

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

=====
=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by London - 23 Jun 2009 09:38

R' Boruch

It says a few sentences later on in the same paragraph of a vision for you "The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got."

SA has no major secrets, it is based entirely on AA, if a Jewish person were to pioneer a group and call it JSA, it would work too. However for me, I need to hit the ground running I cannot afford the luxury of trying to work out a program from mussar seforim, by the time I try and do that I could lose everything I have. What I do have is SA that has a proven track record of success, there are hundreds of people within this fellowship who have achieved long term sobriety, that can give me experience strength and hope on a daily basis 24 /7 unconditionally. Perhaps after a few years of sobriety I can worry about a Jewish program. For me I had no problem going to non-Jewish people for my acting out, I certainly have no problem going to them for help. If there is a program available in a Jewish setting like SA then I will definitely join it, but unfortunately there is not. I can't be a pioneer in this respect.

London

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 23 Jun 2009 09:42

[battleworn wrote on 21 Jun 2009 13:24:](#)

I have a child that is in big trouble. I've spoken to experts with much experience. But a few months ago I had a little talk with R' Tvi Meir. He spoke very humbly, he doesn't claim to be an expert and he doesn't have experience. But it soon became abundantly obvious that he knew what he was talking about lightyears ahead of all the experienced experts. He poshut knew exactly what is going on in the kid and exactly what he needs, when the experts had no idea.

You already alluded to this in the quote that I quoted before. Right now I'm not sure where you stand on the issue, so please let us know.

Chochom odif minovi - the wise man has something over the prophet and certainly there is no requirement to have actual direct experience in every facet of life to discover the correct mussar approach. There are some situations, however that are so complex that without direct experience there is no way to adequately give advice.

I have a friend who is a recovering addict with 3 years of sobriety who told me that he originally went to HoRav Chaim Kanievsky Shlit"a and asked him about his addiction and whether he should do the Steps. HoRav Chaim Kanievsky Shlit"a told him that he cannot answer that question and he should go and ask HoRav Aron Leib Shteinman Shlit"a. HoRav Aron Leib Shteinman Shlit"a told him that he is not personally familiar with the Steps and therefore cannot express any direct opinion on the Steps but he has heard of SA, has heard that it works and he told my friend to join and do the Steps.

That is the difference between gedolim, who only speak of what they know, as opposed to me who posts on forums as if I am some sort of expert without really knowing what I am talking about.

=====
=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by boruch - 23 Jun 2009 09:55

[London wrote on 23 Jun 2009 09:38:](#)

R' Boruch

It says a few sentences later on in the same paragraph of a vision for you "The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got."

SA has no major secrets, it is based entirely on AA, if a Jewish person were to pioneer a group and call it JSA, it would work too. However for me, I need to hit the ground running I cannot afford the luxury of trying to work out a program from mussar seforim, by the time I try and do that I could lose everything I have. What I do have is SA that has a proven track record of success, there are hundreds of people within this fellowship who have achieved long term sobriety, that can give me experience strength and hope on a daily basis 24 /7 unconditionally. Perhaps after a few years of sobriety I can worry about a Jewish program. For me I had no problem going to non-Jewish people for my acting out, I certainly have no problem going to them for help. If there is a program available in a Jewish setting like SA then I will definitely join it, but unfortunately there is not. I can't be a pioneer in this respect.

London

London,

I too am a member of SA, and I got my recovery within a particular SA group. My experience has shown me that many in SA and AA have unnecessarily complicated the recovery process, have made it unattainable to some and in many cases recovery is far from complete and even when sobriety is achieved much of the original insanity remains. That is why I am working on this [board](#) to encourage those in and out of SA to aim for true recovery.

In general, if my experience is any guide, I believe that the best approach is:

1) Join SA

2) Find a Sponsor who is more "G-d conscious" than you, regardless of his religion, as long as he has a religion

3) Do not under any circumstances use any Jewish sponsor who has not become more Orthodox through working the Steps (if you currently do, my recommendation would be to begin looking for a new sponsor and switch as soon as possible)

4) Work the Steps immediately (if your sponsor suggests otherwise, my recommendation would be to begin looking for a new sponsor and switch as soon as possible)

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 23 Jun 2009 09:57

as opposed to me who posts on forums as if I am some sort of expert without really knowing what I am talking about.

