

my story thus far & thoughts on starting out

Posted by returner613 - 01 Nov 2010 10:26

I am fairly new to GYE and this is my first post to the Forum.

I am a frum married man and have been struggling with this addiction for approximately twenty years (shortly after my bar-mitzva). The word 'struggling' can mean many things; in my case, some of the meanings are:

- the actual sin of MZ"L, the obvious things that precede it, and the **immense** spiritual damage involved
- a constant sense of shame and guilt, sometimes conscious sometimes sub-conscious... but always always there
- brief periods of progress, success and growth surrounded by longer and longer periods of darkness, failure and despair

If I blamed my problems entirely on the Internet - I would be lying. It is true that at this point, I *think* that about 95% of my SA current issues are triggered by internet usage. However, I had this problem way way before the internet existed.

My first MZ"L was a few months after my bar-mitzva. At the time, I thought nothing of it (actually, I remember being sort of proud). After a few weeks of experimentation, I began thinking that there may be something wrong with it; I did recall that my Father had told me not to ever touch myself there (probably some number of months before) but I figured that on a relative scale it was the same level of 'bad' as staying up way-way past my bedtime. How I wish that I would have asked more about it then...

Experimentation gave way to mild habit; I was pretty sure at that point that it was something weird and that I should stop - but figured that I could do that any time I wanted, so no big deal... Then about midway through 8th grade I found out. I was looking at an english Kitzur Shulchan Oruch, probably studying for a test, and found a strange sounding entry in the index. Looked it up - sure enough it was talking about exactly what I had been doing - and I was shocked. According to what I read, I had been engaging in one of the worst possible sins. I was embarrassed but was also familiar with the idea of being a Shogeg... so I was filled with a resolve to stop immediately. But I didn't. Days dragged on to weeks, weeks to months, months to years. Having cable-tv in the house (with premium channels) when I was in high-school surely didn't help - *although in retrospect, just as the internet - I would not necessarily blame it*

as *the root cause*. One time, my father even found out indirectly and had a talk with me. While I was deeply ashamed, I was relieved at the same time - since there was absolutely no way that I could do that again afterwards, right? Right? But no... We did have a few more talks afterwards, and soon enough I learned to lie just the right way for them to stop..

When I was in high school, I was absolutely convinced that there was no way I would continue doing that when I went to learn in Israel. That was not the case either, although towards the second part of the year - I read quite a bit on the topic (Reishis Chochma, etc) and bought a small collection of various Chassidic/Kabbalistic sefarim filled with various Tikkunim/Segulos/etc. Though I did very few of these tikkunim, I did achieve some level of growth, cried real tears, and mostly stopped for somewhere between two to three months. That was probably the longest period that I have ever been sober since.

When I went back to the states, the old habits came back quickly (even though I was not watching any tv anymore) and then - THE INTERNET.... While the result (MZ"L) was the same as before, the material was so much more vast. Whatever 'preferences' I had before - could be found within seconds. Anything you could think of could be found.... the abyss was complete.

When I was single, I was absolutely convinced that there was NO WAY that I would keep having this problem after getting married - I mean, how could I? Took about a month for it to come back in full force. Then I remember thinking that when my wife would get pregnant, there would be absolutely no way (I am somewhat familiar with some of the kabbalistic ramifications, so I figured there's no way I could do that then...) - but I didn't stop... Then when my son was born, that was the absolute end... but NO IT WASN'T! I don't want to go into details, but one time that really stands out in my mind is looking at porn while my wife and newborn son are sleeping in the same room. I don't need to go on, I'm sure you know where this is going.

I don't think that I've hit rock bottom yet.... I don't want to hit rock bottom. Although I have some tears in my eyes while writing these words - the truth is that over the years it has begun to hurt less and less. That scares me most of all, because if it hurts then there is at least still hope.

My Yom Kippurs are filled with remorse and kavona. I find that it's one of the few days when the shell opens up and the real me comes out. Every year, on THAT day, I find myself feeling like I finally came back, for the first and last time. Never again will I go back to the filth and darkness. Sometimes I make it to Hoshanah Rabba, more often not. This year I did B"H - but after reading what you guys define as falling, I certainly fell way before then (just not the final result).

