

My Story - struggling with faith

Posted by time2win - 22 Jan 2025 01:56

I've been struggling with whether or not I should share my story on the forum. Because This isn't a forum for people struggling with faith, it's a forum for people struggling with P/M addiction. That being said, my addiction is a result of my fall out with halachic (I.e. authentic) Judaism. So, to begin with the end of my story-where I am now:

I'm not that religious at this point of my life. I don't learn Torah anymore. I don't daven mincha/maariv during the week. For shacharis I daven shema and shemone esrei at home. I don't fast on fast days, with the exception of Yom kippur. I'm shomer Shabb-ish (tear toilet paper, brush teeth, put on stick deodorant etc.) I'm not going to go through the whole Shulchan aruch, but you get the gist.

on the bright side, I'm twenty days clean for the first time in a while:-)

to be continued...maybe

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith

Posted by thegrave - 22 Jan 2025 03:46

Dude 20 days is awesome! I just reached day 9 after a not so brief hiatus so I'm catch'in up to

wishing you much luck on your journey!

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith

Posted by time2win - 24 Jan 2025 17:15

@thegrave - appreciate the encouragement. Amen, same to you!

continuing where I left off:

So if I'm not that Frum, and words like "D'veykus, Kedusha, Gehinom, Gan Eden, Ratzon Hashem etc," are not in my motivational toolbox, why exactly do I want to quit P&M? Here are my main reasons:

- 1) I have an obligation to my wife to make her feel cherished and loved as much as possible. The attention and sexual energy that I waste on fantasies come at her expense

- 2) I have an obligation to my children to model and convey to them a healthy sexual ethic. When it comes time to have the talk about "the birds and the bees" with my kids, I need to be able to discuss the issues candidly and without shame.

- 3) I need to be a master of myself and make decisions rationally, not impulsively. Being a slave to anything, especially to my base desires, is antithetical to that goal.

- 4) I need to stop before I hit rock bottom. I have seen my P usage intensify over the years. Like any drug addiction, I developed a tolerance. Now I need a higher dose than previously in order to get the same stimulus. There are enough stories of shattered marriages, families and lives by people whose addiction led them to dark places

- 5) On a related note, it is not only the intensive quality of the P that has increased, but also the craving for it, leading me to use at times that are physically dangerous. I'm embarrassed to admit that I have engaged in P/M while driving on occasion.

(This is a really dumb idea; don't try it at home. I'm glad I didn't get into a car accident, that would be hard to explain to the insurance company)

Anyway, Onwards and Upwards. Its Time2Win.

Have a good shabbos everyone

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by lamaazavtuni - 24 Jan 2025 18:42

Your obviously a believing yid considering the mitsvos that you do keep. With that said you probably also feel guilty about your level of religion tell me if I'm wrong but from what you wrote it doesn't sound like you were brought up that way. So you really enjoy the feelings of strength and misgaber on your yetser hara the same much we all do. And you'll get the same siyata dishmaya and simcha they it brings like all of us. Feel free to disagree. I hope I said this with the utmost sensitivity. Keep strong my brother.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by time2win - 31 Jan 2025 12:55

Part 3 of my story:

Going back in time, how did I become an addict?

The computer we had in my house growing up was not well filtered. So, being a curious kid whose parents were completely silent when it came to the topic of s*x, I looked up some stuff a handful of times to learn more about this odd and fascinating topic that the less sheltered in kids in school were talking about. It never really developed into an addiction, this was only a handful of times in elementary school and high school. I was away from home for high school, so undoubtedly that saved me from becoming an addict in my teens.

Nonetheless, the seeds of addiction were definitely planted. The memory of the dopamine rush of P, even without M (I never did M until after I got married interestingly. We'll get to that later) was so intense and physically pleasurable. I would later use this as a drug to cope/escape my troubles.

