

Good intentions

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 19 Apr 2012 21:34

Hi everybody,

After almost 6 months of observing this forum as a guest, I finally decided to introduce myself (...painfully shy - even in anonymity). I'm not a youngster - over 40 years on the roller coaster; so obviously my addiction started long before the internet. Like many of you, I've tried and failed over and over, but B"H never gave up. Until finally Hashem helped me discover GYE. I had a good streak of 168 days which ended this week (still not ready to say "f-e-l-l"). I am starting again be"H. The following is my 3-point plan, based on what I learned on this forum.

I am using a Mishne in Pirkei Avos to remember these 3 points:

Im ein ani li mi li - I must avoid all forms of lustful images and thoughts at all times.

Uchshe'ani le'atzmi moh ani - I must surrender my lust to Hashem and pray and ask for his help.

Ve'im lo achshav eimosai - Forget about yesterday or tomorrow - one day at a time.

Looking forward to meet you

MT

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 08 May 2012 16:12

I have never successfully overpowered my desires. I have never taken credit for my being sober

these years. My being clean is far more G-d's doing than my own. So I reject any s'char in Olam haBoh for the past 15 years of sobriety I have been given. Thinking of s'char is poisonous to me, just like thinking of schmutz. Though it certainly was holy, competing with lust ("YH") is the **way** I *stayed* sick for so long. And 'holy sick' is really just sick, for me. A pig with nice lipstick on.

So while I relate 100% to what you wrote in terms of *the behavioral outcome* (staying clean is great)...my process/experience in living sober is very different. I could never have gotten sober the way you describe here and I would not remain sober would I pick that derech back up again. I tried it for 15 years, and all I got was struggle. And racking up s'char for the "precious" struggling - even though I am losing my life slowly and in pieces - well, I give up all that s'char for a single sober day: today.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 08 May 2012 16:47

Dear Dov,

I understand you (I think so). I have read many many of your posts over the past 6 months to 'chapp your mehalech'. However, I do believe (I'm not sure you do - correct me if I'm wrong) in GYE's founding philosophy, that different people are at different levels in this struggle, and may therefore use different approaches for their recovery. I can only speak for myself (and for those who may relate to my position), that I do find much hope and happiness and strength in the ideas that I have been sharing on this forum. B"H I have received quite a few complements on at least some of my posts (even from...), so it makes me feel I'm not totally off the wall.

Perhaps to better explain where I'm coming from: There is a book which you may be familiar with, 'Gateway to Happiness' by R' Zelig Pliskin. It is a great book, not only to achieve happiness, but also to achieve and refine many important character traits (what you would call 'Derech Eretz kodmoh laTorah'). R' Pliskin is an accomplished therapist, and as he writes in his foreword, that he shares in his book ideas which he used in counseling people, so that the readers can benefit from those ideas. Interestingly, the entire book is a collection of insights from sifrei mussar and chassidus, with some of his comments and explanations. So the question arises, are we talking therapy, or are we talking mussar and chassidus ('...we tried and it never helped...)? And I think the answer is again in the foreword, where R' Pliskin states that he refers to his method as 'Torah Based Cognitive Therapy'. In other words, the sifrei mussar and chassidus are not a 'stirah' to therapy. Aderrabah, if used correctly, they are therapy in itself.

Thank you for 'listening', and I do not have to tell you to feel free to react freely to my words.

MT

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 08 May 2012 16:56

Hey, thanks. But I do not see how what you wrote is related to what I wrote. I have read R Pliskins book (bought one when it came out) and worked on it around 1988...I kept acting out sexually for another 9 years. I went to therapy and to rabbonim....and I just got worse. But when I found the solution, I stopped acting out and started recovery. I did therapy for a while till I realized the stepwork and recovery relationships I had were giving me all I needed without therapy...and I have been sober one day at a time ever since, too, be"H.

Not sure what you were responding to in my post, though. Let me know so I chap your drift, OK?