Still, I did do something very different this year on Yom Kippur. I was a bit more honest with myself and with Hashem than usual. I told him straight out that while I have chorota, and never ever want to do this again - I know that I say this every year. I'm not stupid and I know plenty of practical ways to improve my situation (ranging from a serious daily accounting, daily mussar reading/chizuk - to seeing a therapist privately) but why WHY am I not taking these steps!? Hashem, you have to help me help myself - I don't want to be saying the same things again next year. (This is of course a dramatisation, the above words were not exactly my thoughts/words - but it was something to that effect...)

A few days before Hoshanah Rabbah, when I was very close to final breaking point, out of desperation I started typing a plea to Hashem into a google search (I know it sounds tacky, but I do that sometimes...) I don't remember the exact text of it, so will not attempt to reproduce it - but the general gist was how I was frustrated and wasn't meeting my obligations and goals. I don't remember there being any mention of MZ"L or related keywords.. Anyways, something really weird and amazing happened. Even before I clicked on Search - all the results on the page disappeared and the browser was trying to load a page from the guardyoueyes.com forum. It never loaded, but I figured that you don't get more of a direct answer than that - so I typed out the url and after ten minutes of reading felt my first breath or relief in years. Not relief that my problems were solved, but that this was solid proof that I'm not the only one out there and that THERE IS HOPE.

(This is completely an aside, not important to what I am writing, but I wanted to write a bit more about how I found GYE. I would not call the above a 'miracle' - although it is one to me on a personal level. I am a computer programmer, and specialize in web applications. So I kind of understand what happened - to a point. Google has a new feature called "Instant" which shows you results as you type your search. Also, I have a few virus-protection plugins that slightly change the content-results coming in from google. That together explains why all the content 'disappeared' from my screen before I even hit search (i.e. the sentence had so many keywords that google somehow narrowed it down to one site, then gave up, but the plugin was already trying to analyze it & got stuck.. or something like that). It doesn't explain why content from the GYE started automatically loading in the progress bar without my hitting anything though - and though I was not able to reproduce it after trying a bunch of times that day, I'm sure it that it was due to a google/plugin/firefox glitch. Except that it wasn't a glitch to me - to me it was Hashem reaching out to me and showing the way forward. One very practical point that comes out of this, personal inspiration aside, is why didn't I find GYE in the past; I use the internet fairly frequently - read blogs, news, etc... The answer, I think is that I don't really go on Jewish sites that much (other than debka.com - to whatever degree that's jewish). Perhaps there's a way to do an advertising campaign via Google AdWords that somehow targets orthodox men... I realize that this would not be simple to do but in any case food for thought & it's something that I would be glad to contribute to financially...)

Anyways - I've been using GYE 'lightly' for the past month. The first week was full of renewed resolve. Afterwards less and less, but all I was doing was randomly reading articles and entries in the handbook - not doing anything else. However, I think that I am ready to really jump in now. Over the past week I have:

- signed up for daily chizuk emails (which I try to read, although not every day yet)
- downloaded the guidebooks

- started attending a weekly introductory phone group (Elya's)
- created a 90-day profile (have been clean 5 days now)
- requested a Sponsor (*From my communication with the parter-admin, it doesn't look like any sponsors are currently available. I'll hopefully be set up with a parter soon, so I'm looking forward to that. Still, if any of you reading know of a good Sponsor who you think would be available, please let me know! !*)
- installed & configured K-9 on my computer. (*I have not yet given the password to anyone. This is because I have very specialized uses for my computer, and need to make sure that I can use it for several weeks without any problems from the filter. After a month (maximum) once I am satisfied with the configuration - I will give the password over to either a partner/sponsor (assuming I have one by then) or to the password gabbai*)

Things that I plan to do in the near future:

- join a responsibility-group (in about a month)
- join the noon SA group (when they start a new cycle)
- possibly install an accountability program in addition to K-9 (*tried this in the past, but didn't have a good experience... if I get a partner/sponsor who I build a good relationship with, perhaps it will be a viable option*)
- possibly use some form of the Tapsik method described on the site
- work on true Teshuva (combination of SA steps + some Tikkunim that I am familiar with & have been planning on doing)
- if all above don't work out for over ~half a year - I will contact one of the professional therapists referred to on your site

I realize that this post was LOOONG... I just felt like I had to get it all out (or most of it, anyways) after keeping it bottled in for so long. If you made it this far I really appreciate it. Any advice and/or chizzuk would be greatly appreciated.

