

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 the.guard - 28 Jun 2009 18:40

Thank you London, so beautifully said!!

But maybe you want to also give a shot to try and answer these questions to the best of your ability? I respect your opinion very much and would want to hear how a "simple Jew" sees it...

- At what level addiction should we send someone to the groups?
- Is it only after he tried all 13 tools of the handbook, or there's nothing wrong with sending someone earlier than that as well?
- Are there legitimate problems with some of the groups?
- Do we need to give hadracha to a Jew who is joining?
- Would it be possible to develop one day a strategy or program that is just as powerful and successful as the 12-Step groups, but with a Torahdik approach?

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 28 Jun 2009 21:34

Dear moreinu Haguard and chevra -

How about this one: instead of having members who interview or evaluate and give hadracha to potential members, what if we offered alternates within the site for

1- yiddelach who tried feel strongly that they want to use the "mussar/machshova/Torah=tavlin approach" to stop acting out and get better rather than getting involved with the 12 steps (for whatever reason), or who have *tried* #2 and are tired of failing in it

and

2- yiddelach who feel they just want the 12 steps are uninterested in trying yet another Torah

approach, or have tried #1 and are tired of failing in it.

W/these two offerings we could reduce confusion of innocent bumblebees who'd take six months arguing the philosophic virtues of one approach over the other (and crack to pieces in the interim), focus the efforts of your varied "post"-ers into the areas they know best, and - most importantly - it would make me happier.

OK, forget the last thing. I am happy anyway.

Yeah, yeah, it may be Korach talking, (though I'm not even a levi!) but it's lesheim Shomayim; nobody is arguing; and we could all remain great friends, just facilitate a process that is occurring anyway, of visitors gravitating to posters who speak their language.... idontknow, Dov

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 29 Jun 2009 11:58

Dear Dov and Battelworn, I have been giving this thread some serious thought and I would like to try and explain both Battelworn's approach and Dov's approach, and the concerns that each one has with the other...

It seems to me that people like Battelworn have a hard time accepting that the work done in the 12-Step groups is really just "sanity" and not "spiritual" in nature. After all, step 2 and 3 are very spiritual (for example). So Battelworn feels, that if the 12-Steps are really spiritual in nature, why not approach them from a Jewish perspective? In other words, the SAME 12-Steps, but instead of in a Church with Christians saying "may your will not mine be done", we do it in a Jewish home or shul with Jewish people and say something like this:

Step 1. *Kimat Shachna Duma Nafshi.... Ma betza bidami be'riditi el shachas?*

Step 2. *Im amarti Mata Ragli, Chasdecha Hashem Yisadeini.*

Step 3. *"asei retzonoi kirtzonecha".*

Step 4. *Cheshbon Hanefesh.*

etc...

So you'll say, well we knew all these things before and they didn't help, and you're right. He is not suggesting we use the old approach. He is suggesting that we use the 12-Step approach EXACTLY. As we go through the 12-Steps, we explain each one in a completely DIFFERENT light than what we had been fed while growing up. For example, Step 4 - Cheshbon Hanefesh, we wouldn't approach it the way we always did which was in the context of guilt and of changing ourselves. Rather, it would simply be about getting honest about who we really are, the good and the bad (as Dov always says). And if you'll claim, well this is not the Cheshbon Hanefesh of Chazal, well, for the sake of making this program work, we are indeed making changes in the NORMAL way we were taught. But as much as we CAN use Chazal, we will (and I'm sure we can find sources for those changes as well in Torah, for example "emes me'eretztizmach"). Before you can start to grow, you need to face the truth about yourself squarely).

Now I believe Dov has some legitimate concerns about this approach:

1) Because we had been trying Torah approaches for many years without making progress, an addict will initially be reluctant to hear about "yet another Torah approach". He will find it hard to trust that HERE is something finally in Torah that **will** help him. That is one benefit of completely separating the addiction from Yiddishkeit and calling it an illness (and not a Yetzer hara issue) and calling the 12-Steps simply "the medicine".

2) The fact that we are forced to join non-Jewish groups and learn this all from the goyim brings home the fact that we are missing the most basic yesodos and need to get off the tractor trailer and back onto the bicycle. But if we try to turn the 12-Steps into Torah, the addict will think it's just "another type" of tractor trailer.

