

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 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 7yipol - 25 Jun 2009 17:47

I admit I'm a little uncomfortable stepping in here. I am a newbie, on the wrong side of the mechitza, and am far from knowledgeable about the steps. But my conscience won't let me sit by the side.

I have no intention of getting into the nitty gritty of the issue at hand (although do have a personal opinion). What is bothering my A LOT is the tone this thread has taken. Aren't we all here for the sake of personal growth and to help each other? Have I missed a point somewhere? If I'm not mistaken, we're in this galus not because of pritzus, erva or any other addiction synonym. I'm pretty sure chazal say that sinas chinam got us into this mess to begin with, and sinas chinam is *keeping* us here. How many talmidim did Rabi Akiva lose? 24 000 = 700 each day! Hashem wasn't playing games trying to get His message across that lack of respect for each other bothers Him more than just a tad!

Differences of opinion are fine, as long as we can be respectful and mentchim about it. It seems to me that certain members have lost their objectivity. It's no longer l'shem shamayim.

Please; I beg of you, let's all remember why we are here. Every neshama has its own journey down here. Why would we think that each will be taking the same path back home? What works for one doesn't have to work for the other - *and that is fine*. As long as we can respect our differences, and help each other grow closer to the Borei Olam.

7up

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 25 Jun 2009 17:51

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....

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.

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.

Hi Battleworn! It is hard to get to know someone just from posts, but I am doing the best i can to understand where you are coming from and respond for both our benefits, and maybe for that of others, too.

What I am about to share with you is not tooting my horn, at all, with Hashem's help. It is to let people who may not understand become aware of what it is like *for this sexaholic yid* to have a roman catholic sponsor and still be going to meetings and using the steps while in the twelfth year of Hashem's gift to me of recovery from all-consuming addiction to lust.

Before and during the years i was acting out i was exposed to yiddishkeit (product of modern orthodox day school, yeshiva high, etc) and always a bit attracted to the frum, feeling there was an answer there, to something...

I cried at NCSY singalongs and felt a strong "deveikus"-like thing in me; went to eretz yisroel to yeshivah after high, and stopped masturbating for two years except one or two times during the summer while at home in the US. When I got married it got **much** worse, as I described a bit in my first post on this forum in May, or whatever. Look at it if you want to get to know me any better...I'd be glad to describe the details of my behaviors in addiction privately, if you'd like, but this is not the best venue for the gory details.

Anyhow, after starting SA in 1997 and fast forwarding to my past five years, as my avodah began to warm up. I was still going to meetings and using the steps I had worked, in daily life. My sponsor shared how he worked them with me. He is now more of a *friend* than a "sponsor" (as his sponsor now is to him). I have many program friends, sponsees, etc., and get and make recovery calls many times through the day. I do not see any advantage in pretending I got back on some kind of track and am OK now, because I have experienced that my allergy has not gone away. I am free of lust almost all the time and my focus is on living with Hashem, as i'll elaborate on in a bit. I go to one meeting a week.

Over the past 6-7 years my avoda got a boost from my finally going deeper into sfas emes, bnei yisoschar, and divrei chayim. This occurred around the same time I had a little trouble with lust

and finally started to work the steps in daily life more seriously. Gemorah and TU"R has become more of a success over the past three years since I joined a Dirshu morning program (initially w/a SA chavrusa!).

I B'H gravitated toward kisvei ARIZ"l with a chevra learning them in my neighborhood and began finding deep meaning in my davening. This is inconsonance with programmie concepts, as well, Boruch Hashem. This was bolstered w/shaarei RMCHL x 3 years, now; my chavrusa and I should be moving to KL"CH soon, Be"H. I was moved to start wearing Rabeinu Tam tefilin about a year ago and find going to the mikvah a great experience. (Though I look forward to one day keeping takonas ezra for tefilah, I'm not ready for that, yet.) I ask a tzadik in my neighborhood for advice regularly and surrounded myself with experts on chumash, mussar and kabollah as much as possible. For the past two years I have been going through much of the Shelo hakodosh on the parsha and sharing ideas from him w/friends and family when I can. My physical relationship with my wife, as well as my relationship with all people has been growing in ways that I see described in the seforim, thank G-d, and it is exhilarating. I am mostly able to be motivated by being useful, rather than by getting/taking. Enough said there.

