

Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 08 Jun 2009 21:53

Heilige 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 Pintele Yid - 16 Jun 2009 18:07

Heiliga Bardichev et.al,

I have to run into a meeting but I want to share that I can't seem to come to terms with the thought that the statement in Chazal that Berasi Torah Tavlin doesn't work in **all** circumstances. At least from a pshat standpoint it seems to be communicating that it should. This is shaking me to the core but I view Torah as the cure to everything. It is supposed to be Chochmoso shel Hakadosh Boruch Hu?

More later.

Pintele Yid.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 16 Jun 2009 18:14

Sigh.

What chazal say is true, Torah is a Tavlin. And it works in all circumstances. But only if one knows what Torah is. Torah is not just reading words. It is not just intellectual give and take. It is not just Halachos. It is RATZON HASHEM. It is HASHEM HIMSELF. But what does that help a dog? If a dog learned Torah would it make him a human?

If we are learning Torah on Shabbos while scratching a dog's head and smoking a cigarette (as some Masklim used to do), will the Torah enter into our souls and transform us? Will it be the Tavlin that Chazal meant?

Bardichev and Efsheer. You are not letting mine and Dov's words into your heart. You are reading what we say in the wrong way. Re-read all the posts that Dov wrote on this thread again. But this time with an OPEN mind, not with a defensive attitude. And **Try** to understand what he is saying.

But even if you do this, I still do not know if you'll really get it. Not because Dov is better than you, but because you two never came **close** to the level of addiction that Dov and many other addicts reached. And you never experienced the 12-Step groups... So it's like trying to explain the color red to a man who was blind all his life.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by bardichev - 16 Jun 2009 18:23

AS LONG AS IT IS NOT LEKANTER

HAMAOR SHEBA MACHZIRO LIMUTAV

AGAIN I AM FINISHED DEBATING

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by the.guard - 16 Jun 2009 18:23

THE ROMAN CATHOLICS AND ALL THEIR ILK (I DONT MIND IF THE HEILIGER GUARD REMOVES THIS FROM THE POST)

WHO YOU LOOK AS HUMANS WHO STRUGGLE GASSED ANDBURNED 127 MEMBERS OF MY MATERNAL GRANDMOTHERS IMMEDIATE FAMILY SO DON'T GO THERE

What does this have to do with **breathing**? Do Roman Catholics not need to breath??

Dear Barditchev, with all due respect, either you are not reading what Dov is writing at all, or you are just completely missing what he is saying.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by London - 16 Jun 2009 21:46

This section may be of interest from the AA Big Book:

We are average Americans. All sections of this country and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social, and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined. The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action.

I would also like to share a story about my early recovery which only someone who has been through the fellowships will understand. When I came into SA I would do well during the week and manage to stay sober till Shabbos, on Shabbos I would find that the thoughts, cravings would come into my head and would end up acting out on Shabbos normally by masturbating, at that time I was on the verge of using the internet on Shabbos too. My sponsor at that time a devout roman catholic told me that in the Jewish religion it states that one is allowed to break Shabbos to save a life and surely my life is in danger by my acting out and therefore I should make calls on Shabbos, when I first heard this I could not accept this and kept on struggling, he encouraged me to ask my Rabbi but I was too embarrassed to at that time. During this time I was introduced to a Rov from the States with many years experience in addiction, and I asked him what to do and he told me "my friend you are dying - and these are the excuses you are making" and I made call on Shabbos to save my life, my addiction has no respect for anything and if I am not in recovery there are no such things as boundaries I will break them all, I am ashamed to admit but I have used the internet on Shabbos too. I know without a shadow of

doubt that if I am not in a recovery program my future will be multiple relationships, crossing the gender line and drugs. For me the 12 steps is my life line, sobriety is the foundation. I believe with my entire essence that I am doing the right thing. This my experience if I put anything in front of my addiction my addiction will wreck it, be it my Yiddishkeit, be it my wife and kids, my recovery has to come first in my life without exception, and this is why I am struggling so much as I constantly put work commitments, family commitments etc first and I am grateful that I have this forum to remind me of what I need to do to get back on track.