3) Joining non-Jewish Roman Catholic perverts in the basement to regain our sanity is the best way to really drive home the *Lev Nishbar* that is such a necessary component in the recovery.

4) Even if this approach is right for those who are "in between" type 1 and 2 that Dov mentioned above, but as soon as this Torah option exists, no frum Jew will ever try option #2 again, even if he is far gone! And then this may become a case of *Yatza Scharo Bihefsedo*? because of 1,2 and 3 above...

Just thinking out loud friends, obviously you can see I am not taking any sides, I am just spelling

out what I think all of Battelworn's and Dov's concerns may be...

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 29 Jun 2009 13:05

I agree with Dov that we should be offering both alternatives.

But (1) why wouldn't we want to do the very best we can on both of them? As far as the "Torah approach" goes, we know that most people -rabbonim included- have no idea what the Torah approach is. Furthermore the Torah approach by definition, includes any tricks that can be of help. [Like -for ex. the one that London mentioned] So for the Torah approach, there's a lot of work to do, which includes learning tools from those that have experience.

As far as the 12 step approach goes, there's also a lot we can do. Boruch says that we can give it here, without having to send people to groups that have been known to have a negative affect on people's yiddishkeit. He's either right or wrong. If he's right, then we can't justify recommending something that can be damaging when it's not necessary. If Reb Dov thinks he's wrong, he should say so.

Reb Dov, you say that you don't like the idea of giving Hadracha. Perhaps you don't realize that not everyone is as smart (or even nearly as smart) as you. If you figured out how to handle the problems that SA presented for you, it doesn't mean everyone else can. If you don't mind my saying this, I think it's yours and Baruch's basic responsibility to help these people avoid problems. If you don't agree, please tell me why.

2) The idea of keeping the two approaches separate, is an old one. R' Guard mentioned it to may months ago. But until now it hasn't worked for a number of reasons.

a) Most people that come to the forum are looking for hadracha. They haven't tried either of the two approaches and they are looking to us to help them decide which one to go for.

b) In absence of any guidelines, overenthusiastic posters have been known to push things on others to the point that they felt harassed. I personally received such complaints from two people.

c) How do you decide who has a right to post on what? For some reason, I never saw anyone post on someones thread "Don't go to SA" or anything like that. But I did see people posting thing like "You won't succeed because you're not going to groups" or "You need to talk live to people, posting on the forum is not a substitute" or "The Torah is not enough for you because you're sick". Do you feel that you have a way to draw up rules about who should post what?

In summary (of #2), it seems to me that the present situation causes confusion. Making some official policy on who to recommend the groups to, will not cause confusion, rather it will reduce confusion. If you disagree, please tell me which points you disagree with.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by London - 29 Jun 2009 13:51

[battleworn wrote on 29 Jun 2009 13:05:](#)

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A very quick thought before I start work. Last night I was out doing some part time work, where I encountered a major lust trigger, it is well known that if I do not share with someone what triggered me, I am liable to act out, we are as sick as our secrets, I should have put a call through to a member in the States, but did not and still this morning the trigger was bothering me, so when I joined the conference call this morning, I was able to share what happened and again with my sponsor, and the insanity left. This public forum is not the place for people to share details of struggles and simply to write I saw a lustful image and was triggered will not work. So, on a practical level, the fellowships offer the support system, that this forum does

not. Further going to face 2 face meetings and conventions we get to know each other and can often build up close friendships with people as we do not need to put on any facades we can be ourselves. Some of my closest friends are now in the fellowships, we develop a bond a mutual concern for each other giving each other chizuk in times of distress, and the forum cannot do this. I am going through a difficult time trying to get one of my kids into a school, my (Jewish) friends from the fellowships are bedrock of support that I could not manage without, and I can vent to them my frustrations, which would be inappropriate to post on a forum as there are anonymity issues. That is not to say the forum is not a major help to me, it is one of the tools in my arsenal.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 29 Jun 2009 14:08

Let me explain better what I meant in #1 above:

There are unfortunately many people who their addiction took them so far from Torah that they don't want to hear about "Torah ways" to get better. They became disillusioned with it, they had tried for years and didn't get anywhere. For such people, we offer them the 12-Steps (from goyim), they get back their sanity, and then they automatically find their Yiddishkeit again in a whole new way! I have seen this happen many times. All the 12-Steps do is give us back our sanity so that we can then choose what we want to do with our lives. Real addicts have developed a mental disease that nothing but the 12-Steps can help. And if we try to turn it into a Torah or Yetzer hara issue, **they won't be open enough** to accepting the medicine.

