

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 - 25 Jun 2009 09:21

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I should point out that R' Twerski is an outsider (as Boruch explained in the past) and does not have the inside knowledge to do this. BUT WE CAN, because we have insiders over here!

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by London - 25 Jun 2009 10:39

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[boruch wrote on 24 Jun 2009 23:12:](#)

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.

Dear Boruch & Battle

I have been to many AA & SA meetings over the years, and in my time I can honestly say I have never seen anything forced down anyone's throats. I hear the message at the meetings I have been to all over the world of faith, trust and prayer, working on oneself to overcome this illness. If a person is struggling in his concept of Hashem the program will tell you to not let that be an obstacle. I felt let down by Hashem when I came in the rooms, I had davened to Him been to Rabbonim for help to no avail, the last thing I wanted to hear is about G-d and religion, and AA said to me that's ok look around the rooms and you will see people who are getting sober let that empower you let them be your higher power, reach out to them when you are struggling - what's mumbo jumbo about that. Slowly but surely as my mind cleared I came to regain my faith in Hashem. Further one of the major attractions of the 12 step fellowships is that they are religion neutral, and work on spirituality. If you look around the frum world today you will find many people who are religious but totally devoid of spirituality. Whenever there is a tragedy in the Jewish world the Rabbonim are really quick to go on about tznius or the internet,

never do we here loshon horoh or sinas chinom. This is spirituality and this is where for the addict if his spiritual life is not in check he will relapse. In the meetings that I attend I hear the message that no matter what I do I cannot cure myself, only a power greater than myself can - who is that power Hashem. Further in today's frum world, we are given a completely misguided concept of Hashem all this does not help the addict, so when he gets into the rooms and hears about G-d infinite love for us even during our darkest moments it confuses his religious understandings. The concepts of AA are not at odds with Judaism. You will find that after talking to a lot of frum addicts they will feel let down by our religion and its leaders. We read about the youth at risk and how they rebel, a lot of addicts me included have not rebelled in their youth openly but were in pain nonetheless so used acting out as a means of comfort until it turned into a beast against them.

In my experience, and what I have seen of others, when I came into the rooms, my yiddishkeit was totally empty, devoid of all meaning, and for me the neutral tones of AA helped me get sober so that my mind can gain clarity. After a few years in recovery slowly but surely my Yiddishkeit is waking up. Do not judge another until you have been in his shoes.

Battle you write that we have inside knowledge that the Rabbonim do not have, how many 12 step meetings have you ever attended, you are basing your misguided judgments on what a few people in this forum are writing as opposed to the hundreds and hundreds of frum people who have been saved by the fellowships and their religious beliefs given a major overhaul. Further it is well known that R' Twersky attends open AA meetings on a regular basis. We also say in the fellowships take what works for you and leave the rest.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 25 Jun 2009 11:25

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the last thing I wanted to hear is about G-d and religion

Dear London, I understand you very well. I'm sure you'll agree, that someone who doesn't feel that way about G-D and religion, is in quite a different situation than you were. The last thing we would want to do to him is put him with people that do feel that way, and add to his life a new difficulty. That's what happened to Moshe and others, and it should be -I think- the responsibility of the GYE network, to help people avoid that situation.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps  
Posted by London - 25 Jun 2009 12:12

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Battle

At meetings there are messages for every person at his stage in recovery and religious commitment. A person who is strong in faith will not be influenced by those who are not. Again I would invite you to attend either AA & SA meetings for a number of weeks and only then will you be in a position to make any judgements or suggestions.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps  
Posted by battleworn - 25 Jun 2009 12:22

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I'm not making judgements. I'm quoting Boruch and Moshe. And I'll leave it up to them to answer you.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps  
Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 12:57

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Moshe asked:

By the way, I'm curiious 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.

Battleworn also asked me in a private e-mail, why it is that people like Dov can't move ON after spending 11 years in basements with Roman Catholic sponsors, and why can't they now use the Koach of Torah to SOAR!!

I would like to try and answer both these questions together (I just sent this to Battleworn by e-mail, but I want to post it here as well).

The way I see it, the 12-Steps provide the *Even Hayesod* of what it means to be a TORAH JEW. Some people ask a good question though. Chazal say **Torah Bagoyim Al Tamin?** So here's my take on the matter, and I'd be happy to hear if you agree or not...