My experience (which my wife -being very stable - does not understand) has been that: either I grow and change, broadening and deepening in avodah, or there is no point in it. I feel like "a horse running bevitzei hamayim" as the medrash describes Avraham Avinu - NOT to say I am like him at all, just that as he felt tremendous drive to mesaken more and more in the world and advance Kevod Shomayim, so do I percieve a force more powerful than I can understand drawing me closer to Hashem. Still, I feel at peace most of the time. Because of being awakened by the steps I want above all else to live with and be useful to people, more than ever before, yet be alone with Hashem all the time. My formerly very self-centered avodah never allowed me to do that, even though I was convinced I was a "kodosh". In fact, before, the idea that I am be'etzem a kodosh was a tremendous ball and chain for me. It made failure so much more dissapointing. And please consider *not* assuming that "if only someone would have *explained* to me what it *really* means I'd have been "OK"". That is not my experience. For most sexaholics and alcoholics I know, the holier they think they are the worse and more depressed or pompous they get. I know what you really mean, **I just believe you can TELL addicts about it (or even convince them that they SHOULD believe it) but you cannot CONVINCe them it is really true. This is a concept non-addicts do not ever seem to grasp. (I do not refer to *you* specifically, Battleworn, as I don't really know your story, but I hope it's helpful anyway.)**

Finally, I have been able, for the most part, to avoid looking at "normal" yidden who do not seem to *need* the depth and intensity of a relationship w/Hashem as unfortunate. I also avoid shoving my percieved awareness in their face by asking them why they say berachos in a rush as opposed to they way we'd say "thank-you" to anyone *real*. You know, stuff like that. I have seen others give this "mussar" as though it's their own. It is not pretty, and it's unhealthy to pretend I *deserve* any awarenesses I got through addiction/recovery - they were all free gifts and will stay that way. I assume I'll lose them (with my sobriety if I forget that acting like they are "ubesoraso - mine").

So I ask you, what more should i expect from myself, a sexaholic? I am sure we can all do better, me most of all folks. But do you really still think i need to be cried for and that the fact

that I look up to a roman catholic man for sharing his sanity with me is hindering me? Do we understand eachother any better? And if you still feel the same, do please continue the tefillos - maybe it'll help! Hashem is not done w/me yet!

Finally, I do not accept that my addiction was aveiros and the YH, as you are describing it. I have tried to explain this in other posts but I respect *fully* your opinion. I choose to just live right today, and rely on Hashem to make the tikunim. It is clear that recovery has lead me on what - in retrospect - the sforim describe as teshuvah. i choose not to "understand" the process that much and leave it to Hashem.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 17:52

That was some refreshingly cold 7-Up on a HOT DAY ;D

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 18:01

WE LOVE YOU DOV!

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by MosheF - 25 Jun 2009 18:03

[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.

[battleworn wrote on 25 Jun 2009 09:17:](#)

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 askama to "mubo-jumbo nonsense".

Battleworn, I have to thank because without you there would be no discussion and I really want to get the bottom of this.

The point of my post was that the 12 steps does not make a person more religious and I liked that because then it doesn't have to bother me that I'm working on becoming a good Jew through a non-jewish program. All the groups were doing is making my life manageable again so I could do what I want with that life.

Boruch, you seem to imply that you want more religion in the groups, seems the opposite of what I want. If they were to preach religion it would be JC and his group and that is the last thing I want. Battleworn, you also seem to want religion in the rooms but orthodox Judaism, not gonna happen anytime soon but the mubo-jumbo nonsense is good because that separates the groups from religion so we can work on our addiction not on our religion.

[guardureyes wrote on 25 Jun 2009 13:30:](#)

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

, Dov, your post are always beautiful and well written.

[guardureyes wrote on 25 Jun 2009 12:57:](#)

a guy like Dov, although he'll never admit it, and his lev nishbar wants to see himself as an addict just like them,
Wow, what a dance that was

I can't talk for Dov (he's an amazing guy, I could tell from his posts!), but you touched on a core point that bothers me about the 12 step program. Most frum yidden at the groups seem to see themselves just like the rest of them not believing for a second they are any different, what happened to us as yidden, bnei avrohom yitzchok v'yaakov, yiddishkeit is all about being different and having a special relationship with Hashem, in these meeting you have the same relationship with hashem as the guy next to you has with Yoshke. I hope you get my point.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 18:15

Most frum yidden at the groups seem to see themselves just like the rest of them not believing for a second they are any different, what happened to us as yidden, bnei avrohom yitzchok v'yaakov?

Let me answer your question with your own words:

the 12 steps does not make a person more religious and I liked that because then it doesn't have to bother me that I'm working on becoming a good Jew through a non-jewish program.

All the groups were doing is making my life manageable again so I could do what I want with that life.

If that's the case, why should the Jews see themselves as different? We are all there to get our car fixed. Is my car better than the non-Jew's car? No.