We want to help these yidden too on GYE. So there is a benefit in "disguising" the spiritual renewal that the 12-Steps offer us as simply "regaining sanity" and not Yiddishkeit.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 29 Jun 2009 17:11

we know that most people -rabbonim included- have no idea what the Torah approach is.

Bingo

without having to send people to groups that have been known to have a *negative affect on people's yiddishkeit*. He's either right or wrong. If he's right, then we can't justify recommending something that can be damaging when it's not necessary. If Reb Dov thinks he's wrong, he should say so.

This site has educated me about the many different levels of adook-tion ;D (a rather funny play on the Loshon-Kodesh, no?) : many folks peruse this site and look in quiet curiosity at this forum where people frankly talk about the same issues that *they* have been *hiding* for years. Others are ready to do *something*, but figure they (and their rovs) need to just learn the Torah Tricks, Torah advice, as long as they can *remain the same Yid they are now* and somehow solve this problem in the "beis medrash" together with a group of yidden. They do not care if it's more of the same. (For some - probably for many - it will work, but for many others it will be just more of the same silliness; but leaving their comfort zone in any meaningful way is still out of the question...). Others "have it real bad" and have had enough; they are ready for anything and need the steps before they lose their homes, jobs, lives etc.. All this was not really obvious to me before I came to this forum.

So, **for the kind of person who really is *not* sick** enough to be addicted and their lives are not out of control, they *need* someplace to turn for Torah advice, chizzuk, and whatever, to get wise to the YH for pritzus, and to do teshuva, **fast**. This site does a great job of this, I figure.

For the folks who really *are* hopelessly hooked, and their lives as they have known them are really **over** but they just do not realize it yet, **this site may be a double-edged sword**: they may hang on in their folly much, much longer, putting yet more band-aids on their cracked skulls. On the other hand, our posts may help those folks get their inhibitions down sufficiently to finally **know that their problem is actually much more deep and serious than they cared to admit**, that strong medicine is likely needed, and that as we are not running away from their bitter medicine, maybe *they* do not have to keep running either!

For all these latter folks - which I think are **many** - No, I do not think sending them to SA-type groups has any risk of hurting their yiddishkeit. These folks are the ones who *will* eventually, get divorced, ruining their wives lives, *not* get divorced and ruin their kids' lives too, reach old age

(and death) with a very strange and depressing life behind them (though to the non-immediate family observer it seemed quite run-of-the-mill!), go to jail, or even be in the paper. The pain and chilul Hashem potential is quite staggering. **No, I feel that if a yid is truly addicted, his yiddishkeit can *only get better* from that point on, really.** If they go to meetings and get less frum in the short term, I think they either have a secondary problem that led to it, or it is really a *good* thing because they were totally hypocritical in addiction, anyway. I know this is terribly painful. I think it is extremely rare for frum addicts to drop yiddishkeit upon getting sober. Weaker and colder, yes - that is a common side-effect. But with time, as in my case, it reverses and their yiddishkeit really, finally grows to become really powerful. But really, (here I go): what value *does* Hashem have in the avoda of a yid who has empty avodah, parrots things, and does *not* keep the the six constant mitzvos at all because he is too busy hiding the fact that he is looking at po-n, mast--ting, and *other* stuff? Anyway, in the long term, frum addicts who I know, tend to get *frummer* in later recovery.

Reb Dov, you say that you don't like the idea of giving Hadracha. Perhaps you don't realize that not everyone is as smart

This post is already too long, but the AA big book says something like: "We are not experts, on anything". Once we become experts, we are in real danger of losing it all. This *has* been found to happen. So, I'll discuss this idea with my sponsor and ask Hashem for a lot of help to do the right thing, though, I still don't know what we are doing!

As far as the rest of your comments, that is what a secretary, here: reb Guard, is "payed the big bucks for"....

- Dov

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 29 Jun 2009 17:47

As far as the rest of your comments, that is what a secretary, here: reb Guard, is "payed the big bucks for"....

