

Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 24 Sep 2013 20:28

Hello there. I am writing this to introduce myself. I am married with kids, BT. I have been struggling with this addiction since I was little. I was one of those kids that start early. It accompanied me all my life.

When I became frum I was very concerned about this problem, because it had already destroyed a marriage, but I blocked it out. I actually became frum believing that I was guilty and tainted, and figured that I deserved death for being who I was, indeed for wanting what I wanted, but I still thought observing the Torah would be worth it even if I couldn't be a perfect tzadik, even if it meant I had to be destroyed in order to be true to it. Thanks to many "helpful hints" from Hashem when I became frum I got an internet filter, which kept out the worst of it. However I still persevered with motzi zera l'vatala through thoughts and looks.

I married a frum girl and had children, and over the years the addiction almost destroyed my marriage. Finally I davened for issurim and I got them. I ended up in a sort of galus (I would rather not go into detail.) After a while I went home, and my local Rabbi has been advising me. He emphasizes the need for simcha in my yiddishkeit, and the fact that the yetzer ha-ra feels like it's a whole cavalry, but really it's more like a lone horseman. The only way it can win is if I choose to let it.

Since then I helped a couple of friends myself, on the strength of my own experience.

I can see the tree of daas in my life, all day long. It's full of inaccuracies, it's foggy, and rotten, and I can't go on if I don't sit down and write down my thoughts regularly, to feel them, examine them, to accept what I truly desire. It's exhausting. But without that tree I would not be able to properly appreciate Hashem's depth. I would just be a guy walking around the garden, eating fruits that don't even need to be peeled, like a child who has no idea what goes through his parents' minds.

I guess I am not an important guy. I am not clean for years and years, I didn't go to yeshiva, I am not a Rabbi, I am not special, but it doesn't matter to me any more. I don't need to be.

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Re: Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 13 Oct 2013 05:18

No, not all. Please concentrate on whatever you want. Only people who are not sure they can defend their ideas insist that other people shut up.

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Re: Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 13 Oct 2013 05:51

Last night was an interesting night. My wife went to bed and passed out. I was tired, but I felt that old tingle down there like I am entitled to have sex and I am not getting it: "She *should* be having sex with me. I started sleeping in her bed again. She was having an anxiety attack yesterday and I am here now, and she forgot about it."

I was thinking about moving out of her bed again, because I knew that would enable me to move on, and then I thought that maybe I have enough data to figure out what's going on so I have other choices. Since it was Shabbos I could not write, so I went for a walk and talked to myself out loud.

I realized that when I am in bed with her and she is happy (because I am there) and she is sleeping away, I often feel terrible and I want to act out because I am telling myself that if she is not sleeping with me every night it means *there's something wrong with me*. Then I want to stroke myself, figuratively and literally, to refute this idea: if I am stroking myself, I must deserve good things. Since it hurts to see that I think I am bad, I choose it to push it down, and then I start telling myself that she *should* have sex with me, because if she *should* do it, that means I am good. Then since I am thinking I *deserve* to have sex it makes it impossible to choose to focus on other things: after all I am right - I *deserve* it.

When she is *not* feeling well, she is anxious, etc. I don't feel the urge. I can hold her to comfort her, and I have no problem reminding myself that I have a choice not to lust and to engage in thinking about other things. When she is anxious I don't have a problem because I can tell myself that she is not having sex with me because she is anxious, not because of the quality of *me*.

And when I sleep in my bed even if she is happy I tell myself that she is not having sex with me because I have decided to sleep in my bed, not because I am bad. Therefore I feel no urge.

So while I was walking I figured out that I can sleep in her bed without a problem by reminding myself that I am making a thinking error. Firstly, I don't know what she is thinking. She is probably glad to know that I am there, since when I am not there she gets anxious. Secondly, and more importantly, even if she did decide not have sex with me because she is angry at me, it doesn't mean that I am a bad person. Even if I could call myself a *bad person* I can choose to treat myself as a valued guest anyway. She could throw me out on the street and I could go out and have the best day of my life.

After these considerations the tingle went away, and I chose to remind myself that I have a choice not to lust, and I went to sleep.

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Re: Hello

Posted by SIB101854 - 14 Oct 2013 05:03

That's a big improvement!

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Re: Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 14 Oct 2013 05:15

Yes, I feel like I had a big weight taken off my shoulders. Also Hashem sent us issurim (my wife being niddah and bed-ridden for a long time) to give us a little bit more data so we could figure out our problem (I guess I can't be sure, but if it's not true it's no loss in this case) so I wanted to use the data and it was bothering me that I wasn't getting there.

I had her figured out but not me. It takes a big whack to get you to admit that deep down you believe you are a loser.

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Re: Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 14 Oct 2013 05:56

I think we have all done the little dance with lust. We think about doing porn or masturbating, then we go for a walk or a jog, then we go learn, we daven, we fast, etc. And then eventually we act out. Meaning, eventually we stop "fighting" it.