But once the Jew's car is FIXED, he can go to the Beis Medrash and become a Tzadik!

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by London - 25 Jun 2009 18:18

[battleworn wrote on 25 Jun 2009 15:22:](#)

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.

Battle

I would like to bring a quote from the AA Big Book page 30 "Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed."

A sponsor is someone we can talk to and check in any situations in life that we are going through to make sure that our addictive thinking is not getting in the way. Addicts have an ingenious ability of justification, and the sponsor is there to ensure that we are not falling into this trap. Addicts can pull the wool over most peoples eyes except another addict one of my sponsors told me that you cannot BS a BS'er (excuse my French). Where in our community is there such a support system available.

I would like to make a suggestion to you dear Battle, it is well known that when ever we find fault in another we have to look at ourselves, there is clearly something here that is bothering you and no answer posted on this forum has satisfied you. I am not taking your inventory or judging you CV, however I would like to encourage you to look into yourself and try to see your part in this.

Let me know what you think.

London

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Efshar Letaken - 25 Jun 2009 18:34

Wow! I didn't come to add anything because "B'mkoin Gedoilim Al Tamod"

All I want to say that I get to admire Reb Dov every time he goes the extra mile to explain his situation to others that don't get it! I would have given up by now! It's obvious that 11 years did some **solid** restructuring to your life.

Your Strong & I'm Sure Hashem Loves your avoda just as it is.

Thanks for explaining your self & your situation for even thou I never questioned you since my struggle never came close to yours so who am I to, but I had some of the questions others did in the back of my mind, & you made it so clear for me to Fully understand you now.

Go Reb Dov Go!

Efshar Lesaken

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Pintele Yid - 25 Jun 2009 19:03

[guardureyes wrote on 23 Jun 2009 10:36:](#)

I am really confused about this thread perhaps someone can enlighten me

London, you are 100% right, but I think the latest discussion here was addressing 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...

So to this Boruch answered that he would need at least 5 years and 40 recoverees (through him), before he would feel qualified to make any additions or changes to the program as it is now.

I think the Guard has really crystallized what I was trying to say.

In this project, the backbone would be the 12 steps. There is nothing treif/avodah zarah about it because as was described several times, there is nothing in the 12 steps that is kneged hatorah. Adaraba, since the world was initially totally spiritual (based on the Blueprint of the Torah), and was then transformed into physical, then spiritual teachings in the Torah provides the oros to other chachmos. **That is how the concepts in the twelve steps eventually evolved.** Our project just wants to enhance the "physical" implementation of the 12 steps by inserting the "spiritual" concepts from which it was derived.

MosheF brings up another important reason why this should be done. When frum people first try their hardest to use Torah to fight their addiction only to come up short, when they find success in something that on the surface doesn't appear to be Torah, then the natural reaction is for a spiritually inclined person to make the 12 steps their source for spirituality. They therefore "unburden" themselves from the Torah because in such a circumstance, the Torah creates unwanted noise.

By showing how each of the 12 steps is really rooted in the teachings of the Torah, the addict will then become to realize how the Torah can relate to them and how they can relate to the Torah. This would lead them to a healthier recovery, because down deep, every Heiliga yid's "Pintela Yid" needs the Torah to survive.

Reb Dov - I re-read your posts differentiating the 1st from the rest of the steps and I don't understand how a Lev Nishbar, recognizing that you are an addict, powerless, and totally reliant on Hashem for recovery, is not a Torah concept? Reb Eluzer Ben Durdaya, the ultimate addict, is a perfect example of that. I understand his hearing the flatulence and resulting comment of that zonah that he is not going to go to Olam Haba, as a perfect example of someone who attained some level of "Daas". Meaning that he finally knew 100% that he had to change. He then reached outward instead of inward and he asked the help of everyone except Hashem. He finally acquired greater "Daas" that the only way for him to succeed will be a Lev Nishbar (signified by putting his head between his knees). Without total reliance on Hashem he wasn't getting very far. He actually didn't go much further and he passed away - maybe because he didn't have guidance on the next 11 steps.

(Derech Agav, there are many lessons to be learnt for this Gemora and maybe there should be

a post on the Bais Medrash portion of the site to discuss them.)

Boruch and others who feel they are not qualified for such a project should think again. The Koach Harabim of those of you who have really been helped by the 12 steps as well as the unbelievable Toeles Horabim that would result from such a project would make you I"Y"H succeed. Please take a moment and analyze if your self doubts are coming from the tzad of kedusha or the other side who desparately doesn't want such a program to succeed.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 25 Jun 2009 20:03

Reb Dov, thank you very much for that beautiful post! At least something good came out of this. We got to hear more about you. And it warms my heart! Thank you also for clarifying about your sponsor. As I said, I didn't think it was appropriate to discuss this in public, so IY'H next week I'll PM you with my questions.

