

Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???

Posted by ovadia - 17 Aug 2010 09:01

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I have been asked to be a Shliach Tzibbur on the Yomim Noraim. As would be expected this is because in my "normal" life I am a respected member of the community and my level of Yiras Shomayim is not in doubt.

But underneath I am an addict and if I would be given the chance to decline on those grounds I would. The problem is that I can't say "Sorry, I can't do it because I am nichshal in m\*\*\* and I look at p\*\*\* when I can!!"

So, my question to the oilam here is, how would you feel if you knew that the Shliach Tzibbur is a lust addict?

Please, although here at GYE everyone is giving chizuk and being positive, please try and respond to this truthfully. My personal opinion is that, even though this addiction is an illness, and can be regarded as almost an oines, still these are serious aveiros and I am unworthy of the position.

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???

Posted by briut - 17 Aug 2010 13:14

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Ovadia: I see your problem, but I don't see your problem.

Throughout history, we've had chazzans on Y'N who aren't perfect. Indeed, have we had one in a coupla thousand years who was? You obviously know the halachic standard for service: does the tzibbur respect you, is your voice sweet, are you humble before your L-rd, etc.

I don't think you're arguing on those criteria. You're questioning whether someone who's SO steeped in SUCH disgusting thoughts/actions/sins, for SO long, where if people POSSIBLY knew would NEVER ask you.... And maybe add in a little bit of "G-d could never forgive your sins" or whatever (Ch'V). It could be a problem.

Well, I wanna jump in fast and say, SERVE THE TZIBBUR!

Who knows if your sins are worse than wearing shatnez unaware, or even eating baked fish these days. The fact that you KNOW your sins and TRY to fix them but CAN'T do it on your own... that's supposed to make you LESS qualified?? I'd say it makes you MORE so. You have secret sins that inspire you to SUCH action to fix even a LITTLE bit. And you're doing it because you love HKB'H and want to walk in His ways.

Who could be a better person to schrei unesanei tokef?

I guess in this case it's better that your sins are hidden, since sinning in public might be a disqualifying factor. (And even here, I say only a FACTOR if the tzibbur still loves you.) But one more thing -- do you have the chutzpah to say that you and only you are suffering from a bad sin? You think there are folks there in your tzibbur who are sin-free, or at least free of what you consider one of the worst sins? You think anyone who's got such sins is working on them (hah) and conquering them (double hah)?

When we all have to watch the movie of our lives after 120, I think one of your most painful moments would be when you turned down the responsibility to lead your shul in Y'N prayers. And if you were to hand it over to someone else, I think one of their most painful moments would be when they took it out of your hands.

I hope I'm not too rough here... I'm just trying to say that you can sin and still be beloved in His eyes. Especially when you're already on this site and working on it....

B'kavod u'v'ahava.

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by ovadia - 17 Aug 2010 16:13

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Briut,

Just to make things a but more dramatic, I would like you to answer me the following.

It is the break between Krias hatorah and Tekias Shofar, and your esteemed Baal Mussaf, Reb Ovadia comes over to you and asks to have a word with you.

You step outside with him and (in a tearful voice) he says that he has is in a quandary."How can i be the baal Mussaf when I spent a good part of last night watching p\*\*\* and m\*\*\*\* ?"

From what you wrote am I to understand that without hesitation you would reply "Reb Ovadia, my opinion of you remains unchanged. For me you are still the best representative I have today."

Sorry for making it sound like a challenge, but my feeling is that if it would be your Baal Tefila you would not be so sure.

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by Jooboy - 17 Aug 2010 16:37

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I likes Briut's points. You appear to be a real chozer b'teshuva. You may not be there 100% yet but your well on your way. Other candidates.....maybe, maybe not.

There is a halacha that the shliach should be over 30 because he has started to experience the tribulations of life and approaches Hashem with more of a broken heart. I think many of us qualify in the "broken" department quite well.

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Being a chazzan yamim  
Posted by loi-misyaeish - 17 Aug 2010 20:54

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Well put jooboy. I thought just the same. Ovadia, what did you feel like last year. I think you are for sure qualified, did you not go to mikvah and come to davening with a broken heart, thoughts of charatah, azivas hacheit and kabbala al ho'osid. In what way were you different in hashem's eyes than any other person standing there? Someone who comes close to hashem and does teshuva, does it make a difference what he did in the past. "ki lo yachpotz bemoisoi, ki im sheyoshuv midarko ho'raah, veyichye" now it's not written in my seforim that someone who m. or watches p. is any different. "Ma hashem shoi'el mei'imach, ki im le'yira..." another advantage you have is, that sometimes one would feel proud to a certain extent of doing such a job, who in the tzibbur would feel as 'anivusdik' and unworthy of the job, as you. With a broken heart and full of humility you will approach the amud, "hineni he'oni mimaas, nir'ash venifchad,

mipachad...." will reverberate through the air with tears. I don't know if you are going to be the chazzan for mussaf, but does that make the difference! If i would be in your congregation and you'd call me aside and say this speech, i would reply that their's no better candidate. Do you need to give din vecheshbon of all your aveiros to every mispallel, now that's a bit farfetched. Go for it!! Loi-m

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 17 Aug 2010 21:19

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To be a ba'al Teshuva it doesn't matter what we are doing; it matters what way are we heading. We can't change overnight, but we can change direction in an instant.

How have you been doing with recovery? Perhaps this offer was a gentle tap on the shoulder from Hashem. Perhaps you don't feel so much hypocrisy to stand in front of Hashem on a regular Tuesday morning after acting out.

But to stand as a shliach tzibur after acting out--that you notice.

Hashem just gave you a blessing--instead of dropping you to rock bottom, he raised up the rocks for you. I think He's trying to give you a little more motivation. And, if that's what it does for you, by all means it's a good thing and you probably have nothing to fear about being the shliach tzibur.

