

hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 19 Jul 2011 04:33

I've been lurking here for a couple of months, and now it's time to introduce myself and share my story. I first would like to express my Hakoras Hatov to Hashem for giving me a second chance, and for leading me to GYE when I needed it most. Also my thanks to all of you here, who through your stories and struggles have inspired me to hang on when times are tough, and to strive to become the person that Hashem really wants me to be.

i apologize if this is a bit long-winded but I am not such a good writer and I have a lot to get off my chest. I also apologize to the mods if i get too graphic and you have to edit. So here goes....

I am in my 40's, what you would call a "working yeshivishe ben torah", grew up in a small frum community, went to the "best" yeshivas, and I am B"H married with a bunch of kids K"AH. That's what everyone sees and thinks..... they don't know about my dark, secret life.

I have been struggling with SSA since my teens. Actually "struggling" is the wrong word, because until recently I was just wallowing in it. B"H I never went as far as doing it with another person, though not from lack of wanting. My natural shyness saved me many times from following through when situations presented themselves. But the looking, the fantasies, the WANTING, and the acting out with myself totally consumed my life and made me miserable even as i was enjoying the momentary pleasures.

I grew up in a small town with very few other boys my age. I am a loner type and very shy and I really didn't have friends. At Bar Mitzva age I was sent out of town to Yeshiva as there was no Yeshiva high school where I lived. I found myself even more isolated there, as most of the other boys had come in groups from larger schools and had their own circles of friends.

I had always "played with myself" even at a very young age. I had no idea what it meant or that it was wrong, just that it felt good. I guess i began using it to soothe myself more and more. At the same time, as my body matured, I found myself fascinated more and more with looking at the other boys and how they were developing. I had barely any idea what sex was at that point, and surely did not even know that there was such a thing as homosexuality. I attributed my fascination to "scientific curiosity".

At some point around the age of 15, I did MZ"L for the first time, also out of "curiosity". I cannot even begin to describe the way it was immediately addicting, probably like a first hit of cocaine (I have never done drugs). I am sure all of us here know what I am talking about. before i knew it I was doing it every chance I got, even 2-3 times a day. As I got older I realized that I was fantasizing about the other boys while I did it, and I began to realize that i had a "problem". But I couldn't stop, and there was nobody i felt close enough to talk to. So I went through life walking the walk and talking the talk, while in secret i wallowed in my sick fantasies. I learned, davened and did mitzvos, and most of the time I even believed in it, even as I knew deep inside that it was all a show and I couldn't tell anyone about what was eating me up. I would cry on Yom Kippur, promising to be good, while knowing full well that the Yetzer Hora was waiting right outside the Bais Medrash door and i probably wouldn't make it 12 hours before i did it again.

There were times when I got into situations with friends who i think had similar desires. We would be together alone and we each knew the other one wanted it. Once a friend was telling me about his bodybuilding and wanted me to feel how hard his stomach muscles were. I knew what he really wanted, and he knew that I wanted it too. My hand was literally inches from that first contact with another boy's skin. But I couldn't bring myself to make that final move. I don't know what held me back but i knew that if I took that step there was no going back. I remember literally shaking from the tension and the desire, but I pulled my hand back and said no. For years later I would fantasize about what might have been, what could have happened. Now I look back and am comforted that even at my lowest moments i still had some self control (maybe it was just shyness but it saved me from going all the way over the edge).

I got older and began to date, but my heart wasn't in it and it really didn't go anywhere. I am attracted to women also so that was not a problem. I just couldn't "connect" with anyone.

Then I met my wife. From our first phone call it just "clicked". We got married and have a great relationship and a bunch of kids. I hoped that when i got married my 'problem' would go away. I actually stayed "clean" for almost a whole year, but then i fell right back in. My mistake was that I only stopped doing MZ"L, but would still gaze at every boy I saw, fantasize, and masturbate but without MZ"L. I quickly discovered that there's no halfway, but I could not stop and fell back in. This went on for years, I would stop MZ"L for a few weeks or even a couple of months, and then flop right back into the mud.

Then I discovered the internet! first it was just some pictures, but more recently I found all the "goodies" that are available. Now I had even more material to satisfy my fantasies and cravings. I began to secretly look at g** po** more and more. as time went on i got bolder, even looking at it while my wife was in the next room. (I work in IT so I know how to cover my tracks). She still had no idea.