On the topic of religion, I was a very clean kid in high school. Never did drugs, smoked, got drunk, hung out with girls etc. So while not a typical "kid at risk," I was really struggling with basic motivation to be frum. The yeshiva I was in never really discussed hashkafa in a serious way, and as far as I could tell, Judaism was a bizarre set of rituals that we perform in order to get to Heaven and avoid Hell. Frankly, even if that was true, it was largely irrelevant to me. I was, and remain, incapable of living my life on those terms.

I wanted something more. I wanted a relationship with God (if such a thing was even possible). I wanted meaning. I wanted a way of life that addressed the world in which I lived, not some far off metaphysical realm. So at the end of high school, I was prepared to drop frumkeit cold turkey and go off to college somewhere I would be free to forge my own path.

First, I wanted to give Judaism one last chance, so I went to a Yeshiva in Israel with the hope and prayer of finding my place in yiddishkeit.

Thanks for reading. To be continued...

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by proudyungerman - 31 Jan 2025 15:46

Your courage in posting shines through, it ain't easy...

Keep it coming!

We care and want to hear your entire story!

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by odyossefchai - 31 Jan 2025 16:30

Having these struggles (or rather, having ANY struggles) is Hashems way of giving you the opportunity to figure things out.

If it was a medical issue for a child, we would be obligated to do research, get advice from experts, reach out for medical expertise, ask how other people dealt with it etc, in order to make a fully educated decision.

Ruchniyos challenges are EXACTLY the same.

God has chosen us to improve and learn how we can get better at something. It's a challenge and now we gotta start the hard work.

How do I figure this out? Are there people to talk to? Books to read, websites with info on the topic, mentors and guidance etc.

No one is a rasha or a bad person. It's just Hashem telling you, hey bro, here's your challenge. Now get to work.

That's all it is. Overblowing it to be a huge unconquerable monster, is just a sad distraction.

You have a test/challenge.

Now you know. So don't feel bad, don't put yourself down.

Get to work.

BH we have amazing resources here. Help is on hand. GYE is the best place for this challenge. Reach out. Talk to the pros here.

?You are in the rightBEST place you can be to get help for your challenge.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by time2win - 07 Feb 2025 19:24

My story part 4:

...So off I went to yeshiva in Israel. Slowly but surely, I got more into learning and starting taking halacha (both bein adam lamakom and bein adam lachavero) more seriously. While never embracing external yeshivish trappings, I was for all intents and purposes, your typical "flip out" case. I was virtually always learning. If I didn't have a sefer in my hand, I was thinking in learning. During my exercise runs bein hasedorim I would listen to mussar and hashkafa shmussen on my iPod. And I was content in life. Regarding P**n, I was pleasantly surprised to find that when I was home during bein hazmanim, I was able to stay clean without any difficulty. Koach Hatorah? Maybe. Also I wasn't a full fledged addict at that point, so basic self control was enough.

Did I have a spiritual epiphany that was the source of my newfound religious growth? In hindsight, not really. My becoming a ben torah was primarily a function of being affected by my surroundings. Simply put, I was in a yeshiva for the religiously challenged where the social current was becoming more shtark. People are remarkably drawn after their surroundings (Ayin Rambam Hilchos Deios), and I went with the flow. There was also a lot of "kinas sofrim" as to who was the biggest masmid, and I'm competitive by nature, so I was pretty good at playing the game.

When I left Israel after 2 years to study in a yeshiva back in the states, my motivation **very** slowly, but very surely, starting to fizzle out. I still had the gnawing feeling that Gemara, the centerpiece of my life as a Ben Torah, was anachronistic, uninspiring and not particularly interesting. I viewed it as eating my veggies. Gotta do it, but I didn't really like it deep down. I was also bothered by various intellectual issues that I won't get into here.

Don't get me wrong, I was still 100% a ben torah at this point, but the motivation was starting to fade very slowly, almost imperceptibly. Until in my 4th year beis medrash, I got some new breath in my religious life. A supercharge to my lagging motivation batteries.

Its impossible to describe just how impactful (and ultimately, painful) this next period of my life is. To be continued...