I cannot express how much appreciation I have for the people who made this site and community and continue to make it thrive. While we all have our missions in life, and don't necessarily always know what they are - I am SURE that you are making major roadwork in Shamayim. I hope to some day not only be thanking you but contributing as well - although

there is so much work to be done beforehand...

Thank you again & chotzlocha to everyone here

- Naftali Z

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by Holy Yid - 02 Nov 2010 17:35

FF maybe first see what Rav Wolbe writes about talking to kids about this in zereiya o'binyan.

I too learned about it from sefarim, although for me it was the artscroll vedui on gellui aryois. I also later found the chazal in the mesechtas katanous

Rebbe you are doing awesome. However here we suggest not giving it all u got. Rather we suggest letting go. Jump in to all the tools and join the community but don't try to fight the actual lust. That will make it stronger.

More on this later

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 02 Nov 2010 18:14

[Frumfiend The star wrote on 02 Nov 2010 14:59:](#)

Why cant i find that siman? I want to learn it with my son.

It is at the very end, the last or second to last siman. (I think it may be Siman 150)

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by kosher - 02 Nov 2010 19:54

[Yosef Hatzadik wrote on 02 Nov 2010 18:14:](#)

[Frumfiend The star wrote on 02 Nov 2010 14:59:](#)

Why cant i find that siman? I want to learn it with my son.

It is at the very end, the last or second to last siman. (I think it may be Siman 150)

I don't have it in front of me, but it should be 151

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by thanks613 - 02 Nov 2010 23:52

I'm so glad I found your post! It really is a chizuk to me to read your story and see the powerful

steps that you are taking. I also identify in a crazy way with your story -

I used to have problems when I was as young as third grade - even though I was clueless at the time about what I was doing. As my body matured things started to happen that I thought were kind of cool and fun. I remember the fear and confusion that I had the first time I got wet :'(

It was really bad for me because grew up with internet in my house and it had already become a problem for me before middle school. I used to sit in class in 6th grade thinking about what I would do on the computer when I got home. All I knew about it then was that I didn't want my family to catch me.

But I'm B"H trying now to undo all these years of mistakes - and finding your post is really a chizuk to me in seeing the steps I need to take from here.

thanks

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by returner613 - 03 Nov 2010 06:56

ur-a-jew: Thank you so much for the warm welcome.

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by returner613 - 03 Nov 2010 06:59

[Holy Yid wrote on 02 Nov 2010 05:37:](#)

Looking forward to growing with you R' Naftali.

Welcome. Please find a copy of yatkut mashiv nefesh by rabbi simcha klein and look at his chapters on sin and teshuva.

HY: Thanks very much for the welcome and great tip!

I'll try and get (&learn) it soon

Here's a link I found in case anyone else wants to order it online

<http://www.zbermanbooks.com/Page.asp?ID=913866aaca735b055c48328a6c1074c7d146d2af85ba1e45c7fcf415dfe230e1&ProductID=146093&CategoryID=7413>

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by returner613 - 03 Nov 2010 07:04

[Jooboy wrote on 02 Nov 2010 13:40:](#)

learning to live with the nagging shame and guilt but never being able to live happy, joyous or free.

yeah I can definitely identify with that..

[Jooboy wrote on 02 Nov 2010 13:40:](#)

I finally made it to an SA meeting. Then a second meeting. Then, I couldn't wait to get back there again. It became a safe cozy place where I could go, throw off decades of guilt, self-hatred and darkness. It was the emotional connection of being able to connect with others as I really am and not what I think others need me to be that I craved for since I can remember. It has also taught me how to be honest, open, and use the tools of the program to allow GOD to take away my lust and obsession.

The last 12 months of my life have been getting progressively better and GOD willing I still have a lot more ground to cover!!!!!!

I'm really glad to hear that the past year has brought you great results!

For myself, I'm *hoping* that phone-based groups will work out - but I can definitely understand how in-person meetings add a much greater level of connection/support (& *I assume a stronger deterrent factor*) - so I really admire you for taking that step and going, must have taken alot of courage to step through that door

I hope we grow together & wish you much Hatzlocha

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by returner613 - 03 Nov 2010 07:48

[tomid besimcha wrote on 02 Nov 2010 14:53:](#)

Just reminded myself that the Kitzur shulchan Oruch was also my first eye-opener. But I don't think it changed or helped much. It just confirmed my theory that this has got to do with marriage and having children.

There is a lot familiarity in your story.