I was reading about the debt ceiling debate that is happening in Washington right now, and I was struck by the similarity with the addict who "fights" with himself before finally giving in. From the actions of the democrats and the republicans I conclude that the republicans would rather let the US default than keeping Obamacare, and the democrats would rather let the US default than living in a country where the poor can't take money from the rich. That's what you can see from their actions. Actions speak louder than words. But on the way to default, they do press conferences, talk shows, meetings at the white house, short-term proposals, etc.

Basically what's going on here is that the politicians want to default, because if we default then we can finally do what needs to be done (after all we will never pay off the debt ...) without *choosing* to do it, because choosing to default is irresponsible. Just look at GM. When it went bankrupt the unions finally had to negotiate, even though the administration was a democratic one.

Same with us addicts. Until we figure out what's going on, we do the dance with lust. Basically we want to lust, but we can't accept that when presented with lust we will drop the entire Torah in a second. So we start doing all kinds of actions to draw out the fight, to *pretend* that we are fighting it, to save our self respect. But deep down we know the whole time that eventually we are going to act out.

I'd make a good politician.

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Re: Hello

Posted by SIB101854 - 14 Oct 2013 06:03

Great post! We all have lots of rationalizations why we masturbate and get involved in reading, watching and downloading porn, but until we realize that it is an addiction and confront the reality that such actions are a substitute for real emotional and physical intimacy, we haven't begun to confront the addiction.

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Re: Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 14 Oct 2013 06:29

It's true, if you are one of those people who are *good* deep down but you have an addiction, it's not your fault.

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Re: Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 14 Oct 2013 17:32

I successfully avoided bothering my wife last night. This morning I wrote to myself to persuade myself to continue testing that voice that says I am weak. When my wife is happy as can be lying down next to me and she is ignoring me I have to remind myself that I don't know what she is thinking. I can't know for sure that she thinks I am bad. And even if she does think that, I am free to disagree with her, I don't have to invest her with some authority that somehow she can tell if I am good or bad. And even if I were bad I could still choose to treat myself well. Then I don't need to get her to have sex with me to refute that secret voice.

Also she doesn't really take care of herself, and when it's my turn to get my cookie I have difficulty because I am scared that she may withdraw her affection later on. On top of that, I do have better things to do my life, things that give more lasting satisfaction. And if I don't beg for sex she'll be happy, which means I'll be happy. So it's well worth challenging myself not to get turned on all day.

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Re: Hello

Posted by chesky - 14 Oct 2013 23:42

Thank you for sharing. I admire your openness and your honesty.

May HaShem grant us another day of sobriety and sanity.

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Re: Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 14 Oct 2013 23:48

Amen.

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Re: Hello

Posted by SIB101854 - 15 Oct 2013 05:51

Take a look at the Ibn Ezra on the last of the Aseres HaDibros. We are commanded not to covet or to have jealousy for anything is not within our possession. If such a Mitzavh was not possible to be obeyed, it would not have been given. The same logic should apply to anyone who admits that he is an addict.

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Re: Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 15 Oct 2013 06:14

You lost me there. The Torah talks about addicts?

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Re: Hello

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 16 Oct 2013 05:27

I saw a post by Dov earlier that derided the concept of self-esteem. I find this concept brought up often, and I find it interesting because there is no good definition for it. There is such a thing as *low* self-esteem, but it's odd calling something "low X," where X cannot be defined unambiguously. I think the question of just what this is (if anything) is considered sort of the frontier in psychology. Since it's not measurable (whereas behaviors are) I am pretty sure they will never get anywhere with this.

I find that when I am davening I am about as happy as it gets. I don't have joy when I daven, but I finally feel like I am doing what I am supposed to be doing. "I create this existence for my glory."

I heard a vort which I think is from Rav Yacov Kamenetsky zt"l. It's about animal rights. I think he said that we cannot know how a donkey feels when it's fully loaded. It's a beast of burden, and it only really fulfills its true potential when it carries tremendous loads. Its whole skeleton is probably designed for that.

It's like a marathon runner. A person who is out of shape when he runs too much he is very unhappy, but a pro, when he is in the middle of it his heart is pounding, and he feels great.

So sometimes I think that true self esteem must be attained when you worship Hashem and you have no desire for anything else because from previous experience you know you are not really cut out for anything else.

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Re: Hello

Posted by gibbor120 - 16 Oct 2013 18:29

Self esteem is indeed a tricky topic. I don't have time for an arichus. I wrote about it somewhere

Basically, self-esteem has to be intrinsic, not based on anything I "do". Learning to accept oneself and at the same time strive to be greater is indeed tricky. Most of us on the forum need a large dose of self-acceptance.

I think dov does not like the term self-esteem because it is often misused. Dov is great, but not Torah misinai. I respectfully disagree.

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