

Do you believe?

Posted by shlomo613 - 28 May 2015 17:52

Before my driving test I remember saying to Gd: "Things should be just fine, please don't make trouble, just stay out of it."

This was a typical example of me having a completely warped notion of Gd's middos - of how He treats us.

Although I was a member of the chareidi community, had had a strong Jewish education for my entire life - and would proudly say I was a believer, this was where I was - and I didn't even realise how twisted were my notions, and how little emuna I had.

What did I think of Gd? Did I believe He is All Mighty? Did I believe His will prevails over all else? Did I believe He's loving, giving and gracious?

These are false dei'os or lack of emuna that I recently came to realise I had.

I still am very much in the woods - but the difference is that with Gd's grace I know where I am and where I want to get to. But boy it is hard work: I've found that achieving correct dei'os and emuna isn't a matter of flicking a switch.

In tefilla we (I) mouth words - but they are just that - words: I am not *massig* what I am saying. Take "*Elokeinu*" - what do I understand when I say that?

I've posted this thread because I sense that the pursuit of true and healthy dei'os is an inextricable part of sanity and possibly the 12 steps (though I'm no maven). It has certainly been part of my journey, and I suspect it is something all addicts must grapple with. And I believe that these challenges are something to be very happy about because what begins as a handicap is actually the material with which we can build something great.

Shlomo

PS I believe the story was with my driving test, but if not, it's happened countless times in similar circumstances.

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Re: Do you believe?

Posted by yiraishamaim - 28 May 2015 18:37

Before we get to this intriguing and vital discussion.

shlomo613 just listen to yourself. How much Torah and the pursuit of truth has come forth from your challenges. Without the hurdles of your life and GYE would you be asking such a question and in so doing be a mezakeh es harabim?

This must be the peshat that we thank Hashem for the "bad" just as we do for the "good"

Love your topic and looking forward to participate soon when I can chap aran another few minutes.

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Re: Do you believe?

Posted by yiraishamaim - 29 May 2015 18:02

Without tackling anything so deep and philosophical - lets get really practical.

You ask: Do you believe?

It is common to hear: If G-d would just perform a miracle for me I would surely

believe. However, the fact that I have over 200 days is an absolute miracle. Truthfully, how does anyone here have an accumulation of sober days after a long period of habitually acting out? Everyone is here because of their frustration in trying unsuccessfully to control their runaway passions.

Clearly there is direct divine intervention (hashgacha pratis).

Yet, look how many find sobriety. Moreover, how many of us have used this very forum as a

springboard to perform mega acts of chesed. Giving crucial timely chizuk to those who so desperately are seeking it.

We have all-to be a bit cliché'ish - turned lemons into an explosive lemonade!

That is G-d! Instead of the yezter harah dancing and enticing us into a Be'er Shachas we

have been invited by the shechina to dance along with him.

How euphoric it is to hold his hand!

Ashreinu Ma Tov Chelkainu

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Re: Do you believe?
Posted by serenity - 29 May 2015 19:01

This comment is pretty much the point I'm making in the thread lions, tigers, internet in my signature. We aren't looking for struggles, but they are what make us whole.

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Re: Do you believe?
Posted by serenity - 29 May 2015 19:07

The practical approach is what works for me. For me I stopped worrying about what I believe or don't believe in. Praying works, turning my will over to the care of God works, so I do it. The more I do it the closer I get to Hashem. For many old timers in recovery, God and a close relationship with Him just become a reality for them.

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Re: Do you believe?

Posted by shlomo613 - 30 May 2015 23:45

yiraishamayim and serenity, thanks for replying.

Yiraishamayim: when I ask in the thread name "do you believe", I meant to elaborate in the post that I wonder whether others share my experience of having gone through life thinking we believe but coming to a point where we realise how short of emuna we are. And when I say short I don't mean that we have a weak emuna. Instead I mean that we (certainly I) have/had warped ideas completely alien to reality and what yiddishkeit teaches.