The underlying purpose of Torah is really to become selfless and do everything for Hashem's sake. Now, the goyim who learn the deep yesodos of the 12-Steps achieve something called "enlightened self-interest". This means that they are able to internalize that becoming humble, selfless and living with Hashem, is really in their best interest. However, a non-Jew can't get past that, by nature of the fact that their souls are not capable of true *Lishma* (as Rav Shimon Bar Yochai said, *kol ma de'avdin legarmeihu avdin*). That's why "*Torah bagoyim, al tamin*". They can't achieve the true PURPOSE and reach the true SOUL of Torah. However, a guy like Dov, although he'll never admit it, and his *lev nishbar* wants to see himself as an addict just like them, still, by nature of the fact that he has a Jewish soul, he is able to internalize the Yesodos of the 12-Steps **as TORAH**. A Jew is able to truly reach high levels of *Lishma* and *Emunah* that no goy could reach. Because a Jewish soul has the quality of "*kofim oso ad she'yomar rotzeh ani*", **even if he was brought to this state because he was about to DIE**, still, deep down every Jew wants to do everything for Hashem. But a goy can only reach "enlightened self interest".

So while we may be learning Torah **through** the goyim (in the 12-Steps), the goyim themselves are only giving us "Chachma". A Jew, without even being aware of it, is able to turn the *Chachma bagoyim* into **Torah** for himself. (As the chassidishe Rebbes used to take the tunes of the non-Jewish shepherds and uplift them to the highest levels of Kedusha). So I believe that in a sense, people like Dov are able to take the *chachma* of the Roman Catholics in the basement, and soar with it to true **Deveikus**. As Dov recently posted: *As Chuck C said: "A belief in G-d is good, but it is not enough for alcoholics. An Alkie needs to live in the constant awareness of the living presence of the Creator." Sounds suspiciously like deveikus, but what do I know about such things really?* And this, my friends, is the ultimate example of **Shchina batachtonim** if I have ever seen it. As is known in Kabala, the lower down the Madreiga reaches, the higher it extends upwards as well. When Moshiach comes it says "*ve'amdu raglav al har hazeisim*"... the highest levels will reach all the way down to our dark world.

And this also answers Moshe's question (above). I believe the answer is, that while the goyim do not get schar (well, maybe they do get some for their Emunah and selflessness, but still not much) because they are doing this for ultimately for themselves. A Jew though, even if he

THINKS that he is doing it for himself, really wants deep down to reconnect to Hashem - **for Hashem's sake**. And therefore, his **schar** is unmeasurable in working the 12-Steps. And people like Dov and London will tell you that NO, it is not a religious issue for them, it is "life and death". And they convince themselves (like Moshe thought) that they are not even **worthy** of schar, but I tell you, that - ADERABA - the more they believe that they are NOT doing it for schar, the more *Lishma* it **really is** for them, since deep down, **that's all a Jew truly wants: Real deveikus; Real Lishma**. These 12-Steppers will come up to Shamayim and see what great schar awaits them for sitting for years in the basements with perverts, only to achieve **true hisbatlus** and a true connection with Hashem.

Some people feel that these people are "wallowing" in "*Katnus*", not "*Hisbatlus*". But do they truly understand the difference between *katnus* and *hisbatlus*? R' Shlomo Karliner (I think) said that the way we can tell the difference between them is that *katnus* makes us want to "go to sleep", i.e. to give up, while a *lev nishbar/hisbatlus* makes us want to try even harder. But which one do you see in people like Dov, London and Boruch? Do they look like they want to give up, or are they going "*mechayil el choyil*" every day?

BTW. Moshe, also to address the "Cold feelings" that you have now for Yiddishkeit, Chizuk e-mail #485 on [this page](#) might help a little... (I have a lot more material on this known phenomenon, but I'll have to dig it up).

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps  
Posted by Dov - 25 Jun 2009 13:23

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

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. 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.

Dear reb Moshe,

You really started something - yasher koach! The thread seems to have addressed your issue of decreased depth in avoda as something that has some bearing on the 12 steps in general. You also mention at the end of your (beautiful) post that the steps do not seem to make people tzadikim. I presume you mean it doesn't seem to reflect onto their avodas Hashem in as positive a way as you'd expect from any "spiritual" program. In fact, sometimes they seem to do less mitzvos/avodah than they did before sobriety. I agree with you.