Dov and other people I have met in recovery has years of quality living that I crave, how many years of sobriety do the people on this forum have without working the steps etc. Come back to this thread in 12 / 24 months and then perhaps you can have a say on what works and what does not. Dov & co have a proven track record. Dov mentioned that frum yidden find it harder to get sober than goyim. I will share that 2 years ago I was at an international SA convention in Greensboro and all the frum yidden got together to discuss this very point, and some startling points were raised, but the general gist was that due to our Gemorah Kops we like to learn Rashi, Tosfos and all the Rishonim and Achronim on every suggestion that is made to us. Recovery is a simple program for complicated people. I do not always know what is best for me, and that's why I listen to those people who have attained a quality life free of this filthy grime.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 16 Jun 2009 21:53

Dear bardichever,

No debate here, just questions from one yid to another.

I love you. Period. It is clear you feel the same way about *everyone* on this forum, too! What do you expect of me? To lie to you? All I know about recovery is what I have seen and/or experienced, like you. Like everybody. I *tried* to get better as a growing ben Torah but had no success, only got worse. I read breslov, yesod yosef, parts of Tanya (BTW, I knew about despising my temptations, etc.), and went to the mikvah before and after the tikun klali quite a few times, I wrote tefillos, cried, whatever. I **wish** I had "made it" through those methods 100%! I am *not* one to walk into a church building and sit with goyim, at all! But what can I do? This mostly gentile group of recovering perverts saved my life. I do feel like I have a higher calling - to be the eved Hashem I was meant to become. And to be an eesh emes *at all*, it is clear that I must remain part of SA and share what they gave me with other losers (against lust) like I am. If I stay honest, I stay alive to be an eved Hashem for another day.

And BTW, my mother was a prisoner in Auschwitz for >1yr and a subject of Dr Mengele y"s's experiments. She lost >60 family members, as did my father who was in the countryside building railroad tracks. Till I was about four, Daddy used to wake *me* up at night occasionally with his nightmares and screaming. Incidentally, my wife blames my addiction on Hitler, y"s. (I don't care whose *fault* it is because: Hey, IV'E GOT IT!)

So I give no credit for my sobriety to roman catholics, or any other race/religion. It just so happens that one of them happened to have the "aveida" i was looking for and handed it to me. As my brother, I ask you what do you wish me to do now but carry the message I've got?

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by bardichev - 16 Jun 2009 22:28

disclaimer LONDON and DOV I wrote this while you were writng to me

THANKS FOR THE RESPECT IT IS DEFINATELY NOT DUE TO ME .I FEEL LIKE I AM BEING GOREM MACHLOKES.

AGAIN I AM NOT IN DEBATING MODE I AM IN STATEMENT MODE(I know that is not very humble)

I ASK FOR A BIT OF PATIENCE PLEASE HEILIGER GUARD REB DOV LONDON PLEASE BE PATIENT(i re-read all your posts)

#1 I WILL NOT DEBATE THE MERITS OR THE DE-MERITS OF 12 STEPS .IF YOU READ MY POSTS I ALWAYS SAY I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND THEM ALL I READ UP ON THE BUT I NEVER WORKED THEM I WILL NOT PASKEN ON THEM.

#2 IF IT WORKS FOR YOU GREAT MORE THAN GREAT YOU NEED TO BE DANCING FROM SIMCHA AND YOU SHOULD ALL BE PROUD .MAYBE EVEN PROUDER THAN ME BECAUSE YOU WENT THROUGH HARDER STEPS BI-RABIM TO GET HEALED

I AM REALLY BEING HONEST YOUR OPENNESS AND EXPERIENCE IS REFRESHING ESPECIALLY ON A TOPIC WHICH IS STILL LIKE SHAA LETS TALK ABOUT THIS OUTSIDE

ETC..

SO GET TO THE POINT bardichev!