As I sank deeper into my "alternate reality" I would begin to think and question where I really belong. I felt like I was living a lie (I WAS living a lie, i just wan't sure which one). There were times when I would feel like an outsider watching myself acting in a play, davening, learning, raising my kids to be good Yidden, all the while knowing that i couldn't REALLY believe in it if i was acting the way i was. i began to identify myself in my mind as g*y, wondering if I really belonged in the community where i lived. I wondered if Hashem really knew and cared, if He was really there and didn't want me to be like this why did He play such a nasty trick on me and make me this way....(vlo sosuru....zu haminus). I couldn't take the conflict in my head and wanted out. There were times when i contemplated running away and joining "them", and even considered ending it all....

But Hashem sends the refuah not before the Makkah, but IN the makkah itself. I eventually was compelled to break free...

This past winter I discovered what to me was the most destructive form of porn. Stories. I found a site with literally thousands of stories of boys having relationships. Not just s*x, but friendship and romance. A video is just fun while you see it, and you can only watch it so many times before it gets boring. A story makes you think, and you get emotionally involved with the characters. The stories are serials, with a new chapter added every few days. I would be checking 10 times a day to see what was new. I found myself getting so caught up in them emotionally that it started to affect my daily life.

I also started to realize that as I was getting older, my fantasies were becoming less likely to be fulfilled, what teenager was going to do anything with a guy old enough to be their father? This just increased my sense of emotional desperation. I realized that I was yearning for the friendships i had never had in my youth, and sexualizing them because I had no proper frame of reference due to my stunted social development. I was turning into an emotional train wreck, and that just made me act out even more.

Then hashem started sending me messages, things that would open up my feelings in ways I had never experienced. For a year or 2 now i have started occasionally davening in another shul, wher they daven with intensity and feeling. I thin my own davening started to improve then, and hashem hears it when it comes from the heart even when we don't deserve it....

There are 2 boys in the shul that I daven in that are extremely close friends for years. One in particular was a big "trigger" for me and i fantasized about him all the time. I always imagined

that the 2 of them had "something going" (i hope it's not true, I'd hate for them to suffer like this). This past year they went out of town to separate yeshivas and did not see each other for six months. i was in Shul the shabbos before Pesach when they greeted each other after their long separation. They hugged like brothers, and I burst into tears. I never had a FRIEND like that, that I could hug in public. I never felt more alone then in that moment.

Then over Pesach I had a terrible dream. i dreamt that I had a close friend that I had not seen in many years. he was on his way to meet me , and was killed in a car crash. I woke up sobbing, and could barely make it through davening that morning. I couldn't figure out at the time why i affected me that badly, but it was all the accumulated emotional junk starting to bleed out of me. Then by Birchas Kohanim, where we daven for Hashem to heal our dreamd, i totally broke down. i cried, i'm not even sure what i cried FOR. I just cried in pain. I knew i was a hopeless mess and at that moment, i knew that only Hashem could fix me.

At that moment I felt a calmness and resolve rest upon me. i knew that I must do whatever it takes to bring the two halves of my life together. I realized that i have to do something so shocking to me, that i would be forced to completely change my life. i resolved to "come out" to my wife and tell her everything, and take the consequences as they came. At that point I wasn't even thinking about doing teshuva, just to stop living in secret and to take whichever path presented itself. i was prepared for the ultimate rejection. I don't know where i would have gone or what i would have done if that happened, but i couldnt survive anymore with what had been bottled up inside me for so long.

So that firs Motzoei Shabbos after Pesach, i sat down with my wonderful wife and said "I have something to tell you about myself that i have been hiding from you all these years.....I'm gay.....". Her reaction stunned me; "That's not so bad, we will work on fixing it together". In that instant i knew it would be OK. I shared everything with her, all the desperation, all the filth, all the loneliness, all the hopeless yearning for things that cannot and will not be.

We resolved together to work on making it right. The very first thing we did was to install K9 on every computer in the house. From that moment on I have not MZ"L, I have not mast**** (except one slip recently), and I have not looked at porn (with one exception). I promised that any slips i would tell her immediately, and that I would see a therapist. I began from then on to daven with kavana and with tears, begging Hashem to give me the strength to hold on and continue, and to fight the Yetzer Hora for me because I cannot do it alone.

The first weeks were sheer hell. Just like starting was like a drug, stopping was like a physical withdrawal. i walked around in a daze, shaking from tension. i committed to making an effort not

to look and not to fantasize, but it's not that easy. My triggers are EVERYWHERE, in the street, in the store, in shul, at work (don't even mention the mikva). i don't even have a mechitza to hide behind. I constantly have to force myself to look away. i was literally whimpering with the desire for another look, another trigger to release that good feeling in my head. It's a little easier now, but still a constant struggle.

