

Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"

Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 09:41

A lot of great points were raised in the "Torah and..." thread but I also feel that there's a lot of confusion. You see, I have a very analytical mind and I crave clarity. So I'm sure for a lot of people it's great, but for people like me things really need to be clarified.

Furthermore, I loath debate. When I was a young man I spent more time arguing than most people do in a lifetime. I was quite good at it, so I usually won all the arguments. And it was a HUGE waste of time. Arguing does NOT lead you to the truth. Discussion on the other hand, does. I think that we all want the truth and if we discuss these issues we can help each other get there. I'm not saying we have to agree on everything, but I do think that if we search together with an open mind, we will end up agreeing on almost everything.

I will start, be"H, with a list of things that, it seems to me, need clarification. And then I'll elaborate on each one iy"H. Everyone is welcome to comment, question and/or challenge anything I write, but please no attacking. (And please don't put words in my mouth. If you think I meant to imply something, you can allways ask)

1) In the topic name, does the word "Torah" refer to learning Torah; or does it mean the Torah as a whole, in other words Judaism or Mesorah?

2) "The 12 steps": are we discussing the actual steps; or does it mean joining SA?

3) Those who found that the Torah couldn't help them, was the problem with the Torah in general; or perhaps with what they did or didn't learn?

4) Does this problem depend on the level of addiction; or on other factors?

5) Is SA an alternative for those who the Torah didn't work for them; or is it a Tachbula to get the Torah to work for them?

6) Why do some people feel that they needed to slow down in their Avodas Hashem while others feel the exact opposite?

7) Are there dangers in using Torah that we need to warn people about?

8) Are there dangers in using the 12 step groups that we need to warn people about?

9) Are there limitations to the eitzah of Chazal -"Moshchei'hu l'beis Hamidrash"

That's enough for now. If you feel I missed something, please say so.

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"

Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 10:17

1) In the topic name, does the word "Torah" refer to learning Torah; or does it mean the Torah as a whole, in other words Judaism or Mesorah?

If we are discussing learning Torah, the issue has long been resolved. Some of the opponents of chasidus and all the opponents of the mussar movement, had this claim. They felt that Torah learning is all a person needs in order to become a tzaddik. As I said the issue has long been resolved; if anyone disagrees, I'll be happy to discuss it further.

[I just want to point out one thing. It's well known that their claim was largely based on the words of Chazal "Halevai oisi ozvu v'es Torasi shamaru she'hama'or shebah machziron lemutav". I think that this was a total misreading of the words. Chazal were explaining the posuk "Shtaim ra'os osoh ami...oisi ozvu...v'es Torasi lo shamaru. The posuk says that Am Yisroel did

two things wrong. The first one was that we broke off our connection with Hashem. At Har Sinai Hashem married us, and instead of working on Sholom Bayis (like R' Pinkus would always say) we left Him.

The second one was, that we stopped learning and keeping the Torah. Chazal were bothered by a question: Once we c'v lost our connection with Hashem what would be the point of the Torah. [u]The first "rah" was obvious to Chazal[/u], but the second one needed explanation. On this they explained that even after we c"v messed up our connection with Hashem -oisi azvu mekor mayim chaim, there is still a point in holding on to the Torah because eventually we will wake up and re-cultivate our relationship to Hashem. I don't want to be ma'arich to much on this and I hope it's clear. If not, please tell me]

If, on the other hand, the question is about Judaism, then I think almost all of us agree that -as Boruch said- everything is in the Torah. The question then, is not about the Torah at all, but rather about tactics. The handbooks, in my opinion, cover this issue quite well.

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 10:43

2) "The 12 steps" are we discussing the actual steps; or does it mean joining SA?

If we are disscusing the steps themselves, I don't see what the question is. Why would we want to question these particular ideas and what does it have to do with Torah? If someone -for EX:- suggests pinching yourself if you look at something you shouldn't, I can't imagine that anyone would want to discuss "Pinching your self and the Torah" or "Pinching yourself vs. Torah" :D :D :D

If we are dicussing joining SA then there's what to discuss (see below)

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"

Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 11:22

3) Those who found that the Torah couldn't help them, was the problem with the Torah in general; or perhaps with what they did or didn't learn?