Dov, your input is PRICELESS to us all. It is worth a lot more than the big bucks I am paid
(which big bucks was that??). I think you summed up beautifully here what the goal of our
network is. It is TWO fold.

1)

So, for the kind of person who really is not sick enough to be addicted and their lives are not out
of control, they need someplace to turn for Torah advice, chizzuk, and whatever, to get wise to
the YH for pritzus, and to do teshuva, fast. This site does a great job of this, I figure.

2)

For the folks who really are hopelessly hooked, and their lives as they have known them are
really over but they just do not realize it yet, they may hang on in their folly much, much longer,
putting yet more band-aids on their cracked skulls. On the other hand, our posts may help those
folks get their inhibitions down sufficiently to finally know that their problem is actually much
more deep and serious than they cared to admit, that strong medicine is likely needed.

Because of number 2 above, that is why we make such a big deal about the 12-Steps here on
GYE, and that is why we keep quoting people like Dov in our daily Chizuk e-mails. We are
shouting: **Yidden!! Stop putting band-aids on your cracked skulls!!** If you are an addict,
(and that means that when faced with lust you are pulled into it and can't control yourself - i.e.
you don't have free choice anymore, once you taste it you can't stop), then we want you to be
aware that, as Dov says "their problem is actually much more deep and serious than they cared
to admit". We are shouting to these Yidden who think that "more of the same" will eventually get
them out of their addiction "FIRE FIRE WAKE UP!!". The Torah can't help us if we aren't ready
to let go. The Torah is a Be'ar Mayim Chaim, like a Mikva, but if you hold on to the SHERETZ it
can't purify and heal you. The 12-Steps help us LET GO of the Sheretz for long enough that
Torah can start to heal us. Once we regain sanity, we can THEN start to become "frummer"
again...

Thank you Dov for taking so much time to post answers to us hopelessly tangled minds, and for
giving it to us in SIMPLE enough terms to understand ;D

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by boruch - 30 Jun 2009 17:02

[dov wrote on 29 Jun 2009 17:11:](#)

For the folks who really are hopelessly hooked, and their lives as they have known them are really **over** but they just do not realize it yet, **this site may be a double-edged sword**: they may hang on in their folly much, much longer, putting yet more band-aids on their cracked skulls. On the other hand, our posts may help those folks get their inhibitions down sufficiently to finally **know that their problem is actually much more deep and serious than they cared to admit**, that strong medicine is likely needed, and that as we are not running away from their bitter medicine, maybe *they* do not have to keep running either!

For all these latter folks - which I think are **many** - No, I do not think sending them to SA-type groups has any risk of hurting their yiddishkeit. These folks are the ones who *will* eventually, get divorced, ruining their wives lives, *not* get divorced and ruin their kids' lives too, reach old age (and death) with a very strange and depressing life behind them (though to the non-immediate family observer it seemed quite run-of-the-mill!), go to jail, or even be in the paper. The pain and chilul Hashem potential is quite staggering. **No, I feel that if a yid is truly addicted, his yiddishkeit can *only* get better from that point on, really.**

Hello Dov,

You describe the double edge on GUE but for some reason you do not address the double- or triple-edged sword in SA.

As, Roy K, SA founder, wrote in his personal story at the beginning of the White Book, after reading a 1974 Time Magazine [article](#) on Alcoholism (which contained a quote from an AA oldtimer on the threefold aspect of alcoholism, mental, physical and spiritual) he went to AA to get rid of his Sexual addiction. He was sober for 1 1/2 years by going to AA meetings only to go on a spree, drop out of meetings and in just three months he had more than made up for all of his 1 1/2 years of sobriety. He then came back to AA a second time, this time having learned his

lesson, determined to work the 12 Steps.

So in going to SA:

1) Some use the **meetings** as band-aids on cracked skulls, don't use the Steps, don't work the 18 methods in the White Book chapter on Overcoming Temptation and Lust (they are just advised to cope with lust by making phone calls and go to meetings - Roy K should have kept that Chapter on Overcoming Temptation and Lust very simple according to them!!!) and they think that they can stay sober on half-measures.

