between Dov's idea of who SA is for and Boruch's opinion. This info. can be very useful in many ways. It can also help us understand their posts (particularly Dov's) in context.

Information is empowering, don't you agree?

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 24 Jun 2009 20:59

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[London wrote on 24 Jun 2009 19:20:](#)

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I bless everyone on this forum that they should find a simple program that works for them.

[aaron4 wrote on 24 Jun 2009 19:53:](#)

like recovery from the addiction, Torah works **with** your emotional makeup, not against it.

London,

As you no doubt live with all your being, G-d runs the World. I found for me that whatever knowledge I had of Rambam, Ramban, Chofetz Chaim, Ramchal, Rashi actually helped me do a far better program. Yes, initially the last the last thing in the world I wanted to do was the Steps but Hashem took care of that and within 10 days of my first post here on January 20th, on January 29th I joined SA, 10 days sober and Bechasdei Hashem I am still sober, one day at a time.

Now that I think about it my life before joining SA had two phases. The first was until January 20th and my first post on GUE. I learned mussar deeply and committedly for over 20 years, I had an unparalleled Rebbe for a good number of years and I learned Torah deeply. It did not keep me sober. I was unable on my own to get to the real underlying issues that drove me to acting out and so the Torah and Mussar were not directed at the true source of the problem.

Years of therapy failed to get anywhere near the issues and I felt that I would have died at the thought of telling my Rov (I now know that had I done so, he would have sent me to SA.)

I had an accountability partner for over a year, had expensive accountability software installed, almost got caught by my Rov and with the persuasion of my accountability partner I told my therapist. That took me to January 19th of this year. Through our mutual accountability software I had discovered the online posts of my accountability partner here on GUE and I was very inspired. I was convinced that finally everything had come together and I would be able to quit acting out for good. That night I acted out yet again and when the insanity had finally lifted, I made a decision to take massive action to give it up once and for all. I was finally convinced that between Torah, Mussar and a full Teshuva, Hashem would prevent me from relapsing.

That's when the second phase of my pre-SA life began. I posted my teshuva here on GUE in a way that I felt would commit me as never before and put all my pride on the line -- bishnei yitzrecho. I deliberately and provocatively took on everyone on the forum who was interested on the demerits of the 12 Steps. For over a week I remained totally unconvinced by anything anyone here posted. I had done more research than they had on the Steps, I understood the relevant maamorei chazal in a way that they did not and I was convinced that I would stay sober for life that way. I was committed to founding face-to-face Torah groups for dealing with this addiction in a way that I have not subsequently noticed among anyone else on these forums.

And so far, thanks to Hashem, I **have** stayed sober. But Hashem had different plans for me. Why I cannot say. On day eight of my recovery my therapist succeeded in persuading me to join SA, which I did 2 days later. I was not easy but it took him only 5 minutes. To this day he says that the only success that he had with me in 8 months of weekly meetings was the 5 minutes it took getting me to join SA.

Now I still believe that I may have been able to stay sober for life without the 12 Steps. But I know with certainty that there is no way that I would have been any use to anyone else this early in my recovery -- it's just 156 days into sobriety and through no merit of my own, and only through Hashem Yisborach I now have four Frum sponsees, have started a face-to-face SA back to basics group for Frum yidden, an online back to basics group and tonight a back to basics phone conference for Frum yidden all with the guidance and help of a sponsor who has taught me what I had been unable to learn from anyone else.

**So, should I have continued on Torah alone? Absolutely not, without a shadow of doubt I can say with absolute certainty that Hashem decided that I am more useful to Him if I do the Steps.**

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by MosheF - 24 Jun 2009 21:21

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It caught me by surprise that as I grow in sobriety, my yiddishkeit is going through a extremely cold period, I am more sober then I ever was but my davening, learning etc. is falling to zero. I have very little cheshek or patience for anything yiddishkeit these days. I wonder if the 12 steps is somehow responsible for this decline. I guess I have to start working on my ruchnius.

When I first joined the program I was shocked to find a very sober frum member who rarely davens with a minyan and confessed to sometimes not putting teffilin on or another guy who was frum (don't know how frum) until he joined the program and when he joined he simultaneously dropped his yiddishkeit completely, he is sober but also mechalel shabbos. I couldn't comprehend how the 2 go together, I assumed if your frum, this program will make you frummer. It doesn't seem so.

It seems to me that the 12 steps make an addict's life manageable, it brings him back to his senses so he could actually think. I spent days and weeks on my computer ignoring parnassah and family completely, I wasn't able to think, I just wanted to watch porn, nothing else ever mattered. In recovery, your life becomes manageable again and allows you to think normally and act responsibly. You can do what you want with that normalcy, if you learn mussar and work on your ruchniyus you will become a more erlicher yid. If you don't consciously work on ruchniyus you will not become a tzadik just by working the program. My point is that working the steps doesn't seem to make people into tzadikim and you must combine the 12 steps with mussar, 12 steps to make you normal and mussar to make you Jewish.