I had finally acknowledged that I am "gay" and i felt totally disconnected from reality. I would play with my kids in the yard and think to myself "What is this gay guy doing here, i don't belong here". My wife quickly set me straight (pun intended) on that one "You are not gay, you are a yid with a strange and powerful yetzer hora and you are finally fighting it!". I eventually realized that rejecting the label was one of the most important steps in recovery.

I also met with a frum therapist who deals with these issues. He helped me to understand how certain issues from my childhood cause the stunted social development that leads to this problem, and gave me some tips how to control and redirect my thoughts away from the dangerous fantasies.

Sometime during that first desperate week, ~~i discovered~~ Hashem led me to GYE. I had seen the ads before, and I always thought it was for a filtering service like JNet or Yeshivanet, which i was subconsciously resisting because i didn't want to lose access to my precious secret world... But then i was on another website, one that often mocks practices of the frum community. They had a post making fun of the GYE handbook (specifically the "rubberband snapping" thing). The post actually had a link back to the GYE handbook, and i was curious so i clicked it. It was like being transported to a new planet. Suddenly i was not alone anymore, there were so many others who were struggling with similar issues AND SUCCEEDING. I spent hours reading the handbook and browsing the forums, and got tremendous chizuk from it. I even discovered that i was not the only SSA addict out there, and that it can be successfully suppressed.

The entire secular culture is obsessed right now with being "Born This Way" and that it can't be changed and you should just "be yourself" and "it gets better" etc. as much as we strive to separate ourselves from the Goyish attitudes it seeps in like a poison and in moments of self-doubt the Yetzer Hora tries to convince us that they are really right. My weapon is to turn the slogans against them and use it to my own advantage. Yes i was "Born This Way", a member of Hashem's Chosen People, tasked with the mission of spreading His light in a world bent on ignoring Him. we each have our own mission and our own fight, and I have been tasked with a special job. I have a special and unique Yetzer Hora to fight, and although I was held captive by the enemy for 30 years, i have now escaped and i am fighting back! With sweat and tears (lots of tears) I try every day to resist the temptations placed in front of my eyes and the fantasies that linger in my mind. Eventually "It Gets Better", when the desires will fade away with time and it will be easier to resist. i know that just like I will have to pay and burn for each time I don't look away fast enough, so too i will receive infinite reward for each time I resist the urge for a second look, and each time i suppress the fantasies that constantly try to creep into my head.

I mentioned before that there was one exception to stopping to look at porn, and that was the stories (i found a way around the filter for those). I just couldn't. I needed that fix of knowing what happens next. For few weeks I unsuccessfully tried to quit, I would manage a day or 2 then I fell in again. I wasn't even interested in the s*x parts, just the storyline and the emotional buildup. But i knew it had to stop. Then one day i told myself "Enough! if you are serious about this there are no halfways anymore!" i went to Maariv that night and it was the 37th day of the Omer. The sefira of Gevura ShebYesod. I realized "that's what we are all about, Gevura, Kovesh es Yitzro, in the midda of Yesod, of self-control". I resolved that that day would be my personal Yom Kippur of sorts. I davened like never before, and promised that I would never go there again. B"H so far I have been successful. Hence my screen name.

I stayed clean until last friday. Then in the shower i suddenly found myself mast*** I stopped before anything worse happened, but i feel like i was teetering on the edge of a cliff. Then on shabbos i had fantasy dreams which i had not had in a long time. When i have these dreams they are so real that i experience every sensation. many times I would wake up wet, this time B"H I did not. but I need to strengthen myself over again. The events of the past week have affected me terribly and have left me emotionally drained, and maybe that's what made me vulnerable and in need of "soothing".

So here I am, trying to stay clean and to clear the bad thoughts from my head. It has its ups and

Once again I would like to thank all of you here on GYE who have shared your stories and your struggles, especially those of you who share my particular "flavor" of addiction. The chizuk i get from seeing how everyone encourages each other to get up and start again really inspired me in my darkest moments. Thank You.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by stillgoing - 28 Feb 2017 04:11

[cordnoy wrote on 28 Feb 2017 03:52:](#)

[stillgoing wrote on 28 Feb 2017 03:41:](#)

Imagine, Jonathons weekly calls will be about the ABC's

I don't know if you can just change to a S. Your name still starts with a G (as opposed to mine
)

which starts with a S

Darn!