Keep it up

Practically speaking, if I had not chanced upon that Siman then - I would have found out anyways half a year later when one of our Rabbeim told us about it in a Chumash class - so I'm really glad that I first found out from a book rather than get surprised like that in the middle of class

(side story: we were learning about various arayos in our Chumash class and he brought it up - don't remember specifics... but "Is Masturbation a big sin?" was on one of our tests freshman year. The Rebbe was very early in his career at the time & was actually a very normal sincere guy. I don't think there was anything wrong with him teaching us that - and I wish it was on every yeshiva curriculum - albeit not in high school but in elementary school, and probably in very small groups.. obviously a vast subject of discussion in-and-of itself..)

anyways - on the main point of finding out that it's bad (regardless of source) - I definitely don't think that it 'helped' me in terms of stopping. However, knowing that it was very wrong did at lead to at least some teshuva and improved kavona on yomim norayim throughout highschool.. (& obviously also to alot of despair & depression - but then again I had a rough time in highschool for other reasons anyway)

Anyways, that is all in the past - and today beckons

(actually my bed beckons, I really should be going to sleep...)

All the best to you!

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by returner613 - 03 Nov 2010 08:01

[thanks613 wrote on 02 Nov 2010 23:52:](#)

I used to have problems when I was as young as third grade - even though I was clueless at the time about what I was doing. As my body matured things started to happen that I thought were kind of cool and fun. I remember the fear and confusion that I had the first time I got wet :(

It was really bad for me because grew up with internet in my house and it had already become a problem for me before middle school. I used to sit in class in 6th grade thinking about what I would do on the computer when I got home. All I knew about it then was that I didn't want my family to catch me.

Although for me actual physical hirhurim only got active around bar-mitzva time (either a bit before or a bit after, don't remember exactly) I definitely remember having sexual fantasies much much earlier on - probably as early 2nd or 3rd grade as you say, so I can definitely identify with what you wrote. In my case though, they were pretty mild and not associated with anything physical in body yet. I don't know if that's due to differences in maturation, or if it's because at that age I did not have ANY access to inappropriate things yet (i.e. internet no existo, we didn't have cable-tv yet) - if I did, who knows - maybe it would have been earlier on?...

[thanks613 wrote on 02 Nov 2010 23:52:](#)

But I'm B"H trying now to undo all these years of mistakes - and finding your post is really a chizuk to me in seeing the steps I need to take from here.

thanks

Looking forward to growing with you R' Naftali.

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by returner613 - 03 Nov 2010 08:35

[Kedusha wrote on 02 Nov 2010 15:09:](#)

There needs to be a balance between discussing the chomer ha'aveira and giving chizuk to those who have already been nichshal (or will be at some point), which covers about everyone. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch does give eitzos as to how to be Mesaken this aveira, but does not give the Chizuk that will be needed.

Amen!!! Definitely let's grow together! (But for sure drop the "R"
The booklet "Dear Bochor," which is being excerpted in the Shemiras Ainayim Chizuk e-mails and can be downloaded from those e-mails, strikes a very good balance: Tells it like it is regarding the chomer ha'aveira, while giving chizuk at the same time. So, whether or not you show your son the siman in Kitzur, be sure to share "Dear Bochor" with him.

BTW, I don't recommend discussing this with your son until you have a reasonable degree of sobriety yourself. "Do what I say and not what I do," is never effective, and even though your

son doesn't know, YOU know, and that will make all the difference.

I guess, if I could go "back in time" and warn myself about it - I'd go back to when I was a year before bar-mitzva. For me that would have been the best time to learn about all these things, since the desire wasn't there yet but I could sort of relate to it already.

For material - agree, probably wouldn't pick the Kitzur Shulchan Oruch. If I were to present the topic to myself when I was a young boy, I agree that something like the Dear Bochor would serve as an excellent overview. However, and I only speak of my own personality - I would have also taught myself some of the scary stuff (like the section in Reishis Chochma on this topic - which acknowledges that there are many who fall in this area, goes through some crazy-scary spiritual ramifications, and discusses tikkunim. Other more recent sefarim come to mind as well...). I know that sounds extreme - and I am NOT *necessarily* saying that it's appropriate for other children- but I'm fairly sure that it would have helped me significantly.