By the way, I'm curious what others think. I wonder if I even get shchar for working on my addiction and character defects (middos) through the 12 steps, it doesn't seem so.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 24 Jun 2009 22:21

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[boruch wrote on 24 Jun 2009 18:28:](#)

[dov wrote on 22 Jun 2009 22:26:](#)

There are two parts to the 12 steps experience in recovery:

Part 1- quitting and not starting back up again (step one)

Part 2- learning how to live in such a way that the addict will never get so uncomfortable that he will need to use his drug, again. (all the other 11 steps)

Hello Dov,

I don't like getting into discussions with fellow SAers on the Steps, my comments here are more clarification than anything else but it is very important to address an all-too common fallacy and misconception in AA/SA that one can get by by two-stepping - Step One and Step Twelve.

The reality is that Step One is not about quitting at all. Step One is about giving up on all hope of recovery by non-Divine means. **A Step One, even a 100% Step One will never on its own keep anyone sober.** Powerlessness is exactly that - a lack of power to quit, and 100% Powerlessness is a 100% lack of power.

I had a sponsee who at a very early point in his recovery, each time he acted out, kept insisting that he needed to convince himself some more that he is powerless and once he realizes it enough he will stay sober. I explained the obvious, that no matter how convinced he is of his powerlessness, powerlessness by definition will never equal power. He and every other 12-Stepper needs a minimum of a genuine Step Three - a genuine surrender.

Even with a good Step Three it is only after Step Ten that the insanity of the first drink is lifted. So until Step Ten there is still serious risk of relapse.

As far as getting started by initially stopping his acting out, per the SA White Book that's Step Zero not Step One.

Dear Boruch -

Thank you for your clarification on the meaning of step 1 and I look forward to getting to know you better. Perhaps I was not clear when describing my experience of the steps. In no way was I referring to two-stepping, as far as I am aware. Perhaps I misunderstood your point. Regardless, it is always nice to read someone write about the centrality of the 3rd step in recovery, as you have. There was a time in my recovery that I was too desperate to teach rather than to share, and too desperate to have sponsees. Boruch Hashem, I was helped to see that no sponsoring can substitute for a deeper application of the principles of all the steps in my heart and life. I need a personal and real relationship with Hashem and the world around me. That is what all the steps help me do. Thanks for reminding me of that again. May Hashem help us all be ever more clear and helpful to each other.

with respect and love for another addict in recovery, Dov

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 24 Jun 2009 23:12

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[MosheF wrote on 24 Jun 2009 21:21:](#)

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frummer. It doesn't seem so.

Moshe I have seen a number of people like you in the rooms. To me it seems that there is too much mumbo-jumbo nonsense being spoken about the supposed differences between "Spirituality" and Religion between "Higher Power" and Hashem, words and concepts that were originally only used to give space to atheists and agnostics have now been forced down the throats of frum yidden. Nothing is said about how the early AAs found the G-d of their Tradition, spent hours in prayer and Bible Study and strengthened their own religious communities. Here is what the Big Book says,

[quote="Big Book pp. 130-131][size=10pt]Alcoholics who have derided religious people will be helped by such contacts. Being possessed of a spiritual experience, the alcoholic will find he has much in common with these people... he will make new friends and is sure to find new avenues of usefulness and pleasure. He and his family can be a bright spot in such congregations. He may bring new hope and new courage to many a priest, minister, or rabbi, who gives his all to minister to our troubled world.[/size][[/quote]

It is tragic that so many frum Jews are getting "ACLU" AA that separates Religion from Spirituality and separates Higher Power from Hashem.

Clarence Snyder founder of Cleveland OH AA became a religious fundamentalist and although in meetings he never spoke religion between sponsor and sponsee he witnessed his own religion converting his sponsees. Cleveland had the best success rates in AA history. Bill W and Dr Bob both acknowledged in writing Cleveland's unparalleled 93% success rate. NY AA by comparison did not get close to 50% success.

But it is about so much more than just sobriety. Horses are also sober from Alcohol. In Cleveland they had recoveries that were not all about meetings, meetings, meetings, depression, depression, depression, treatment centers, treatment centers, treatment centers, therapy, therapy, therapy. In Cleveland they found a new regenerated relationship with G-d, a new regenerated relationship with their co-religionists and a new regenerated relationship with their wider communities.

I believe that there is no reason at all to argue this. In my opinion the results will speak for themselves exactly as they did back in the 1940s and frum Jews are no fools. When they see

what works they will make the right choice.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 25 Jun 2009 09:17

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Dear Reb London and Rabeinu Guard,

In case you still didn't understand me, Boruch has now provided us with a very good example. It of course goes without saying, that neither R' Twerski nor any other Gadol would ever consider giving a haskama to "mubo-jumbo nonsense".

This also illustrates one of the great benefits of this discussion (which Rabenu seemed to think is pointless). I would think it should be obvious, that if you're going to be sending people to SA, then it's a most basic responsibility to direct them to the right place and to protect them from "mumbo-jumbo nonsense. DOES ANYONE DISAGREE WITH ME?

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