2) Some choose a **secular** Jewish or non-Jewish sponsor with a very watered-down Spiritual message either because that is for the most part what is available in certain parts or because superficially it seems "safer" and "less threatening"

3) Some do **slow-motion**, half-measured Step work and they cannot figure why at best they are very flat and slow in recovery and at worst they are in constant relapse, as they pick up new acting out techniques from other members

So the problem of half-measures is as common in SA, as it is in GUE and possibly even more so, since some in SA believe that they are making a huge commitment by showing up at meetings as often once or twice daily.

And there is, in my opinion, an alternative to both the standard GUE posting and standard SA attendance, BOTH of which have the danger of covering up for half-measures. That is to capture the essence of the early AA program. Here is the description of the Frank Amos report to Rockefeller (1938) on early AA in the original AA group in Akron:

(See DR. BOB and the Good Oldtimers, pp. 130-31):

1. An alcoholic must realize that he is an alcoholic, incurable from a medical viewpoint, and that he must never again drink anything with alcohol in it.

2. He must surrender himself absolutely to God, realizing that in himself there is no hope.

3. Not only must he want to stop drinking permanently, he must remove from his life other sins such as hatred, adultery, and others which frequently accompany alcoholism. Unless he will do this absolutely, Smith and his associates refuse to work with him.

4. He must have devotions every morning -- a "quiet time" of prayer and some reading from the Bible and other religious literature. Unless this is faithfully followed, there is grave danger of backsliding.

5. He must be willing to help other alcoholics get straightened out. This throws up a protective barrier and strengthens his own willpower and convictions.

6. It is important, but not vital, that he meet frequently with other reformed alcoholics and form both a social and a religious comradeship.

7. Important, but not vital, that he attend some religious service at least once weekly.

The Frank Amos reports also specifically added:

The A.A. members of that time did not consider meetings necessary to maintain sobriety. They were simply "desirable." Morning devotion and "quiet time," however, were musts (DR. BOB and the Good Oldtimers, p. 136).

In the 1940s, with the creation of Beginners meetings in many large groups they would not allow regular meeting attendance until a newcomer had first completed 4 weekly Beginners meetings taking him through the 12 Steps.

So, instead of making the meetings the "ikkar" and the essence as so many in NYC AA did, we would do well to return to what worked so well in Akron in the 1940s.

The two methods of group Step taking offered on this site offer phone support that is just as available as the phone support within SA. To me it is a no-brainer that as preparation for SA attendance we initially **suggest** that like it was in the 1940s, there should be no regular meeting attendance whatsoever until taking the Steps. That way the newcomer will know what is most important. The Steps ARE the program, the meetings are only a tool.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by the.guard - 01 Jul 2009 12:42

Dov wrote in reply #202 above:

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Dear Dov, what if we are able to develop a Torah program that would NOT BE *"more of the same"* but rather would teach a person who to **completely rebuild themselves from scratch**, just as the 12-Steps do, and NOT *"remain the same yid they are now"*? Do you think this is a realistic goal (not in one day, but over time...)? See my reply #12 on [this page](#). Do you think there is a chance to build such a program? Do you think maybe Battleworn is "onto" something?

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by Dov - 02 Jul 2009 12:43

[boruch wrote on 30 Jun 2009 17:02:](#)

[dov wrote on 29 Jun 2009 17:11:](#)

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The two methods of group Step taking offered on this site offer phone support that is just as available as the phone support within SA. To me it is a no-brainer that as preparation for SA attendance we initially **suggest** that like it was in the 1940s, there should be no regular meeting attendance whatsoever until taking the Steps. That way the newcomer will know what is most important. The Steps ARE the program, the meetings are only a tool.

Dear Boruch - It's not clear to me what you are referring to, as I do *not*, it turns out, believe SA **meetings** are that important. I think I have posted precious little about meetings, as a matter of fact. As for me, I went to only one meeting regularly per week for the first few years and do the same now. I agree completely with most of what you write here and thank you for sharing it. For me, meetings, step-writing assignments, making calls, and davening, too, are all *be-etzem* half-

measures. What seems to make them work for me and others I know, is only whether *through them* we obtain an honest relationship with the Ribono Shel Olam. Nothing else really helps. Meetings are not SA, but *going* to meetings certainly appears to break the lies I told myself that I was really, be-etzem "OK" and just had "a problem". One fellow recently wrote that just being on a phone conference line made his heart race to 200BPM. What is that about? I believe it is an emotional reaction to *contacting other real people* about our problem. The more of that, the merrier, it seems. I have more to say about this from a Torah perspective but this post is long enough...