P.S thank you every one who is reading and gives a "like" to my posts. I really appreciate the DM's in particular. Gives me reassurance that I'm not spilling my guts out to the void.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by cleanmendy - 09 Feb 2025 23:19

I recently shared on my own thread about very similar struggles to you, I'm on the outside (and inside) A yeshivish guy. But besides for my struggles over the years in kedusha areas, I struggle immensely with keeping halacha and staying close to Hashem.

Something that has really been helping me now is reading The battle of the generation, he discusses this exact idea of all areas of yiddishkeit being affected by our struggles with kedusha.

He also writes how the way out of it, needs basic emunah... Im still in the begining of the book so dont take my word for it.

Hatzlacha!

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by time2win - 14 Feb 2025 15:34

My Story Part 5:

I became exposed to, and became a "chassid" of, a haskafas hachaim espoused by a certain adam gadol (IYKYK) that emphasized several key points:

- 1) The foundational beliefs of Judaism could be proved with absolute certainty
- 2) God's involvement in our lives and his love for us were concrete, discernible realities, not merely philosophical abstractions.
- 3) As a corollary, one should expect their prayers to be answered, provided of course that they have thought things through and have come to the conclusion that obtaining the thing they are praying for would bring them closer to God. So for example, if I ask for a lot of money so I can buy a Ferrari, there is no reason to believe God will answer my prayer because I would be praying for superficial things that distract me from the purpose of life.
- 4) With God's help you can achieve truly great things. Without God's help, you can't lift a finger. Being real with God means that you have big aspirations to accomplish great things.
- 5) Mankind was created for the greatest pleasure, and the greatest pleasure **in this world** is Ahavas Hashem.
- 6) The 6 constant mitzvos, of which Ahavas Hashem is one of them, are the foundations of religious observance.
- 7) The Torah is God's instruction manual for living the best, most meaningful and deeply pleasurable life possible **in this world**.
- 8) It was Klal Yisroel's responsibility to actively be a light unto the nations and positively transform the world.

I can go on, but in a nutshell, the paradigm shift was that Judaism could be an olam hazeh-centric religion.

This was exactly what my Neshama needed. It was like previously I had been viewing the world in 2d black and white and then discovered that there was a way to see it in 3d color. I did my best to incorporate these principles into my life. My entire religious identity was based on these ideals. While I am a staunch Litvak, I now understood the chassidish reality of feeling that the Rebbe is your conduit to God. I was so deeply enthralled and attached to this hashkafa and the gadol batorah behind it

During this period of my life, I naively allowed myself to have access to unfiltered internet. While in hindsight this was foolish, to be honest, I didn't feel tempted to look at P. God was so real to me, so why would I sacrifice my loving relationship with God for a few minutes of superficial pleasure? Doing that would be the equivalent of looking at P when you are sitting next to your beloved wife. It was unthinkable, and I was able to stay clean without any struggle at all. This

was my religious headspace at the time.

This was the peak of my religiosity. I was happy in life, proud to be a Frum Jew and Ben Torah. Until things came crashing down. To be continued...

Thanks for reading and have a good Shabbos everyone.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by chosemyshem - 14 Feb 2025 16:01

Don't leave us hanging! That sounds like such a beautiful way of living. . . What went wrong??

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by time2win - 04 Mar 2025 01:44

[time2win wrote on 14 Feb 2025 15:34:](#)

My Story Part 5:

I became exposed to, and became a "chassid" of, a haskafas hachaim espoused by a certain adam gadol (IYKYK) that emphasized several key points...

This was the peak of my religiosity. I was happy in life, proud to be a Frum Jew and Ben Torah. Until things came crashing down. To be continued...

My Story, Part 6

As I type this, my heart rate is elevated. Even on this anonymous forum, without delving into the painful details, the skeletons in my closet continue to haunt me. Part of me wants to forget this entire period of my life, even a decade later. So why I am I writing this? Not sure, but perhaps for the cathartic effect.

I don't want to be known as a source of negativity here, but I feel compelled to honestly share my emotions and perceptions from that time. I hope you'll excuse me if I write things that are heretical or use strong language. My story does get better, with some elements having happy endings, though others remain unresolved.