I was hoping that this thread could be one where we air this out. Let the light of day in to an area that maybe doesn't get such a look at.

I wasn't questioning Gd's ability, involvement and care in our life. Developing this belief and awareness is so important and previous to me. It's my life. But I have parts of me that are deeply resistant to all of this (Call those parts what you like.) so this is a work for me - and a joyful, meaningful and precious one at that. And as I said, I really hope that opening up this conversation can encourage others to think about it if there is anyone like me with a netiya for the deep darkness of 'minus' (lack of emuna to put it mildly) that threatens us.

And like I said in the first post, I know this is a shmiras einayim forum but I suppose I'm unlikely to be the only person who along with his lust challenges doesn't have this issue.

Serenity, I need to think about what you said. It certainly challenges the way I go about things because I think about emuna a lot. I will re-read what you've written over the next days bli neder. What you said could turn a lot of my approach on its head so I need to get my head round what your saying and think if it applies to me.

Shlomo

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Re: Do you believe?

Posted by serenity - 31 May 2015 01:55

I just remembered something I think I wrote elsewhere here, that I found from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, zetzal. I think it went like this, the difference between faith in Hashem and trust in Hashem, is that with faith I can believe one thing and do another. In other words, our negative

actions don't necessarily place our faith in question. I used to question my faith because of my actions. I reasoned that if my faith/belief was solid, then my actions should follow. The standard answer given to me was that I needed to internalize my faith. No one ever said what that meant or how to do that though. No one ever actually showed me a source for that and I have no idea if it is even true. What I do know is that I tried many to internalize my faith, whatever that meant. So in the end I was left feeling dejected with the belief that I had no real faith, which just isn't true. There eventually came times that welcomed the idea that I didn't have faith and was happy to reject belief. It's a lot easier to keep on acting the way I was without the guilt of a moral belief system in my way. Turning my will over to the care of Hashem is a matter of trust more than it is a matter of faith. It's a more general approach, I think, to the way I live my life. Someone can be shomer Torah and mitsvos and at the same time be full of self will. Whether that is good or bad for them I have no idea, I just know that a life of self will wasn't working for me.

Also when I take that action to turn my will over to the care of God, I really don't have to have a belief in God. That's part the irony of how the 12 steps work. Step 2 is that I became willing to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. My actual belief isn't so important, it's my willingness to believe. Isn't there kind of a submission and surrender in that statement alone? Interesting how that works for some of us.

Hatzlacha!

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Re: Do you believe?

Posted by yiraishamaim - 31 May 2015 02:40

shlomo613- It appears what you are saying is that you 1) would like others to straighten out their ideas to what real emunah means just like you are doing

2) you also want to internalize these ideas so that they are a living part of you.

I hope I understand you.

Great. we are all works in progress - thank you your thread I am growing along with you.

serenity- I agree that not following Hashem's ways does not necessarily mean you are not on board with the concept of Hashem. How many people do not follow doctor's orders and it does not mean that they don't realize the doctor is right. Having said that working on believing in Hashem is helpful to some degree but as you pointed out there is a better approach by giving over your will to Hashem. that surrender is the foundation of sobriety as AA NA GA SA etc has proven

However as believers bnei believers we need to have belief in us, it is the first mitzvah of the Aseres Hadibros(RAMBAN and others)

Giving over our will is the practical way to improve but we need to believe. I think when a person is just beginning his journey of sobriety I would leave him alone and tell him just to work on giving over your will and follow the 12 steps.

A person needs a certain amount of emotional health before he can properly deal with his Judasim.

But at a certain point he must add belief, don't you think?

Let's also remember that AA needs to be amenable to a broad spectrum and diverse group. It's not specific to Jews. Therefore they need to play down the actual belief in G-d. It's called just a higher authority.

What are your thoughts?

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Re: Do you believe?

Posted by neuron_redux - 31 May 2015 04:35

Gutsy topic imo.

What does one do when one's view of G-d is dominated by parental trauma?