You are too humble Boruch (if such a thing is possible). You **do** know what you are talking about.

But what are you doing up at 6:00 AM?

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 23 Jun 2009 10:07

[guardureyes wrote on 23 Jun 2009 09:57:](#)

what are you doing up at 6:00 AM?

Leaving for shachris

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by London - 23 Jun 2009 10:09

Dear All

I am really confused about this thread perhaps someone can enlighten me; let me explain. If the strategy you are using is working for you then why change it; however, if the strategy you are using is not then you do not have to be the biggest lamden to understand that you need to change it. Therefore if a person is finding that by learning mussar and doing tikkunim etc is enough for him to stay clean then why are you posting on this thread, clearly you have a strategy a program that works.

However if mussar etc is not enough then clearly the 12 step fellowships are the way forward, there are so many Gedolim of our generation who say that the 12 steps are not contrary to our religion, we have R' Dr Twersky, Boruch just mentioned Harav AL Steinman, I personally know people who have spoken to Harav Matisyohu Salomon and he has told them to join SA besimcha as that is their Avodah.

So why are we discussing this? do we on this forum know better than Rabbi Twersky, Harav Steinman and Harav Salomon? What is there to discuss if a person can get well without the 12 steps good, if not then join a 12 step program - to me it's really simple, I am not sure where this is going, someone please enlighten me?

London

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by London - 23 Jun 2009 10:17

[boruch wrote on 23 Jun 2009 09:55:](#)

My experience has shown me that many in SA and AA have unnecessarily complicated the recovery process, have made it unattainable to some and in many cases recovery is far from complete and even when sobriety is achieved much of the original insanity remains.

Please can you explain, I have not seen this. What I have seen is that SA will only help me with my lust addiction only. I have issues with food and money for that I am working other fellowships. There is emotional trauma that I have suffered from my childhood that I deal with in therapy. I do not believe there is one size fits all approach, people do not become addicts in a vacuum, and a person in recovery needs to go to the core of himself and find out why he has become an addict and fix the damage. SA is a tool in this process, however if I am not sexually sober I cannot deal with anything, sobriety is the foundation, if I am not sober, no mussar or therapy in world will help.

London

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 23 Jun 2009 10:24

[London wrote on 23 Jun 2009 10:17:](#)

[boruch wrote on 23 Jun 2009 09:55:](#)

My experience has shown me that many in SA and AA have unnecessarily complicated the recovery process, have made it unattainable to some and in many cases recovery is far from complete and even when sobriety is achieved much of the original insanity remains.

Please can you explain, I have not seen this. What I have seen is that SA will only help me with my lust addiction only. I have issues with food and money for that I am working other fellowships. There is emotional trauma that I have suffered from my childhood that I deal with in therapy. I do not believe there is one size fits all approach, people do not become addicts in a vacuum, and a person in recovery needs to go to the core of himself and find out why he has become an addict and fix the damage. SA is a tool in this process, however if I am not sexually sober I cannot deal with anything, sobriety is the foundation, if I am not sober, no mussar or therapy in world will help.

London

I went for years of therapy and my last therapist of eight months told me that his only achievement was persuading me to go to SA. My SA Step 10 motivated me to join OA for my food issue and my SA Step 10 and SA Step 11 Guidance motivated me to join DA for my money issue. Hashem sent me to a sponsor with the right message and my sanity returned. I was able to go off my therapy and medication and I am calmer and happier than ever. That is a solution that I got only because Hashem sent me to the right SA sponsor.

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by boruch - 23 Jun 2009 10:34

[London wrote on 23 Jun 2009 10:09:](#)

Dear All

I am really confused about this thread perhaps someone can enlighten me; let me explain. If the strategy you are using is working for you then why change it; however, if the strategy you are using is not then you do not have to be the biggest lamden to understand that you need to change it. Therefore if a person is finding that by learning mussar and doing tikkunim etc is enough for him to stay clean then why are you posting on this thread, clearly you have a

strategy a program that works.