Anyway, here goes...

My life completely and utterly collapsed. Like a house of cards, like a row of dominoes—choose your metaphor, and it's accurate. All my hopes and dreams went up in smoke. My experience was an empirical refutation of (among other things) what had been my favorite chazal, the Gemara in Makkos that says, "BeDerech SheAdam Rotzeh LeiLeich Bah Molichin Oso." I believed that God cared deeply about me, wanted a relationship with me, and was intimately involved in every detail of my life. However, there was no way I could plausibly reconcile my experience with that belief.

I remember feeling at the time that Chovos Halevovos Shaar Habitachon wasn't worth the paper it was printed on, that tefillah was an absolute waste of time, and that either God didn't exist or just didn't give a damn about me. My entire hashkafic framework was destroyed. In addition to the crisis of faith in God, I began to lose faith in myself and suffered from intense epistemological angst. I had read so many books and sefarim on hashkafa and machshava and was so confident in my beliefs. How could I have believed in something so deeply, yet been so wrong about it?

Outside of the hashkafic ideals listed in post #431362, I had nothing to fall back on religiously. What would the future hold for me? The Judaism I had grown up with felt insipid. I needed something deeper, something more, but it seemed like I had been trying too hard to find meaning where there was none. It had all been an illusion. The mental rupture was so great that I couldn't accept I had been wrong, not emotionally and not even intellectually. Had I really invested so much into Yahadus for nothing? I just couldn't accept it, so I didn't.

I wrapped my experience up in a box, hid it deep in the proverbial closet, put a pained smile on my face and said "gam zu litovah/yissurin shel ahavah," and several other empty platitudes that I desperately needed to believe. I moved on, bruised, wounded and hurting deep inside, but still a fully frum Jew and ben Torah.

Then the next blow came.

To be continued...

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by time2win - 07 Mar 2025 19:30

[time2win wrote on 04 Mar 2025 01:44:](#)

I moved on, bruised, wounded and hurting deep inside, but still a fully frum Jew and ben Torah.

Then the next blow came.

To be continued...

My Story Part 7...

I got a call from a sibling telling me that Dad was sick and... there was no cure. A terminal, debilitating illness.

The news hit me like a sucker punch to the solar plexus. After crying and getting over the initial shock, I gathered myself together and took a deep breath. It was going to be ok. After all, I knew the best Doctor in the world. I spoke to him every day. He was the "Borei Refuos Oseh Chadashos." It didn't matter if the doctors said there was no cure. They weren't God.

I began working extra hard on my bitachon and tefillah. So, while acknowledging the seriousness of the situation, I was nonetheless optimistic for a recovery. My (less *shtark*) family members viewed my optimism as naïve and quixotic.

Slowly but surely my dad's condition continued to deteriorate, and it was hard to muster enthusiasm in my tefillah. At this point, a recovery would have been an open miracle. I recall one time during Birchos Krias Shema during shacharis that the words became so heavy in my mouth. I just couldn't continue. What kind of ridiculous charade was I engaging in? Clearly, I was either talking to the wall or to a God who couldn't care less, who did not value my hopes and tefillos regarding my father's fate one iota.

I began turning to lust to escape the pain. Nothing crazy. No M, just browsing racy songs on spotify/youtube and pretty vanilla inappropriate pictures (no videos). I hated this behavior, as I knew it was damaging my relationship with God, which I desperately needed, but I felt like I had no choice. I just needed to escape the hurt. While this was the first time I used P and the like in the addictive/drug sense, I wouldn't say I was an addict at this point. Far from it.

In the last few weeks of his life, my dad lay in bed in effectively a vegetative state. Soon, Teva won out over Tefillah and he died. It was obviously a very difficult time. While this experience was disillusioning and painful, it was not traumatic as was my experience described in my previous post, Once again, I picked myself up, said gam zu litovah and moved on with my life. Still not an addict.