To those that found that the Torah didn't work for them, I ask the following:

In those dark days did you know that:

- a) The purpose that Hashem sent you to this world was to work on this very issue?
- b) The reason we are given a lifetime is because that's how long it takes until we get it right?
- c) Hashem doesn't make bad investments and when He gave you this mission, He knew what He was doing?
- d) Everything depends on the eyes and the heart?
- e) Every effort that we make is worth infinitely more than anything in this world EVEN IF WE FELL IN THE END?
- f) The only thing we have bechira on, is Ratzon; success is only in the hands of Hashem?
- g) The Torah specifically tells us, that when all else fails, all we need to do is have pure Emunah and leave everything up to Hashem?

h) The only way to fight the y'h is to learn how to avoid him?

i) Not only is this nissoyon not a hinderance to your success, but in fact it's the only way possible for you to get to your goal?

j) Hashem is totaly and completely on your side, and he's NOT disgusted with you?

k) Every yerida is always a preparation for an aliyah?

l) The greatest nachas ru'ach for Hashem is when someone who is in the grip of the y'h still tries to fight -This the ultimate Shechina Betachtonim which is the purpose of all creation?

m) Hashem does not expect you do it alone? (And even if you knew that, were you able to get real help - the kind of help that people are getting on this heiliger network?)

n) Every effort end every good ratzon adds up, and at the end Hashem brings the yeshu'a in the zechus of everything together?

I have a lot more to ask, but this is what came to mind now.

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
Posted by the.guard - 21 Jun 2009 11:47

I didn't get a chance to read everything here yet Battelworn, but I just noticed meanwhile one thing you wrote:

Some of the opponents of chasidus and all the opponents of the mussar movement, had this claim. They felt that Torah learning is all a person needs in order to become a tzaddik.

It's so funny that you mention that because just this Shabbos I saw in a Breslover Parsha-weekly that this was PRECISELY the Machlokes between Korach and Moshe! Korach was a great Talmid Chacham, and he knew all the deepest Kabbalistic intentions of the Avodah and the ketores, and so he was sure that that was all he needed to be a Kohen Gadol and lead Klal Yisrael! But he didn't understand that being a Tzadik is **far different** than just "knowledge".

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 11:49

4) Does this problem depend on the level of addiction; or on other factors?

It was suggested that someone whose addiction has gotten passed p*** and mast. can't do it without the groups, while someone who's less infected could. I think we have proof here that the first half of that statement is not accurate (I can think of "Mevakesh"). And about the second half, I wonder what Boruch would say.

A while ago someone made a totally different chiluk. He suggested that if someone is really seriously actively concentrating on it, then he can do it without the groups but otherwise they won't make it. (My personal **feeling** is that one of the main secrets of success in SA is that it makes you be very proactive [going to therapy is not the same thing at all because it's largely passive])

I would suggest perhaps another chiluk. Maybe it simply depends on what else is available to you (see #3)

Of course it can also depend on your nature, your level of emunah, your connections (for EX: if you have a rov or rebbe that is equipped to deal with it) Your chinuch etc.

If anyone can shed light on this, please post.

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 12:38

5) Is SA an alternative for those who the Torah didn't work for them; or is it a Tachbula to get the Torah to work for them?

It seems that everyone here agrees that the latter is the way to go. I think it's very important to be very clear on this, as I will be"H explain below (#8) If anyone thinks that it's not that simple, please comment.

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 13:06

6) Why do some people feel that they needed to slow down in their Avodas Hashem while others feel the exact opposite?

There's been a lot of talk about bite size pieces etc... But others have found that the key to breaking free is being totally absorbed in Avodas Hashem. For Ex: If someone says the 100 daily brachos with kavonoh, then it would seem to me that there's no way that that won't save him.

I know that there are people that are learning and giving shiurim the whole day and finding time to browse gehinom in between. But mind you their Torah is min hasafa ulichuts. The Arizal says that the Torah can c"v strengthen the bad in a person, if he doesn't do teshuva before he learns. On that the posuk says "niru lachem nir vi'al tizri'u el hakotzim" You have to get rid of the thorns before you plant otherwise you will encourage the growth of the thorns. Now of course everyone will scream "What do you mean, the greatest strength for doing teshuva comes from learning Torah"

The answer is that if you want to learn and continue sinning then you will succeed very well in doing exactly that. But if you daven before you learn and say: Tayireh Tatteh I have sinned but really I want **only** to do your will and nothing else at all. Please help that the Torah that I learn should purify me and change me and bring me close to you. The Torah should cleanse me from Kinah Taivoh and Kavod, all I want is you and nothing else.

If that's way you learn and that's the way you do mitzvohs, then why should you have to slow down? And if it's not, then why can't you start today? If someone can enlighten me on this, I would greatly appreciate it.

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"

Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 14:04

7) Are there dangers in using Torah that we need to warn people about?

Once, when I was actually doing very well, someone gave me a kuntress about shmiras einayim that was all about the great punishments awaiting the person who doesn't watch his eyes. One time someone saw me reading it and he tapped me on the shoulder and said R' Yossel Tzeinvert said that you are not aloud to read that. For those who don't know, R' Yossel is an old style Yerushalmi holy Tzadik. And he says that one is not aloud to read this kuntress which is all Torah. So I want to discuss why.