Thanks

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 08 May 2012 17:18

Okay, let's try this again. You seem to disagree with my approach of 'overpowering the YH', and you explained how this approach never worked for you, and G-d is the one that does it for you. So I responded that my approach is based on sifrei mussar & chassidus, which may not have worked for you, but may work for others.

And BTW, if you start again from the beginning of this thread, you will see that my approach

includes surrendering to Hashem and realizing that ultimately He is the one that does it for us. But we need to do our 'hishtadlus' in trying to 'overpower' the YH. This is clear in Chazal (sources available on request), and for me (and many others), this approach is the way to go.

If this did not help explain myself, then I suggest that either we give up trying to understand each other, or perhaps (if you think it is important enough - I don't think so) you can PM me and we can try discussing it on the phone (or in person?).

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 08 May 2012 17:19

One more thing:

I believe *b'emunah sheleimoh* that there are **many** people who have problems like mine - even many who are actually hopelessly lost addicts as I am - for whom therapy, Torah-based cognitive therapy, or even just chizzuk from a good rov - **worked** and for whom it will *continue* to work.

But all I pass along is my own experience, and I only pass it to those who want it. Those who do not want it either shun my words, make it personal and attack me for some reason, complement me and then ignore the info, or just ignore what I write outright. It's all OK w/me.

So, as far as your suggestion to try Pliskin, or even Bilvovi, or a shrink, or just chizzuk, or *whatever* - I am all for it!! It may work!

I for one, saw the answer I found as an absolute last, tragic resort, and would never have done it unless I had no other choice. And I still do!

Have a nice day, and BTW, your posts are awesome and clear, so I hope you keep it going, sir.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 08 May 2012 17:36

Woops! I posted the above before seeing what you wrote in the above *that*. Well, I have see my recovery and stepwork refected and empowered in a lot of sifrei mussar and chassidus, too. I love Hashem and His Torah!

But I survived to be able to see all this because I go to the weekly SA meetings with the yidden and goyim in the church schoolroom. *It* is the way Hashem saved my life. And I remain alive and loving His Torah and living an avodas Hashem that works, only because I maintain open and honest relationships with other sexaholics - many of whom are shtreimel-wearing and yeshivah guys, *and* many goyim (one of whom is my sponsor)...and I love them so much - but not as much as *Hashem* loves them all. They are His personal messengers to His world, giving life to people like me and saved my marriage and my children from certain avadon. And I love the new guy - be he a Jew or a goy - who comes sheepishly into the door, sometimes wishing he were dead....he saves my life too. Because each of the guys in the meeting were him, once upon a time. So he - the new guy who might stay- makes this meeting *stay* alive.

I ask you: Should I *not* love these people? Are they not also Hashem's? Isn't He konei Shomayim vo'oretz? Should I not see this vehicle of Hashem's Chessed pouring into this world as a wonderful and good thing? Am I straying from His Torah an iota by this? I do not *believe* so.

But I **know** - and not just *believe* - that I am with Hashem more and more each day now, while until I got sober with these guys I was farther and farther from Him each day.

I feel you do see this and understand it all. Perhaps you even agree in essence with it, too. But we can share this stuff and not feel we are arguing, even if we do see things differently, I feel. So I share them with you, chaver!

And yes, I'd be so glad to speak with you or meet, any time you'd like, if it's possible. Hatzlocha!

Love,

Dov

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 08 May 2012 17:58

Yes, B"H that we are pretty much - or very much - in agreement. And B"H we proved that we can talk it out maturely and come out strengthened and in harmony with each other. As Chazal say (kiddushin 30b), "Even a father and son, teacher and student, who toil in Torah together, they at first seem to become enemies with one another, but they do not leave from there until they become good friends with one another."

Gevaldig!

(P.S. I may PM you regarding speaking/meeting. I need to think it out.)

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 09 May 2012 14:29

A Story for Lag Baomer - A Lesson for SA 12-Step Recovery

Dear Chevra,

There has been some discussion recently (and previously) elsewhere on the forum regarding the validity of attending SA 12-step meetings in a church (side room) with non-Jews etc.