Yes, you are right, there are many who do not make it in SA. There are many who do seemingly not "make it" in yiddishkeit, lehavdil, either. I have no experience of problems 2 and 3 you brought up. So nothing to share there, but thanks for letting me know your opinion, though.

Your friend, Dov

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 02 Jul 2009 19:01

[dov wrote on 02 Jul 2009 12:43:](#)

Dear Boruch - It's not clear to me what you are referring to, as I do *not*, it turns out, believe SA **meetings** are that important. I think I have posted precious little about meetings, as a matter of fact. As for me, I went to only one meeting regularly per week for the first few years and do the same now. I agree completely with most of what you write here and thank you for sharing it.

Hello Dov,

Thank you. Let me make it very simple.

You wrote initially that for people who are hooked GYE is a double-edged sword. You suggested that such people would do better in SA and it would not negatively affect their Yiddishkeit. I know at first-hand from experience working with sponsees that it is not as cut and dried as all that.

1) walking into SA can sometimes be in many ways more of a double-edged sword than walking into GYE

2) those who get a watered-down Spiritual program in SA can have not only a weak and slow recovery but a regression of several years in their relationship with Hashem, before they make any progress at all in their relationship with Hashem and that is in addition to picking up the baggage of certain Liberal AA myths that will unfortunately stay with them for life.

That is why I believe that neither of the approaches above, hang out on GYE, or join SA are sound guidance in themselves. I believe that the only sound guidance is "work a strongly Spiritual program", whether it is an AA-based program or a Torah-based program or some mix of the two, and you can do all of those on GYE today in a way that you cannot if you just join SA.

Now you raised two points in your posts about GYE:

1) In SA meetings you get rigorously honest in a way that is not inevitable on GYE

2) In SA you get phone contacts in a way that is not inevitable on GYE

I will not speak for Duvid Chaim, either he or Guard can do that, likewise I won't speak for the fledgling Torah Approach developing here on GYE, but I can speak for SA Back to Basics here on GYE.

1) In SA Back to Basics here on GYE you do your 4th step inventory in your second full week and that is getting a lot more honest than anything that would take place in the second week of going to SA meetings.

2) In SA Back to Basics we match people up with co-sponsors on day one. These co-sponsors are people, who for the most part have experience in BOTH face-to-face SA meetings and face-to-face Back-to-Basics meetings whom newcomers are encouraged to call. We are also

currently working on building a contact list so that newcomers can call any of the co-sponsors and each other for mutual support.

So, I am very open to suggestions but I feel that newcomers will come into SA with a much stronger Spiritual program before they have even walked into their first face-to-face meeting by doing SA Back-to-Basics phone meetings. Additionally there is a large metropolitan area in the US that will with G-d's help in be served in early August by Frum face-to-face SA Back to Basics meetings, which I would strongly recommend for anyone joining SA who is within the distance of being able to get to them.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 02 Jul 2009 19:43

Wow, Boruch. You are doing an amazing job! I didn't know you are matching people up with co-sponsors and getting phone numbers for the guys in your group to call. That is truly an AMAZING thing, and this was sorely missing on GYE until now. Even Duvid Chaim's group hasn't ventured to do that yet.

I'll bet Dov wishes you'd have been around 11 years ago when he was starting out in SA. Lucky for him though, Hashem helped him find an SA group and sponsors that obviously worked well for HIM :D

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 02 Jul 2009 20:01

[guardureyes wrote on 02 Jul 2009 19:43:](#)

Wow, Boruch. You are doing an amazing job! I didn't know you are matching people up with co-sponsors and getting phone numbers for the guys in your group to call. That is truly an AMAZING thing, and this was sorely missing on GYE until now. Even Duvid Chaim's group hasn't ventured to do that yet.

That is what Back to Basics is all about, it is about the group taking responsibility for getting the Newcomer through the Steps and taking the responsibility to make sure that he takes the next newcomer through the Steps.