THE POINT IS SIMPLE TORAH IS NOT DEBATEABLE. TORAH IS. TORAH IS THE BLUE PRINT OF THE WORLD .TORAH IS THE MEKOR (SOURCE) OF ALL WISDOM. TORAH IS WHERE WE FIND THE CONCEPT OF SIN THE CONCEPT OF ADDICTION THE CONCEPT OF TESHUVA

TWO THINGS PRECEDED THE WORLDS CREATION TORAH AND TESHUVA

BACK TO MY POINT. THERE IS NO WHERE IN TORAH THAT SPELLS OUT A PROGRAM FOR TESHUVA OUR RISHONIM GIVE US A FEW

JUST BY HAVING A PROGRAM WHICH IS NOT MENTIONED IN THE TORAH DOES **NOT** MAKE IT UNHOLY THERE ARE MANY DIVREI RESHUS WE DO THAT ARE NOT MENTIONED IN THE TORAH

BUT WHEN DO WE MUSTER UP THE CHUTZPAH TO SAY THE TORAH DOES NOT WORK?? (I THINK I JUST SLIPPED INTO A DEBATE SORRY)

YES THE TORAH DOES NOT SPELL OUT AN ORGANIZED SYSTEM WITH SPONSORS AND MEETINGS AND HELPFUL TIPS ALL IN ONE PLACE .I AGREE BUT DOES THAT CH"V TAKE AWAY FROM TORAH?? (YOISH AGAIN DEBATING THAT bardichev little sneak)

TORAH IS ANIYM BIMAKOM ECHAD AHIRIM BIMAKOM ACHER. FOR THIS VERY REASON THAT WHEN SOMEONE LEARNS A DEEP SUGYA OF TUKFO KOHEN A FEW BLATT LATER THE TORAH WANTS HIM TO HEAR SOME DIVREI MUSSAR.

YOUR PROBLEM IS NOT WITH TORAH (ah bardichev is back in the groove being meilitztov on yiddin) YOUR PROBLEM IS AND IT IS MY PROBLEM AND IT IS THE PROBLEM WITH ALL THAT RELATES TO INYANEI KEDUSHA .THE PROBLEM IS IT IS DIFFICULT TO TEACH ,ESPECIALLY BI-RABIM AND ESPECIALLY OUR RABBIS (FOR BETTER OR WORSE) HAD NO CLUE AS HOW TO DEAL WITH THESE INYANIM AND IF THEY DID THEY DIDN'T COME ACROSS IN A NON-JUDGEMENTAL WAY.BUT THERE IS NOTHING THAT YOU WILL NOT FIND IN TORAH.

LETS TAKE ME FOR A CUTE LITTLE EXAMPLE I STRUGGLED WITH NISYONOS SINCE FIRST YEAR HIGH SCHOOL. IT ONLY GOT WORSE AS I GOT OLDER. I HAVE RABBIEM FROM ALL ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM FROM THE KEDUHAS LEVI TO THE BAIS HALEVY AND I READ EVERY WORD IN LEV ELIYAHU AND ALMOST ALL OF IGROS CHAZON ISH AND STEPLER GAON TO ALMOST EVERY WORD OF NESIVAS SHALOM ETC.. AND I WAS STILL STRUGGLING

DOES THAT NEGATE THE KOACH OF TORAH CH"V IT IS ONLY TORAH THAT SAID bardichev keep on trucking!!! YOU WILL GET THERE

I GOT OFF TARGET IN A NUTSHELL

12 STEPS IS GOOD GEVALDIG A LIFESAVER YESS YESS YES NO QUESTIONS

TORAH IS LIFE

12 STEPS A LIFE SAVING PROGRAM CPR YES (YES LONDON I UNDERSTAND WHY A ROV CAN PASKEN TO CALL ON SHABBOS)

(BTW LONDON YOU ARE SOOO HOLY I CRY FROM TESHUVA EVERY TIME I READ YOUR POSTS)

TORAH IS LIFE TORAH IS THE ONLY ANTIDOTE TO Y"H

TALK ALL THE MERITS OF THE 12 STEPS .YOU SHOULD IT'S GOOD AND HEALTHY AND THE LAST TIME I CHECKED IT IS YOUR WEBSITE

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE DON'T STEP ON THE HEILIGER TORAH

HASHIVEINU HASHEM EILECHE VINASHUVA CHADESH YAMEINU KIKEDEM!!!