Thanks for reading. Have a good shabbos everyone.

To be continued...

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by yitzchokm - 07 Mar 2025 22:01

I feel your pain.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by time2win - 21 Mar 2025 20:02

My Story part 8:

I moved on with my life and started shidduchim. I knew that after all that I had been through life

was going to get better, and I expected that shidduchim wouldn't be too difficult. After all, I had been through hell already, so I deserved a break, didn't I?

Midway through the first date with the first girl I dated, it was clear as day to me that I was sitting across from my soulmate. It was a total meeting of the minds. I felt as though I had met my new best friend, like I was talking to my twin. I was completely sold. As far as I was concerned, further dates would just be a formality.

In the end, we went out about 5 times before she said no and gave a typical non-explanation of "just not feeling it" and the like. I was completely dumbfounded. How would I ever be able to experience that chemistry with someone else? (Because you are wondering, no she was not a beauty queen. Just a regular attractive looking female).

I continued dating but was not able to find that spark with other girls. Everybody else just didn't measure up. I was angry at God for teasing me like that. What was the point of going out with someone with whom my chemistry with her set an impossible standard that I couldn't replicate with other girls?

Dating continued to be a very frustrating and emotionally painful process. I had more than my fair share of heartbreak. My tefillah to God was that I could accept that perhaps my time to get married had not yet come. If so, please help me not get set up with people who are not a match, since I was still a masmid at this point and didn't want to waste time away from learning. Needless to say, my tefillos weren't answered and there were a lot of dates that were dead ends.

There was one particular date where I traveled three hours each way, but the date was "dead on arrival." For me, it was the metaphorical straw that broke the camel's back. All of the pain and trauma that I had been through, the illness and death of my father, the heartbreak and confusion of shidduchim, and other things which I've mentioned in earlier posts just broke through the dam.

The foundation of my Judaism was my belief that as a Jew, I had a special relationship with God. This theory just no longer fit the data that was my life. All of the intellectual and experiential frustrations with Judaism were too much for me to bear.

Internally, I was drifting away from Yiddishkeit, but even though intellectually I could accept that my earlier beliefs were mistaken, I wasn't capable of amputating myself from the frum community, from my community. Just the thought of the stigma, the embarrassment, the loneliness...I would've died if I announced to my family and friends that I was taking off my yarmulkah.

So I continued doing my best to live as a frum Jew, (and for a while) did a pretty good job. But inside I was broken and this is when I really started using porn and becoming an addict. Part of me wanted to give God the middle finger in case he existed, but more importantly, I just had to escape the pain and emptiness inside.

I still tried to resist because I knew I was digging myself deeper into quicksand, but I had nothing else to strive for. Reminds me of a line from one of Rabbi Twerski's books that the

reason the “Just say No to Drugs” campaigns didn’t work is because teens’ attitude was “why say No? What else is there in life to say Yes to?” That really encapsulated my struggle at this point.

Since I didn’t have the stones to go OTD, I continued shidduchim with the Hail Mary prayer that I find a new source of inspiration.

Eventually, I realized that I would never experience that spark in shidduchim again, so agreed to settle and got engaged to a normal frum girl. Wasn’t that attracted to her, but wasn’t turned off either, so I followed the conventional wisdom that love and attractiveness will grow over time. Personality wise, we were total opposites, but I told myself that maybe God was telling me that I didn’t need to marry my twin, I needed someone to balance me. It didn’t really feel right, but that’s what I told myself anyway.

I knew I was sitting on a time bomb. Once the truth came out that I wasn’t internally with the frum program, which of course it would, she would kick me out of the house and demand a divorce. Then I would go through all the shame and embarrassment that I had been trying to avoid but would have messed up her life in the process as well. I just couldn’t proactively make that choice to actually leave. So I pushed forward, the cognitive dissonance notwithstanding, and we got married.

Then things went from really bad to really worse... To be continued.

To end on a happy note... Have a wonderful shabbos! (and check out the spoiler if you want to fast forward to where I am today)

Warning: Spoiler!

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