My own Sponsor in face-to-face Back-to-Basics had a perfect program. It is seven years since he has lusted even in fantasy or thought. He has many sponsees. But he was unsatisfied because the majority of his sponsees were not completing their Steps and of the few who did, most wanted to retake them again and again rather than sponsor someone else. So in January of this year, he began Back to Basics meetings in his local SA so that he could make sure newcomers complete their Steps and make sure that they go on to sponsor others.

On the third week of the first run of Back-to-Basics, through a series of inexplicable "coincidences", I ended up in an SA group an hour away from home and on February 2nd of this year, I walked into the Back-to-Basics meeting in that group (it was my second SA meeting, my 13th day on GYE and my 13th day of real sobriety for the first time in 36 years). Today, five months later, Hashem has blessed my sponsor's efforts and realized his dream. Thanks to Back-to-Basics, I am my sponsor's second or third B2B sponsee and I have with his guidance started a local SA face-to-face Back-to-Basics meeting where I live, I am working with a large SA group in a Big City on starting another on August 4th, we have a phone Back-to-Basics meeting here in co-ordination with GYE and we are shortly going to get the online group going here on GYE all with Hashem's help.

Back to Basics is the best and most effective way to Pass it On and all are welcome. My sponsor originally envisaged Back to Basics as a sponsor factory. I have a rare disagreement with him. From my own experience I can tell you that **Back to Basics is not just a sponsor factory it is a group factory.**

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by Dov - 02 Jul 2009 23:09

Reb Boruch,

Thank you for the response. It is very nice to read what you have posted. For me, the face2face thing is a really big deal, particularly for newbies. If you would PM me to explain the details of

how it actually works, I'd like that very much.

In response to your helpful 3rd or so post above,

"You wrote initially that for people who are hooked GYE is a double-edged sword. You suggested that such people would do better in SA and it would not negatively affect their Yiddishkeit."

Please help me keep very clear that I am not an expert. I state my *opinion*, based on my *personal* experience recovering and sponsoring since Hashem sent me to SA. When I say *personal* experience I do not mean to imply that "since I experienced it myself, trust me - it's true." Rather, I mean that my experience is really all I dare to share with you. It is actually quite weak in a respect, because I may have no logical proofs to support it with! Nu. I believe Chuck C (and as implied in AA) is right in that when we set ourselves up as experts - no matter how altruistically - we gain an ego and lose our sobriety. I'll pass there, of course.

The flipside of that is that I am very certain that what I have experienced *is* real. The only question is: what does that have to do with anybody *else*? That, I do not know for sure and that is where Hashem comes in. All I can do is share it when I think it can be helpful.

I *have* also learned that when I intend to honestly share my experience, some people (*not* you) misunderstand and come off sure that I am *telling* them what is good or will work for *them*. I guess that can happen for two reasons:

First, I did not *phrase* it right or got carried away, taking myself too seriously in the moment or getting too passionate about the issue; or second, because *they* are simply used to "telling" and have little or no experience at "sharing". I have met many sponsors (and even sponsees) who do not share, but "tell". Some seem to do OK, but it's just not the way I was introduced to in recovery. It doesn't even register with these fellows that this guy may actually be just saying what works for him, and not telling *them* that they are "wrong and better come around, or else."

If I wrote to you above that GYE ***is inherently*** a double-edged sword, I was wrong. I do not have the posts here to check, but what I was trying to say was that ***I believe*** that there is a genuine ***risk*** of danger in GYE alone, as I hope I explained clearly. I wholeheartedly agree with you that there are real *risks* in just SA, as well. I tried to explain the *cheshbon* to the best of my ability. I assume GYE *has* helped many yidden get saved from deeper trouble with lust. **For me**, a frum man who is addicted and hopeless, even in recovery, I believe it is different. An approach that does not involve actually *meeting* with other recovering addicts, that is based on

the *same* Torah ideas I was already comfortable with and *wished I was keeping* would have been highly attractive to me 12 years ago. Maybe it would have worked. I believe strongly that

1-shifting my focus from the Torah or philosophy, *onto **myself*** and how to *effectively* do that; and

2-having to actually face other real people in recovery (pun intended) to make it all *real* experientially and not just another "concept", were both indispensable for my recovery, *and still are*. I would venture to say that you feel the same way. No?

All the best to you! And a great Shabbos to all!

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