very humble and yet very proud to be a small part of this HEILIGER CHABURAH

BARDICHEV OOPS

bardichev

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by London - 16 Jun 2009 22:32

[guardureyes wrote on 16 Jun 2009 14:55:](#)

About your fall, Nu, what can you expect from an addict? But can you identify what chain of events led to it? Can you make new fences in those areas, or try something you haven't yet, to

Guard, thanks for your kind words and email to me. I know from my past experience and from others that my addiction / acting out is only a symptom of the problem. I do not know how to deal with daily living as Boruch has so profoundly shared too I have issues with money and weight, and find it very easy to get overwhelmed 90% of the time the tools of the program work for me the other 10% of the time I choose not to work them. I am discussing now with my therapist and sponsor doing 90 meetings in 90 days (90 & 90) this is known to be one of the most effective tools to get recovery back on the front burner, and to give me a chance to deal with my daily living so working a combination of programs. A bit similar to the WOH but for me on a very strong dose.

On a practice level I have agreed with my wife that by the end of the week I will have re-protect you for next time? That's how we grow. I don't need to tell you that I instated my filter and give you the passwords.

Thanks for being there for me.

London

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by bardichev - 16 Jun 2009 22:49

DOV THE SAME WAY I CAN NOT JUDGE ANYONE WHO WENT THROUGH THE
HOLOCAUST I FIRMLY BELEIVE I CA NOT JUGE YOU EITHER. (LONDON IS A DIFFERENT
STORY just joking)

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PLEASE BOTH OF YOU READ MY POST slowwwwly

BTW REGARDING BREATHING YOU CAN ALWAYS BORROW THE bardichever
DIFRIBILATOR

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by London - 16 Jun 2009 22:55

[bardichev wrote on 16 Jun 2009 22:49:](#)

DOV THE SAME WAY I CAN NOT JUDGE ANYONE WHO WENT THROUGH THE
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STORY just joking)

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by the.guard - 16 Jun 2009 23:33

BUT WHEN DO WE MUSTER UP THE CHUTZPAH TO SAY THE TORAH DOES NOT WORK??

Torah is life. Torah is our AIR. But if we are underwater, air won't help us. We have to get out of being under the water first.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by hoping - 17 Jun 2009 02:04

I don't understand the debate here. Reb Dov oozes Kedusha and I am thrilled whenever he posts advice in my thread. This falls in line with "Sh'al Avicha V'yagedcha". It makes sense to listen to someone with more experience. Dov's battles and successes make him particularly qualified to advise. That being said, I have never seen him say anything that pointing in a direction other than Avoda and Yiras Shamayim. If someone can tell me that from his experience learning was not enough and he needed the 12 steps, it is not relevant if that is because of the low Madraiga of our generation's learning or for some other reason. It is also not relevant that there may theoretically be another way to heal through Limud Hatorah. What is important is that he is giving me tools and tricks that I can use to move away from sin and be close to Hashem. If someone offered me a "trick" to become a bigger Eved Hashem, I would not care if I couldn't find a source for this trick in the Torah. I would just make sure that it did not go against the Torah and then I would assume that my lack of ability to find it was due to my own shortcomings. Regardless, I would make sure to do whatever I could to achieve the ultimate level of Avoda.

Bardichev- I love you dearly and I love the way you stand up for our Torah. It is important that you make sure that noone ever disparages Limud Hatorah or doing Teshuva and Tefillah. I sincerely believe that everyone on this site (especially R' Dov) would wholeheartedly acknowledge the supremacy of Torah and Avoda as you express it and just believe that whatever works is included in the Ratzon of Hashem.