--Eye.

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by yedidya aleph - 18 Aug 2010 00:46

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i think what u r looking for is an answer to a halachic shailoh. Unfortunately,it is not possible for most of us to share the true nature of our misdeeds with our Rabbis.

Maybe the shailoh can be posed to one of the "GYE friendly" rabbis?

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by briut - 18 Aug 2010 04:11

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Wow. I'm so impressed that you got such a range of views, and such thoughtful ones. What a chevra.

Having read some of them, I think "eye" might have said it best when he focused on your DIRECTION and not just your degree of recovery. Are you POINTED in the DIRECTION of derech Hashem? For right this very minute, are you an eved H? Not last night when you m'd or this afternoon when you surfed to p. But right now this very very second... who are you in your core.

If you're just another weakling white-knuckled guy who's gonna break and stoop to p&m again and again, that's one thing. But if you're an eved Hashem who in this immediate moment wants deveikus with ALL His ways, then you're pointed in the right direction.

None of us is expected to be there yet. Just to be pointed in the right direction.

So when Mussaf starts, and you ascent the amud, and you start to cry because you know you're not there yet and you know Hashem has no obligation to hear your prayers because you've messed up in so many ways so many times and not limited to p&m stuff... then you're exactly the one I want to be shaliach of my tefilos.

And if you pulled me aside in that moment and said, oy, how can I do this, I've spent the whole past year (p, m, killing people, bowing to Indian sheitels, whatever)... I'd say "get back up there and cry your eyes out for us."

Maybe this is like elya's view (and others) about whether you are stable in your recovery. But I

don't think so. This "direction" can be achieved in a millisecond of recovery or a millenium. It's all about who we are, now.

Just one crazy man's opinion. Your mileage may vary.

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???

Posted by ovadia - 18 Aug 2010 08:28

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Raboisai,

Thank you all for your responses and insights.

Although I accept the idea about Teshuva and that being in the right direction is what counts, I think that an important distinction needs to be made.

It is one thing on a personal level and in one's personal relationship with HaShem to know that despite everything He still loves me and that the path to teshuva is open etc.

However it is another thing to use that cheshbon for others. Being a Shliach Tzibbur on Yomim Noraim is to be the representative of the tzibbur in their communication with HaShem, and one cannot negate the severity of these issues, addiction or not.

This is the reason why I have more of a moral conflict in this particular issue than in others and I definitely agree with Elya that we would not be so considerate of someone who had just been convicted of embezzling money.

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???

Posted by destructive cycle - 18 Aug 2010 22:09

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I very much relate to what Elya stated. Keep that in mind. Bottom line, we are chotim, even if we are outta control.

But, it really depends where you are holding. If you are still struggling, then I would suggest turning it down. But if you feel you are a baal teshuvah, wonderful, then you have no chisaron, and you are all the more so worthy for the job. And you should be zoche to dance at the simchas beis hashoeva as well with all the baalei teshuvah.

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by briut - 19 Aug 2010 00:04

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[Maaglei Tzedek wrote on 18 Aug 2010 22:09:](#)

But, it really depends where you are holding. If you are still struggling, then I would suggest turning it down.  
So, I guess folks are saying that if we're struggling against aveiros, but not winning consistently to a place addicts would call recovery, then we're not allowed to be representative of someone else's prayers?

So I guess that means tefilos b'tzibbur are pretty much 'toast' in our generation .

I don't mind the daily non-recovery from sin. Indeed, I'd rather imagine that each and every Jew has disgusting taivas every day, that the greatest Rebbes of the greatest Chassidic courts have fantasies. Maybe they're fantasies of ripping off the government by claiming too many students, or inducing some goy to pay too much for something. Or maybe it is P, M, young boys, heroin, whatever. But Hashem gave us each our own taivahs for His own reasons. And to wait for "he who is free from sin to cast the first stone" is not gonna leave us many stone casters. Or many chazzans.

Okay, I've made my point. YMMV. I'll stay out of the thread. Thanks.

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by mnman415 - 19 Aug 2010 02:08

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i dint read all of the comments of this thread. but did you ever read the translation to the "hineni" said right before musaf? its all about "how am i able to lead the tzibbor?".....this year (if youre chazzan for musaf), really say it with kavvanah it might answer your q

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by StrugglingGuy - 19 Aug 2010 02:27

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Who more than us need to ask for rachamim and yeshua? Isn't that what it is about? It never says we should have a tzaddik up there anyway, does it?

that's my two cents.

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by mnman415 - 19 Aug 2010 03:21

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true that it doesnt say we need a tzaddik up there. but if we had som1 from our community of GYE up there. that is the closest to a tzaddik that we can get. just the mere fact that we have a foum like this shows the tziddkus (rightousness) of this cummunity. so who cares if we didnt succeed yet. hashem doesnt care about the outside. he cares about the inside! i think an addict would have no problem going up there. as long as he in sincer and is in the process of trying to make teshuva

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Re: Can an addict be a Chazan for the Yomim Noraim???  
Posted by ovadia - 19 Aug 2010 08:08

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As I mentioned I really do not have a good excuse to get out being the Shliach Tzibbur so I just want to suggest the attitude which I developed over the years which I have been Chazzan and at the same time struggling/falling.

I say to HaShem "the reason why I was asked to be the Chazzan is because the tzibbur feel that my daavening/nusach/singing is instrumental in their daavening/kavana. HaShem, I am just the truck driver delivering the goods, don't look at the driver, just the goods."



BTW although everyone is familiar with the hineni heoni, equally beautiful and humbling are the tefilos which the Chazzan says in the introduction to Chazaras Hashatz of Shacharis on both days of Rosh Hashana.

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