As I have posted before, I had a very upsetting coldness in my avodas Hashem during the first two years or so of my recovery in the program. So, I can relate. First let me share that things are *much* different for me now, as - after growing into my 11th step and being sober for a while by Hashem's grace, my avodah has been steadily increasing. I feel the quality of my faith, as well as the avodah I am fortunate to be able to do is far more than it ever was. If you want me to detail this for you more, I will in a personal message. So hang in there and trust Hashem that if *you* really want a close relationship w/Him and know what that means, that He will grow your avodah, together with you over time. Also, consider not looking as much at others (I have found that very helpful - "ein malchus (asiya) nogaas bechaverta afilu Kemolei neema", shteyt!).

A few basic additional points:

One, it may be *far* better that a yid is putting on tefilin less and doing less mitzvos but is clean from acting out. The chillul Hashem and personal gehinom that many addicts go through is a decent trade off for freedom even at a lower madreiga, it seems to me. *People who stop* often feel this way, and also the ones I meet who *don't* stop, when they finally end up in the toilet.

Two, lets be honest. The quality of *our* faith is definitely lacking in some way if we are looking and porn and masturbating, or worse.

As you posted:

I couldn't comprehend how the 2 go together, I assumed if your frum...

It is likely that some of the mitzvos an addict does while inactive addiction are like the old story of the guilty husband bringing home flowers to his (oblivious) wife on the way home from a tryst, to counterbalance his own guilt. Better we should be lower and honest with Hashem, no? This is Hashem we are talking about here. He definitely has a fully functioning B.S. detector...it all depends on what you want. More shallowness, or less.

An interesting phenomena was reported to me by Jews for Judaism professional Motty Berger. He said that after successfully "deprogramming" a jew for yoshke, they never become frum. "Hey - wait a minute! You accepted the "new testament" after a yoshke guy "proved" it to you **from verses in the Torah/na"ch**. So you clearly accepted the idea (as *they* do) of Torah-min-hashamatim, no? So why are you dropping it (the Torah) now?"

Clearly there was a **negiyah** that got these people to accept the yoshke stuff "based" on the Torah. They never really had full faith in the Torah to begin with, and still do not. Same here: The aspects of an addict's avodah that were fake or mostly due to negios (approval, people expecting it of him, fear of retribution, etc.) tend to fall away for anyone in true recovery. Boruch Hashem! Now they can start to work from honesty. Even though "shelo lishma certainly maivee to lishma", for an addict in recovery there is often a lot of garbage that *needs to be thrown out* as they slowly grow into the honest and real people they *desperately need* to be in order not to die an alcoholic/sexaholic death.

Finally, look at the time frame here. I acted out for over fifteen years, so a year or two of sobriety before starting to feel anything ain't so bad, no? Why not be patient for something if it is really precious to you?

This is all I have to share at the moment cuz I gotta go! Much appreciation for your honesty and best wishes for our continued hatzlacha!

Dov

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 13:30

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This is so beautifully profound! Deeper than deep! It answers this known phenomenon (that Moshe describes of feeling cold in yiddishkeit while in recovery) - better than I ever could!

Moshe, Moshe, read this again and again and start to dance!!

*An interesting phenomena was reported to me by Jews for Judaism professional Motty Berger. He said that after successfully "deprogramming" a jew for yoshke, they never become frum. "Hey - wait a minute! You accepted the "new testament" after a yoshke guy "proved" it to you from verses in the Torah/na"ch. So you clearly accepted the idea (as they do) of Torah-min-hashamatim, no? So why are you dropping it (the Torah) now?"*

*Clearly there was a negiyah that got these people to accept the yoshke stuff "based" on the Torah. They never really had full faith in the Torah to begin with, and still do not. Same here: **The aspects of an addict's avodah that were fake or mostly due to negios (approval, people expecting it of him, fear of retribution, etc.) tend to fall away for anyone in true recovery. Boruch Hashem! Now they can start to work from honesty.***

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by London - 25 Jun 2009 13:57

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Dov

I thank you from the depths of my heart for that answer, as this is my story exactly. But after being in recovery for 4 years the ice is slowly starting to thaw and my desire to be a true eved Hashem is increasing. My recovery process has given me a firm foundation on which to build on. I would add that working the steps are a major part of this process, for me when I came in to the program I had major resentments with the system. After doing my step 4 & 5 and getting closure on these issues, being forced to look at my part in the resentments was I able to start building on my religion again. Growing up I often felt that I had no choice with my Yidishkeit, that this is what is expected of me this is what you do no questions asked. After going into recovery I am now rebuilding within me a true connection, today I have the choice. I was

discussing this point with a member today he shared with me a victory he had over lust and he told me that the program gives him his "bechiro back" as when he was acting out he had no choice he was a slave to his addiction today he has the choice not to act out, he was sharing how when he was acting out he felt so inhuman and how recovery has given him his humanity back.