I hope that this rant makes sense.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by aaron4 - 17 Jun 2009 16:40

Although B"H my struggle is not as painful as that of Dov or London, I can nonetheless understand and relate to the way they (and Guard) describe the role played by the 12 steps in their recovery and can appreciate how it does not detract C"V one iota from Torah. I think the reason why this is so hard to grasp is that it **seems** like the 12 steps are competing because their goal is a "spiritual awakening" and an awareness of G-d which is **also** the goal of a Jew living a Torah life. The answer is, as Guard noted, one (the 12 steps) precedes the other (Torah). Hold it BARDICHEV (you deserve the capital letters), it does not **have to** work that way, it does not mean that the answer is not in the Torah C"V, but on a practical level, it's difficult to pull together the **SIMPLE RECOGNITION** of Hashem required by the steps from more complex Torah sources. It's simply more hidden and difficult to access, particularly when in the throes of the addiction. The obstacle to using Torah sources is simple and practical - you cannot relate to Torah properly – you're running before you can walk. This idea has been stated many times (Dov's bicycle vs. an 18 wheeler, Boruch's building from the foundation, etc).

In fact, although lately I seem to just agree and "second" other posts, I think I can add a little twist here, along with a question from my own struggle relating precisely to this line between being a human being and being a Torah Jew, and perhaps someone has a suggestion.

Before my recovery began almost 11 months ago, I was emotionally DEAD. Although I learned Torah, I did not relate to it, I did not really relate to anything. I felt disconnected from life and could mimic but not **experience** it the way others did. My recovery has been, at times, pure, unadulterated bliss! I can feel for the first time! I'm like a drunk with a bottle except that this is a GOOD bottle, I cannot get enough of being emotionally ALIVE. It's a new toy for me, and one of my first goals it to connect for the first time to Torah and Hashem. So I'm at the line, and here's the question as I search for more and more for fulfillment from Torah. This site is a great source of inspiration, chizuk and mussar and I've been learning and listening to shiurim on hashkafa and mussar offline as well. I find that my heart is filled with the desire to do the ratzon haboray, and since talmud Torah k'neged kulam, I am drawn to learning. However that's when I hit a BRICK WALL. Friends, I can open a sefer but within minutes, my mind wanders. Even if it doesn't go places it shouldn't, nonetheless, it's not on learning. If I do manage to learn for 5 minutes, I can't remember a thing. I've forgotten the ideas I learned in minute 1 by the time I get to minute 5. Since everything is connected, I have to start again. And again. It just won't penetrate or stick!! B"H I am not learning disabled and generally have a good memory and skill set for learning. Can any or you relate to this? What has worked for you?

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 17 Jun 2009 17:11

Hay, great post! Thank you for the reminders and chizzuk, reb aaron. The clear way you put everything is a gift. I was also dead. Things went very slowly for me in Torah/avoda at first but picked up later on. The road of my avodah was rocky for a few years. It is lightyears better now, though far from perfection. (I'll get specific if you request it.) I do not believe it *had* to take me that long, but I didn't reach out until things got unbearable, a typical pattern for me! Anyhow, Please, please learn how to take it easy. It is actually hubris to expect everything to spiritually click as soon as you start to get healthy, let alone Torah itself: the holiest stuff, da'as haborei! It would also imply a person is turning his back on the extent of his former illness when he acts as though he can get significantly better so fast, no? You may actually need to **hold back just a bit** at a few rikkudim (I know some won't hear of it!!), or change your limud expectations to mikra and mishna instead of gemora and mussar. As for me early on in recovery, if I had gone right to the same limudim that I was trying to "make it in" during my worst acting out years, the dejection would have been crippling. Maybe that's where you are? Don't stay there, brother.

The Sfas Emes explains: Yir'u es Hashem kedoshov, ki ayn machsor lireyav: Sometimes, for attaining yir'as Hashem (and certainly sobriety and recovery is the primary haychee timza especially for an early-recovering addict!) a yid (yes, a kodosh like you) needs to forgo an aspect of learning he really desires. **Don't fear, ki ayn machsor *lirayav*!** you will not miss out on an iota of Torah at all, in the end. Hashem will make it up for you, or whatever. So, go ahead and do whatever it takes to keep the focus on yiras Hashem, not on your own picture of what your avodah needs to be.

Does this help?

PS. On a slightly different tack, if you can handle it (or modify it to *use* it)

Reb Tzvi meyer writes a lot about a yesod that the Torah you learn w/o any ta'am serves you later on as the ikkar source of power in your days of aliyah. I am sure others here can elaborate on that better than I.

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