

ramban on nitzavim

Posted by neshamaincharge - 16 Sep 2014 20:24

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I'm sure that others have pointed this out- but I just saw the Ramban on "Imaan s'fos harovoh es hatzmeah" it reads almost like it was written about sexual addiction- about the progressive nature of the addiction. If you haven't seen it, take a look!

K'siva V'chasima Tova to all!

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Re: ramban on nitzavim

Posted by WhenZaidyWasYoung - 17 Sep 2014 19:10

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Much of R' Kohn's success is based on an incredible psychological insight that is found in the words of Nachmanides (Ramban), on a sentence in this week's Torah Portion. A very cryptic sentence reads:

"...I will go through life as I see fit, so as to place the fullness (ha'rava) with thirst" (Deut. 29:18)

The Hebrew wording at the end of this sentence is extremely difficult to read. In Ramban's commentary to this verse, which was poignantly shown to me by R' Kohn, the great sage finds a fundamental and profound psychological insight. Nachmanides' words read:

"The explanation of [this sentence is]... to join together someone who is feeling full in his or her physical desires with someone who is desirous (i.e., to further attempt to satiate someone who has already achieved satiation). The reason for this [being out of the ordinary] is that someone who is full does not have a strong desire for items that are bad for him or her (- including items of excess).

"When it should happen that a little desire enters someone [after satiation], and this person fulfills his or her new desire, then this person's desire [actually] increases [to a new threshold of achieving satiation] and he or she 'thirsts' exceedingly for that item that he or she ate or did more than initially ('did' here means non-food indulgences). Then the person will desire more bad things that were not desired initially."

Ramban explains that, when someone decides to indulge in attractive, self-gratifying pleasures, his illicit indulgence will eventually lead to more and still more perverted and depraved ways of fulfilling his lusts and desires, beyond the original intention(1). He extrapolates this to any indulgence, as “[t]he same occurs with other desires; it is in 7-WAYS-outlinesline with the concept that our sages mention (Suka 52b), ‘When it is satiated, it is hungry; when it is starved, it is satiated.’”

Nachmanides teaches that the more we give in to a small extra indulgence, the more our bodies and imaginations tell us that we need even more indulgence after that! The mentality “just a little more” will lead to wanting even more yet – with no satiation in sight.

It is important to note that Ramban is not teaching us to continually lessen our engaging in pleasurable acts to the point that we are starving our physical bodies from anything enjoyable; this would be contradictory to the beginning of his piece, where he comments that one can be satisfied with basic, ‘good’ activities that are pleasurable to the senses (as opposed to the word ‘ra’ ‘bad’ that he uses).

Rabbi Kohn used the psychology behind the Ramban’s words for many years to assist youths to develop out of their issues. Many people whom he has worked with have reached the point of not being emotionally healthy and/or functional members of society due to our very issue of indulgence. At one point in time, the youths, many of whom now have addictions and dependencies, decided to indulge, and progressively continued to engage in more indulgent and unhealthy behavior until their actions were far beyond what their intentions were in the first place.

Many admitted to being extremely unhappy with their own behavior, but could not resist giving in to their urges. R’ Kohn’s work with them included lessening the need for desire(2) through practicing progressively less indulgence over time, as well as involving them in constructive building projects and the act of giving to people and animals in need. Other methods were used, which I hope to share in another post, but the main battle is lessening or replacing the compulsion to indulge.

It is very clear that a different message about indulgence is being purported by the media and pervading culture around us. Television, movies, and many websites on the

Internet give us messages that we must give in to indulgence to satisfy our unquenchable

urges. Aside from the observable prevalence of advertisements to indulge, this encouragement is found in a very subtle but very profound dynamic between characters in visual presentations and written stories. The message is that we all have serious desires and will only be satiated when those desires are fulfilled. "I feel so much better now!" the character says, after giving in. A character is portrayed as needing a hit (of food, drug, etc.), with the overtone being that the intense desire that cannot be overcome; that self-restraint – *gevurah* – is unachievable.

The Ramban and Torah psychology clearly teach to the contrary. By limiting one's enjoyment to 'good' healthy levels, one will be continually satiated and happy, and not need to constantly increase her or his indulgence to meet the body's demands. With only periodic visits of slight enticement from the Evil Inclination, one can easily deflect the urge to indulge "just a little more" and find real satiation and serenity.

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Re: ramban on nitzavim

Posted by gibbor120 - 17 Sep 2014 21:01

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Who is R' Kohn?

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Re: ramban on nitzavim

Posted by WhenZaidyWasYoung - 17 Sep 2014 21:18

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Rabbi Shaya Kohn

I wasn't sure about the website, so I didn't link to it; something to do with "7 ways."

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Re: ramban on nitzavim

Posted by decidingtotry - 21 Oct 2014 19:42

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I was wondering about this same Ramban. It made me kind of worried because he only talks

about desires getting exponentially stronger and more numerous, but he doesn't talk about getting out of those desires. Once the desires are strongly built up over time, is it possible to rid yourself of them??

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Re: ramban on nitzavim

Posted by neshamaincharge - 21 Oct 2014 20:45

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Great question!

My assumption from everything I've learned on this site, is that only Hashem can remove it.

hatzlacha!

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Re: ramban on nitzavim

Posted by decidingtotry - 21 Oct 2014 21:43

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I'll be davening to Hashem that He will remove them then. I wish I would've learned (and taken to heart) that Ramban before it was too late.

Hatzlacha to you as well!

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Re: ramban on nitzavim

Posted by unanumun - 22 Oct 2014 00:48

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[decidingtotry wrote:](#)

I'll be davening to Hashem that He will remove them then. I wish I would've learned (and taken to heart) that Ramban before it was too late.

Hatzlacha to you as well!

Reb Yisrael Salanter said: In Avodas Hashem it is always late but never too late.

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