I am not an authority at all, however I want to share an insight that hit me this morning when reflecting on the life of the holy Rashbi (R' Shimon Bar Yochai) who's Yartzeit is Lag Baomer.

The Gemara Me'ila (which was just concluded in Daf Yomi) relates how the Rashbi travelled to Rome in an effort to annul the decrees which the Romans imposed upon the Jews and their practice of the Mitzvos. Upon arrival in Rome, an unholy ghost (a demon - a shi"n dale"t) approached the Rashbi and offered his assistance. The Rashbi was upset and cried, "Hagar the maidservant of Avraham merited to have three holy angels come to assist her, and I did not merit to even a single angel, but an unholy ghost. Oh well - may the salvation come by any means." And as the Gemara concludes, they were saved through the services of the unholy ghost and the decrees were annulled.

Fast forward 2,000 years. Some Yidden are afflicted by a 'decree' of sorts that threatens their Yiddishkeit (and often times, their entire existence). They are offered assistance by what seems like the services of the unholy ghost. They are upset and cry, "How I wish I would have merited to be helped by a holy angel, a tzaddik. Instead I need to resort to joining forces with the unholy ghost. Oh well, if that's what it takes, then that's what I'll do - and may my salvation come from whatever it takes."

May the merit of the Rashbi shield us forever, amen.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by obormottel - 09 May 2012 18:55

LIKE :D

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 09 May 2012 19:53

I am definitely closer to the unholy kind than to the holy kind. The holy kind is way, way up there, and I am mostly busy down here. Nu.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 10 May 2012 14:48

Hayom Shlosa Ushloshim Yom... Today is Lag BaOmer

To be heavenly or earthly, that's the question.

Yesterday I had a chat with one of the tzaddikim from our (GYE) community. He mentioned that he finds it hard to deal with certain sifrei mussar and chassidus that advocate a derech of totally divorcing oneself from earthly matters and being entirely in a state of dveikus with Hashem. After all, he explained, we are earthly human beings with real materialistic needs and we cannot live as angels who are totally devoid of gashmiyus. Therefore, he would rather stick with such sforim that offer a taste of spirituality while acknowledging the fact that we are still down here, involved in our gashmiyus lives and issues.

I thought about it - I slept over it - and be"H I was reminded of a Lag BaOmer vort I once heard that supports this concept.

In the Gemara Sukkah (45b) Rashbi says, "I can acquit the entire world from heavenly judgment, from the day I was created until today. And if my son Elazar were with me, [I can acquit them] from the day the world was created until today."

So the question is, what does this mean - why was his son not with him?

And the answer is in the Gemara Shabbos (33b) which relates the story of Rashbi and his son, who were hidden in a cave for 13 years, because the Romans wanted to kill Rashbi. When they exited the cave, they noticed people plowing and planting. They said, "These people are forsaking eternal life (i.e. Torah, Avodah) and occupying themselves in temporary life!" Wherever they looked got immediately burnt. A Bas Kol declared, "You exited the cave to destroy my world? Get back into your cave!" They returned and sat there for 12 months, until a

subsequent Bas Kol permitted them to leave. Afterwards, wherever R' Elazar destroyed, Rashbi would resurrect. And he said, "My son, it is enough for the world that me and you [are such lofty heavenly people - let the rest of the world be human and down to earth].

So this is what Rashbi meant in Maseches Sukkah. "If my son would be with me", and would join me in acknowledging that people are humans with earthly issues and needs, and cannot be expected to live as angels. Then we can be much more successful in being melamed zechus on all previous generations so that they be acquitted from heavenly judgement.

Yamlitz tov ba'adeinu, adoneinu Bar Yochai!

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 11 May 2012 02:45

Wow. Thanks!

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 11 May 2012 03:17

I LOVE this vort!!!!

I hope to remember it &, possibly, repeat it!!!!

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by mifatfait - 11 May 2012 06:47

Harav Machshovoh Tovah,
Just read your recent posts, they ranged from amazing to sublime. Keep on Going!

Gut Shabbos,
Mefatfait

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