Reb London, thank you very much for your pointer.

7up, I promise you that there's not the slightest amount of sinas chinam here. Rabbeinu Guard and I, love each other very much. He's one of my favorite people in the world! I am absolutely crazy over mizaki harabim. It's my patience, that needs working on. So I sincerely apologize for getting impaitent and for the resulting damage.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by 7yipol - 25 Jun 2009 20:28

Battleworn, I hope you forgive me if I overstepped the bounderies.

Anger and lack of respect is something I grew up with unfortunately. To me, it's nothing less than poison. I admit I am often *oversensitive* because of it.

May Hashem bless you with true menuchas hanefesh and simcha hachaim as only He can.

7Up

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 20:43

I'm so happy that the love and joy is returning to this thread, like a gushing river that was held up by some rocks which have now fallen away!

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 20:46

Dear Moshe, I replied to you before that I had more material on the subject of "feeling cold in . Please see our new website [over here](#). Read the post through, top to bottom. You won't regret it.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 25 Jun 2009 20:48

Pintale, I love this idea. I'm all for it and I am sure it would be great. Maybe one day the people with the real experience, like Boruch, Dov and London, will help start such a movement.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 25 Jun 2009 21:13

[battleworn wrote on 25 Jun 2009 15:22:](#)

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.

Battleworn, there is no reason at all to cry. You and many others on this site are just missing a vital piece of knowledge. There is no cure for addiction. Period.

After an addict has done his hishtadlus and bitochon by TAKING (not just studying, journalling or writing) the first Ten Steps, or any other religious method that achieves Trust Hashem, Clean House and Help Others, then, if done honestly and thoroughly, after a maximum of 3 months of "ten-stepping", Hashem WILL lift the insanity, the obsession and compulsion, but only one day at a time.

Hashem gives no permanent cure to the addict, in the same way that Hashem gave once a day to the ochlei hamon, Hashem gives the addict one day of sanity for that day only and it is contingent on his daily working of Trust Hashem, Clean House and Help Others. Any day on which the addict fails to do that, no matter how many years he is in the program, Hashem will not give the addict his daily reprieve and the addict is vulnerable to massive relapse, no matter how many years he has been doing the program. Just like the ochlei hamon, no matter how many years they went out for the mon, if they skipped one day they starved. And with the addict to relapse for even one day is to risk everything.

The problem for the addict is that as vital as it is that he should mainstream (if the program was done as it was in the 1940s they would mainstream in months instead of years) when he is among others he is in danger of fooling himself that just like other people can get away without a day of Trust Hashem, Clean House and Help Others, so can he. That is why it is so vital to remember where he came from by helping not just other yidden but other yiddish addicts. That is why it is so vital to keep coming back to meetings. That is why it is useful to have a sponsor.

But first a word about the sponsor. The sponsor in the 1940s was not a "rebbe" or mentor for living life. He was not a therapist, nor was he someone to depend on. He was a "Step chavrusa". No more. No less. That is my relationship with my sponsor and the fact that he is Roman Catholic is neither here nor there.

As it happens I do not know of ANY Frum sponsor in SA (including the Rov with the longest frum sobriety) who have a message that is anywhere near as powerful as the message that my Roman Catholic sponsor has given me. That message is powerful, not because my sponsor is Catholic nor despite it, it's powerful because it is the message that he got from those in the more religious wing of AA, those that still carry the torch of the early AAs and that's a message that so far has not penetrated the frum community.

Am I dependent even today at just 156 days of sobriety on my sponsor? Not at all. But his being many more years in program than I and having worked it longer than I makes him a valuable resource and so I am not desperately seeking a Frum sponsor with the right message for me (I personally am convinced from everything I have seen, heard and read that there is none) because I have a Rebbe and Rov, I have no need for a therapist and my sponsor can be as Roman Catholic as our Doctor, Dentist or mechanic and that's fine.

Furthermore I assure you there is no chisoron and nothing to cry about the fact that until recently we have not had a big enough all-frum community of addicts to be self-supporting.

Of course there is no exclusive reason to have a Roman Catholic sponsor, the main reason that in my opinion, people do, is that the Roman Catholics have a mesorah and understanding of addiction that goes all the way back to Esav (I am only slightly joking because there is a lot more truth in this comment than you would expect), there are a disproportionate number of Roman Catholic sponsors and they tend to have more traditional values.

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