G-d commands us to "love" him with all our heart.

Love?

I love pizza, ice cream. I think I love my wife. I know I like her. I think Will Rogers said it: "You can't just love your wife, you gotta like her". But given my acting out, how can I call that "love". If I "loved" her I would not have broken my vows.

"love" for G-d feels like a chore, duty, burden, a to-do list.

And I certainly do not know how to "like" G-d. How could I like someone who feels more like a threat than a friend?

If I "loved" G-d I might have an alternative, an antidote to my addiction.

i.e. If I "love" reading more than I "love" watching tv, I will read more than I watch tv.

So, I am asking G-d to show me precisely how it is I am supposed to "love" him.

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Re: Do you believe?
Posted by serenity - 31 May 2015 05:08

Thanks for that thoughtful share. I didn't mean to say that anyway was better than another. I was just sharing my experience and what worked for me. I agree with you about emunah. For me utilizing the 12 steps has been rebuilding my emunah, that's all I was saying. This was at a time where building my emunah was not my goal.

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Re: Do you believe?

Posted by serenity - 31 May 2015 05:12

"What does one do when one's view of G-d is dominated by parental trauma?"

This is one of the first issues that is tackled with the 12 steps. For many of us, our perception of God has been defined by the strong characters in our life, usually our mother and father. Often this view of God is not healthy for us. Addicts specifically need an understanding of God who that is conducive to their recovery.

Hatzlacha!

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Re: Do you believe?

Posted by shlomo613 - 31 May 2015 20:03

So much has been said by serenity and yiraishamayim that my head can't take it all in.

Serenity I get what you said that being willing to turn myself up to a higher power is all we need to do. And that you don't worry whether you have emuna or not. I never thought about that but it sounds remarkably beautiful and I can just sense that it works. I can see that I may have been overly preoccupied with how much emuna I have. You've really given me food for thought.

Yiraishamayim, if I understood you correctly, you say a similar thing - that in the beginning, the way to go is just to turn over our will.

You also say that this way lies emotional health; that you can't work on yiddishkeit's emuna without the sanity that the steps give you - and they precede emuna. Did I understand correctly?

There's stuff both you guys said that I probably didn't understand but hopefully I can revisit it at a later date.

Here is one question though: turning our will over is step 3. But step 2 is coming to believe there's is a higher power. This suggests that some form of emuna precedes what you (serenity and yiraishamayim) are prescribing?

And finally to answer your questions to me yiraishamayim. Yes and yes. I have come from a dark dark place with many warped notions of Gd. Therefore I've been desperately searching for

straight dei'os (particularly in the emuna area) and I think this area of focus might apply to many addicts and i wanted to share what I've been doing cos I'm in a much better place than I was a few years ago.

Come to think of it, it might not even be a chidush - this is what sanity is about - straight thinking, no? It happens to be that for me the emphasis was on our notion of Gd. Because mine was so perverted.

Which leads me on to NeuronRedux: I relate 100% to you and I empathise with you. I think we are similar in that we've had authority figures who one way or another have warped our ideas of Gd. I am struggling against an ocean of experiences and a view of reality thereby formed of how Gd relates to us - and my intellect's puny ability to change that feels comparable to a fly against an ocean wall. That is how i feel. And this explains why I'm so obsessed with straight thinking/correct ideas of Gd's relationship towards us.

It's also why I celebrate every minuscule change that I experience because I have an appreciation of the plain goodness of simple emuna in Gds goodness that someone with a healthy upbringing probably lacks. Which is another reason I so much wanted to share this.

Maybe this conversation will show that I'm going about it the wrong way. I've just thrown up how things are from me, and I really hope that I/we come up with a better way of living, a better way of going about things. (It's amazing how in the beginning of this thread I thought I was on the money. Now I'm already not sure.)

Sorry for the stream of consciousness. I know I've been shooting arrows in every direction. I'm sorry. But I do hope it gives clarity on where I'm coming from. I've certainly gained more clarity already.

Shlomo

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