We know beyond any shdow of doubt, that Ein HKB"H ba bi'trunya im briyosov and lefum tzara agra. So obviously if someone was born in to a world that is totally flodded with tumah, and before he even became a Bar da'as he was already exposed to tons of spiritual poison, that in

previous generations didn't even exist; then of course the onshim that apply to a clean and pure person who looks where he shouldn't, can not possibly apply to him. When Chazal said that that's the onesh, they were talking face value. If we apply it to us, then we are distorting the Torah by taking it out of context.

I once heard from a very big Talmid Chochom that just like there were Kara'im there are also "Talmuda'im" Hashem entrusted the Torah to Klal Yisroel to be transmitted by them from generation to generation. We are to turn to the transmitters of the Torah in order to be able to understand it properly. And when things get rough Hashem sends us Tzadikim that reveal things in the Torah that we need in order to survive. If you try to apply the Torah without the help of the later Tzadikim then you might very well be in for big danger.

On the other hand, sometimes it seems to me that some people here have a sort of bias against the Torah. Like as if they think that people need to C"V be protected from the Torah. Even if you're convinced that SA is the only way to go, I don't see any reason to be "wary" of Torah content. [If you don't know what I'm talking about, that's fine.]

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
Posted by London - 21 Jun 2009 17:01

Dear Battleworn

I am not sure of your motives in this post, and what exactly you are seeking to clarify. There is an English saying "if it 'aint broke, don't fix it". So my question simply is - is what you are doing now working, are you staying sober, staying stopped, and leading a purposeful life? If you are then, great! Why the long Shabbos Hagadol drosho on the 12 steps? However, if what you are doing is not working, then why not try working the steps and go to an SA meeting what have you got to lose? We have it on good authority that the 12 steps are not contrary to Judaism.

In my experience long before I came into SA I went to speak to Rabbonim and Mashgichim, and they all sympathised with me, but none of them gave me the answer like the 12 steps do. If the answer was so simple as to learn more mussar or daven harder why did they not tell me this, the answer to me is that most Rabbonim are way out of their depths with mental issues like addictions, they do not understand, and why should I expect of them to understand me. Perhaps if someone has the occasional urge to look at porn etc the answer is to be mechazaik

oneself with mussar etc. Nowadays we do not have the capacity of the previous generations to look into the Torah and derive the practical solutions for the world's problems. I am sure beyond a shadow of doubt that there is a cure for cancer contained within the Torah, but which Rov would be so foolish to advise someone suffering with cancer r'l to immerse himself in the Torah to find the solution, he has to see a Doctor and start a treatment of chemotherapy. Lust addiction is a spiritual cancer of the soul, that on any given time is only getting progressively worse as we try and maintain the highs. The 12 steps is a spiritual chemotherapy. For me (I speak for myself only) learning mussar in isolation would not work, I need the physical interaction of going to meetings, speaking with my sponsor, making and receiving calls during times of distress, and working the 12 steps.

Therefore R' Battle, if you are still struggling with this insidious addiction, perhaps you should try going to a meeting and asking for help, you may be pleasantly surprised. For me working the steps has now given me a foundation of to my yiddishkeit, it is helping be a true Eved Hashem, for me it's not Torah v's 12 ; Torah is the 12 steps, the fact that it was originated by Non-Jews, I will leave that up to Hashem to worry about, there are so many inventions out there that were invented by the Non-Jews that we use to help us in our Yiddishkeit, let this join the ranks.

I will end of by quoting from the AA Big Book "There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance-that principle is contempt prior to investigation."

London

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"

Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 17:38

Reb London, thanks for your concern, but no I am B'H not struggling.

Therefore R' Battle, if you are still struggling with this insidious addiction, perhaps you should try

going to a meeting and asking for help, you may be pleasantly surprised.

Why do you think I would be surprised? According to my understanding SA has all the nessecary components for success. I assume that the main reason that their success rate isn't much higher is because the rest or the people don't really want to recover. They're just going so they can say that they tried.

I am not sure of your motives in this post

I have two motives. First of all, I love all Jews insanely and I want to be able to help people in the best way possible.

Second of all Emes and K'vod Shomayim are extremely important to me.

what exactly you are seeking to clarify

I'm not sure I understand the question. Did you read what I wrote?

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
Posted by battleworn - 21 Jun 2009 19:59

If the answer was so simple as to learn more mussar or daven harder why did they not tell me this

Is there anyone here that feels that the answer is that simple? I definitely don't.

Taireh Reb London, Perhaps you can answer the question that I asked in #3 You can have a big part in zikui harabim if you do.

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
Posted by bardichev - 21 Jun 2009 20:15

bardichev

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
Posted by bardichev - 21 Jun 2009 20:18

Am I being pulled back into this debate or should go back to my shtender in the bais medrash???

bardichev

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Re: Some thoughts on "Torah and the 12 steps"
I would embroider all of #3 on my taalis battel if i had the room
Posted by battelworn - 21 Jun 2009 20:21

Reb bardichev, Bli neder when I finish this I'll meet you in the 'smedrish

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