It is then no wonder that during addiction and early recovery our religion will suffer but as we keep trudging the road of recovery and keep getting victory over lust we start to feel like human beings and not animals, after all the only difference between man and animal is choice, so today in recovery I am given the choice to do the next right thing. Recovery is a process not an event, and because my acting out is a misplaced connection, recovery will give me back that connection to Hashem, and my Yiddishkeit will flourish.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps  
Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 14:00

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BattleNEVERWorn, you don't think what Dov and London are writing here is giving Hashem tremendous Nachas Ruach? What makes you think that the future of Klal Yisrael depends only on coming up with a new system based on Torah? Maybe for the non-hardcore-addicts, yes... (for that, see tools #1-13 in the handbooks)... But for the level 3 addicts, Klal Yisrael depends just as much on guys like Dov and London passing on these truths to other suffering addicts, people who have lost their "soul connection" to Yiddishkeit... by letting them know there is hope!

Battle, I would make you the Rosh yeshiva of the **non-addicts** of GYE any day, but I'd make London and Dov the captains of the **REAL addicts** in GYE!

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps  
Posted by London - 25 Jun 2009 14:12

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Hello Everyone

Today's instalment of AA clich?s

- Be nice to newcomers ..... one day they may be your sponsor
- Before engaging your mouth, put your mind in gear
- Decisions aren't forever
- Formula for failure: try to please everyone
- Growing old is mandatory – Growing up is optional
- (today's favourite) ISOLATION: it's the dark room where I develop my negatives
- Many meetings, many chances; few meetings few chances; no meetings; no chances
- H.O.P.E = Happy Our Program Exists

Next instalment tomorrow

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 14:28

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AWSOME. Keep them coming!

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 25 Jun 2009 15:22

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Battleworn also asked me in a private e-mail, why it is that people like Dov can't move ON after spending 11 years in basements with Roman Catholic sponsors, and why can't they now use the Coach of Torah to SOAR!!

~~I told you months ago that I don't like to be misquoted. If you feel it's appropriate to quote me on this, at least do it right. [I regret writing that line and I apologize to Rabeinu (see below)]~~

What I said was that Dov believes in SA philosophy, which says that he needs to continuously concentrate on preserving his humanity. For preserving humanity, a Roman Catholic sponsor is appropriate.

I believe [though I didn't think it was appropriate to discuss it here] that the Torah view is quite the opposite. If you want sources I can try to prepare a list. But I think anyone with a solid Torah background knows, that:

1) We are essentially holy. No matter how much we sinned that never changed. All the sins are caused by the y'h who has become "baal -habayis" but once we evict him we can soar. The very best way -according to the Torah- to effect the sinner positively is to get him to understand that he is holy. Then he can concentrate both on sur merah and on aseil tov with SIMCHA and ENTHUSIASM, which totally messes up the vicious cycle. [I was very very mikatzter; I could go on forever about this.]

2) We can and must always conquer more ground, thereby moving the "nekudas habichira." The holier we get the further we get away from lust. This is not at all to say that the y'h can't do a sneak attack; we need to always be on guard. But that's not where we are holding. We are holding totally somewhere else. We are holding on the highest madreiga by the kisei hakavod as it says ????? ????? ????? ?? ??? ?????

And I cry for a holy neshama that for 11 years feels like he still needs his Roman Catholic sponsor to help him be human. After whatever time it takes to brake the cycle (not nearly 11 years, not even 11 months) it's time to GROW! But if you believe that this is you, then of course you are stuck. A person could only do what he believes he can do.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 25 Jun 2009 15:30

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However, a guy like Dov, although he'll never admit it, and his lev nishbar wants to see himself as an addict just like them, still, by nature of the fact that he has a Jewish soul, he is able to internalize the Yesodos of the 12-Steps as TORAH.

~~I'm a bit suprised that someone of you're caliber somehow forgot that~~ if you don't know your kochos then they're useless.[I regret that I wrote that, as it is inappropriate and disrespectful]

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 25 Jun 2009 15:37

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R' Shlomo Karliner (I think) said that the way we can tell the difference between them is that katnus makes us want to "go to sleep"

Here you hit the nail on the head! You answered my question in the other thread. I asked why some people feel that they need to slow down in their avodas Hashem, while other's feel that they need to speed up? You gave the answer: Katnus makes us need to slow down, while Charata and all the chelkei hateshuva make us speed up.[Please ignore the cynical tone of this post (see below)]

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