I can't correct spellin' or grammar this month.

Dats rite! An yoze gotta let da looove of purim spread to da hole yeare. Ya hear?

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Markz - 05 Apr 2017 21:45

All Gevura admirers are gonna party today as the man reaches the awesome 300 bench Mark

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by GrowStrong - 05 Apr 2017 22:10

And I had the pleasure and honor!!

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Singularity - 06 Apr 2017 13:29

MazelTov!

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by humblewarrior - 21 Jul 2017 13:01

Shalom Aleichem. Just read your story on GYE and am so moved and inspired. Thank you SO MUCH for being yourself and sharing with others. I am on my own SSA journey, currently going thru Jonathan Hoffman's SSA weekly conference call. It's actually my second round. Have been looking around on the GYE SSA forum for an accountability partner. Yesterday I was reading thru some posts there and found myself getting stimulated by reading about guys acting out with men. I felt awful and was really beating myself up about it, thinking that it wasn't safe for me to read this stuff and probably not a good idea to contact another guy with SSA (didn't trust myself). Reading your story has given me the chizuk to reach out. Would welcome the chance to speak with you over the phone if you've got the time. For now you can email me at mgraiser613@gmail.com. (same goes for anyone else for that matter). And again, thank you for being you! - Michoel

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 21 Jul 2017 13:41

Welcome, it's always good to be reminded that we are not alone.

I was on Jonathan's calls in the past but the new Sunday schedule doesn't work for me.

I've also had the experience of being triggered by posts here, and I actually asked a big Rosh Yeshiva (one of the very few people I opened up to IRL) and he said that it would be worse if I went back into isolation again and that I should just be careful. Still there are some posts that I have an unhealthy urge to go back and read again and I try to avoid those threads.

I can't do phone but I'd be glad to keep in touch by PM or email.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 17 Dec 2017 05:14

Just came across this, a great speech about our struggle. <http://matzav.com/watch-never-ever-play-this-game/>

Here's another link to the same speech that will work if you have Youtube blocked. <https://www.torahanytime.com/#/lectures?v=52772>

About time i bumped this thread

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by dontwannabecynical - 30 Apr 2018 14:47

yeah hi, just in case you didn't read the thank you at our chat, thanks a lot. i saw just now that you posted that story 7 years ago. Well, if there aren't there any new installments, does that mean a happy end? or at least a happy continuation?

either way, much hatzloche and i'll try to keep in touch,

dontwannabecynical

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by stillgoing - 31 Aug 2018 22:26

Have a good shabbos to all.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by cordnoy - 06 Sep 2018 01:44

[alexeliezer wrote on 06 Sep 2011 15:45:](#)

[Gevura ShebYesod wrote on 06 Sep 2011 15:23:](#)

I hate wanting this stuff. It has become so much a part of me that I don't know if it will ever go away.

I think that much of it can go away. Especially if you zealously protect your mind from fantasies. It will happen.

Yep, it can and it will!

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 09 Sep 2018 22:14

Wishing everyone a Ksiva Vachasima Tova, a sweet new year with lots of success in your "GYE" journey and in all areas b'Ruchniyus ub'Gashmiyus.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 23 Sep 2018 03:19

Repost in honor of Sunday's Daf...

[Gevura Shebyesod wrote on 17 Aug 2011 04:02:](#)

Day 31, trucking along.....

I just wanted to post a sort of dvar torah that I thought of a while back. I originally PMed it to Durdaya because his screen name reminded me of it, but I think some people could get chizuk from it.

The Gemora is in Menachos (I think daf Mem-daled). It came out in Daf Yomi just when I was in the first terrible days of withdrawal at the beginning of my recovery.

It tells the story of another Baal Teshuva who stopped himself at the brink of committing a terrible sin. He had made an appointment with the most expensive prostitute in all of Rome. She prepared for him bed upon bed, with ladders to climb up. As he was climbing the last ladder, his Tzitzis struck him across the face. He stopped himself and went back down. she asked what was wrong, and he explained about the Tzitzis and what they represent. She then sold all her possessions except for the beds, and traveled to the place he was from. She eventually was megayer and married him. "And the same beds she had prepared for him b'issur, she now prepared for him b'heter".

I read that and I was hurt to the core. He did teshuva, and in the end he got the girl of his dreams and a fairytale ending. And I, no matter how hard I work, will never have what I desire

b'heter. IT'S NOT FAIR!!!!