However if mussar etc is not enough then clearly the 12 step fellowships are the way forward, there are so many Gedolim of our generation who say that the 12 steps are not contrary to our religion, we have R' Dr Twersky, Boruch just mentioned Harav AL Steinman, I personally know people who have spoken to Harav Matisyohu Salomon and he has told them to join SA besimcha as that is their Avodah.

So why are we discussing this? do we on this forum know better than Rabbi Twersky, Harav Steinman and Harav Salomon? What is there to discuss if a person can get well without the 12 steps good, if not then join a 12 step program - to me it's really simple, I am not sure where this is going, someone please enlighten me?

London

It seems to me that you are not confused at all. London, I agree with you fully and I believe that is where this thread has finally gotten,

[London wrote on 23 Jun 2009 10:09:](#)

if a person can get well without the 12 steps good, if not then join a 12 step program

=====
=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 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.

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 23 Jun 2009 22:25

Therefore, the Chesuron is not in the Torah nor the person - just the implementation.

AHHH PINTELE DO ZUGST OZOI GUT-YOU'RE SAYING SO GOOD!!!

You put the whole big emes in to one little sentence.

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 08:04

Chochom odif minovi - the wise man has something over the prophet and certainly there is no requirement to have actual direct experience in every facet of life to discover the correct mussar approach. There are some situations, however that are so complex that without direct experience there is no way to adequately give advice.

I have a friend who is a recovering addict with 3 years of sobriety who told me that he originally went to HoRav Chaim Kanievsky Shlit"a and asked him about his addiction and whether he should do the Steps. HoRav Chaim Kanievsky Shlit"a told him that he cannot answer that question and he should go and ask HoRav Aron Leib Shteinman Shlit"a. HoRav Aron Leib Shteinman Shlit"a told him that he is not personally familiar with the Steps and therefore cannot express any direct opinion on the Steps but he has heard of SA, has heard that it works and he told my friend to join and do the Steps.

there are so many Gedolim of our generation who say that the 12 steps are not contrary to our religion, we have R' Dr Twersky, Boruch just mentioned Harav AL Steinman, I personally know people who have spoken to Harav Matisyohu Salomon and he has told them to join SA besimcha as that is their Avodah.

Dearest Boruch and London,

Let's see if we can agree on a few things.

1) Breaking out of addiction is "Pikuach Nefesh".

2) The only system that has been known to work was always AA

I think those two statements are not negotiable, if you don't agree please tell me.

3) That being the case, OF-COURSE the Gedolim have been encouraging people to go. It doesn't mean that they studied the whole thing in depth and came to the conclusion that there's nothing in all the AA tradition that's contrary to Torah!

In fact it tells us nothing about SA that we didn't know before. All you can possibly prove from it, is that they (the Rabonim) have their heads screwed on straight. [And most of us knew that anyway]

Again, please let me know if you disagree.

4) Reb Boruch, I'm sure you agree (correct me if I'm wrong) that the reason R' Shteinman said to go, is not because SA was built out of experience, but rather because it was the only thing known to work.

So let me rephrase my question: If, say, R' Don Segal would come and say "I have found that lust addiction is a big problem in the frum community. So I was choiker vidoresh the sources and B'H I came up with a system that will definitely work for whoever tries."

What will you do? A)Will you say it can't be because the big book says that you need experience?

B)Will you trust him because he's more worthy of your trust than the big book is?

C)Will you say that the big book is right for Goyim bur we have "Chochma Eloki"?

D)Will you say something else?

In addition to Reb Boruch, I address this question to all the 12 steppers. I'll be grateful to all those who answer.

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 24 Jun 2009 11:10

What will you do? A)Will you say it can't be because the big book says that you need experience?

B)Will you trust him because he's more worthy of your trust than the big book is?

C)Will you say that the big book is right for Goyim bur we have "Chochma Eloki"?

D)Will you say something else?

"D" - I would say something else, and that is: "Wow, Reb Don Segal, that's truly wonderful!! How does it work??? And if his response made sense, I'd say: "AMAZING! It's about time the gedolim came up with a solid plan! Ashrecha Yisrael! HOW DO WE SIGN UP???"

=====

Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by battleworn - 24 Jun 2009 11:23

Thank you for your reply (Only, I think it might sound to some people that you are being disrespectful)

=====