I was almost ready to give it all up. :(:(:(

But then I thought about it, and I realized that i have the potential to reach a much higher madreiga. My teshuva can be completely lishmoh, with no thought of any earthly benefit. From that I found the strength to go forward.

The very next morning I found GYE.....

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by KoachCheshvan - 28 Sep 2018 00:56

Wow, Gevura Shebyesod,

I don't remember if I had read this post before, but I am glad it is still here for people to read and contemplate. We have a similar background, but you were raised more frum and full of Yiddishkeit than I was. I am also in my 40's, (at the time you originally posted I was 41, but now...looking towards 50 pretty soon). I was raised "goyish" to be sure, and both parents were atheist, and my "sex education" was through public school, and their attitude even as a young teenager had always baffled me. Their attitude was basically one of resignation that teenagers were going to engage in..er..s*x, and so just teach them about the biology and "mechanics" if you will, but nothing about the significance, the gravitas of it all. (Morality is not taught in public school, so they could have never approached it from that angle).

I had engaged in mz"l from a very early age, about 3, (as my mother as told it). That must have been before I was conscious of it, because I never thought my mother knew, until one day when she had mentioned it. (don't ask about how that could even come up in a conversation!). I had been always more SSA than not, although attracted to both male and female. I too was a loner, and still am, (which I think has caused a lot of problems). I always had only a few close friends.

I was in state college at 20 years old, when I started questioning my sexuality, but with no religious foundation, I was quite ready and willing to accept a g*y label. And it was a deep, emotional crush that I developed on my roommate that started me asking those questions. When I had c**e o*t, I hadn't had s*x, but felt sure because of the process of examining my feelings, combined with the g*y presence on campus, which was pretty strong.

I started to date men and yes, I had taken the "plunge" but gradually, (due to my own shyness, I think, and nervousness). Since that time, I have at times, committed "the act", but luckily those times are few. I was involved in the g*y community for a long time, first in a more political way, and then less so, but still g*y identified.

The turnaround point came for me, when my p**n addiction became so out of control, that I was looking at it while I was at work, and I printed a picture, and it didn't go to the printer that I was expecting it to! My heart was racing, because I didn't know where it had printed. What if I couldn't find it? What if someone *e*/se did? Luckily, I found it, and I realized then that I had a problem.

Religion is the subject of another addiction or maladaptive behavior, but at the time, I had just become a Catholic, (my Dad is Jewish, mother is not: both atheist). So I didn't think I could even refrain from mz"I, since it had been a habit for a long time. I remember praying a simple prayer: "G-d, if homosexuality is really wrong, then help me to stop mz"I." -- Something along those lines...and I was surprisingly able to do it for 3 or 4 months --- Until a nisayon came along while I was looking for an apartment, and failed it.

And so there has been a waffling: between g*y life and religious life is some form or fashion. But now, as I approach 50, while I want to leave the SSA life, I don't know really how to go about it to where I would stay out of it. The few people I talk with are all "g*y", and when I step into religious circles, I feel out of place. Most people my age are married, and they have children. I've never had any sort of dating/non-platonic relationship with a woman. And right now, for a number of reasons, I'm not exactly prize bochur material.

So I find myself, still in a place where I am asking myself: "What do I do now?" Originally, when I asked that question, it was in regard to how I was to fulfill a g*y lifestyle, now it is in regard to how I would live outside of it.

There are times when I think about "What if?" What if I just found the right guy? Would I be happy? I have to remind myself that it really is impossible to be happy in that sort of situation. I would have to have a piece of myself die in order to be in that sort of relationship, namely the

part that doesn't want to either engage in s*x or identify as g*y. And for me, especially never being with a woman, it's hard to completely drop the g*y identity, but have made progress in that front.

I didn't intend for the long ramble, but here it is...

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by mzl - 28 Sep 2018 10:27

[KoachCheshvan wrote on 28 Sep 2018 00:56:](#)

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I think you could pull this off if you go to 12-step (SA) meetings and keep going no matter what. Then start dating a woman, and be up front with her about what you are doing. I think 12-step could provide a fitting spiritual environment.

For the record, your mother is not subject to Jewish religious requirements so you are not either, unless you convert with a traditional rabbinic court.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by KoachCheshvan - 28 Sep 2018 12:20

Thanks MZL,

I was just reading a Jewish pro-SA perspective, which made me reconsider my long-standing objections to it.

As far as dating a woman, I will definitely need some advice on that one. I wouldn't even know what to look for...In a sort of odd romantic notion, it would be a lesbian that is looking to change, and we both work together to become "hetero-normative".

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