The reason I say that is that while I have a VERY addictive/compulsive personality (SA isn't my only thing - tend to also overeat, love caffeine, expert procrastinator, etc) - I have actively avoided many other addictions like gambling, never smoked or tried drugs, etc. Why? Because I was convinced that these things were "big trouble" beforehand (i.e. before I had any desire for them) - so when desire came bit-by-bit, my fear was stronger than the desire. Obviously, I am making some exaggerations in what I'm saying - for example - I am misstating that the desire for alcohol & drugs is just as strong as the desire for looking at porn - probably that's not true (unless someone is born with a alcoholism disposition) so granted even if I pre-warned there would have been a stronger desire for that than the other stuff...

BUT

I can also remember from personal experience that the first few times that I did MZ"L - there wasn't a SUPER STRONG desire for it either... the first time was mostly by accident (i.e. bumping around b/c it felt interesting) and the second time (experimentation) did feel good but not great. If I recall correctly, it took about a week until it was something that was very pleasurable. So my (very rambling) point is - I think that to some degree, self-sex is a BIT of an acquired taste (though it gets acquired very quickly) - so the comparison to alcohol/drugs/smoking is not completely unfair.

So - in a very rambling fashion - my point is that if I had known just how bad it was before I had any desire, I might have been too scared to go through the first few times. Maybe that's not

being realistic, but that's what I believe relative to myself.

Now I'll completely, sort of, contradict myself:

With all that said - I did try the above stated materials (minus the Dear Bochor part) about ten years ago with someone that I was close to when he was close to bar mitzva. (And I didn't just put in the scary stuff. I also explained that Teshuva was possible, and he could always talk to me about it, etc...) At the time, I had *though* that I saved him from repeating my path - and continued to think that for a long time. When we spoke recently about deep personal things - he told me that in fact he wound up having this problem anyways. So I just completely contradicted myself right? Maybe - but I still think it would have been good for me personally

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by Kedusha - 03 Nov 2010 13:58

I used to get Chizuk from reading Me'am Loez. The fire and brimstone warnings were enough to keep me clean (I had been given the 1st two volumes in English for my Bar Mitzvah, and I borrowed volume 3, which is the volume that discusses masturbation and z"l at length in Parsha Vayeishev). My parents felt that reading these Sefarim was making me obsessive in certain ways, so they got rid of them, although I had warned them that "bad things would happen" if I were to stop reading them. Unfortunately, I was right. After they got rid of Me'am Loez, I was able to hold out for about 2-3 months before I was Nichshal. After that, I was not able to stop for the next 5 years, and didn't even want to stop for most of that time.

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by lookingforwisdom - 03 Nov 2010 15:37

Wow Wow wow glad I found ur post u sound ready for the full fight, I truly envy u Hatslachah rabah

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by frumfiend - 03 Nov 2010 17:35

My idea is i want my son to see black on white that its assur. My experience is that kids cant believe that the torah talks about this. Its may not be nice but asur. The torah says dont touch the torah says dont think cant be!

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Re: my story thus far & thoughts on starting out
Posted by returner613 - 03 Nov 2010 19:03

[lookingforwisdom wrote on 03 Nov 2010 15:37:](#)

Wow Wow wow glad I found ur post u sound ready for the full fight

Well after 20 years of it.... right?

[lookingforwisdom wrote on 03 Nov 2010 15:37:](#)

I truly envy u Hatslachah rabah

Thank you - but I assure you that vis-a-vis my problem there isn't much to envy. I firmly believe that each person is judged by Hashem relative to what their potential & personal situation is/was. I obviously don't know your situation - but I know that in my case I am so so so so far from what I can be. When I think of all the wasted opportunities, regrets and lost time - I

shudder... While I B"H have a career and am functional within it, probably on a generally upward path - my energy and concentration is NOWHERE where it used to be, procrastination abounds (together with its dear friend: 'mild non-clinical depression'), my learning and davening has gone from ok to bad to much worse, and personal projects/goals are at a virtual standstill. I have many plans for improving all of these things, but that's what I seem to be good at: making plans. So many plans and so little followed through. For the past 20 years, almost the entire time I had a detailed practical plan (or series of plans) for solving all my issues (and trust me, if I went into details - they really did make practical sense) - but did almost NOTHING... So if my "readiness" for a "full fight" is possibly something to envy, that's great I guess - but trust me spiritually I'm a mess right now. If I do actually FIGHT the "full fight" over this coming year - that will something different of course. I do feel that it's much more tangible this time... may it be so with Hashem's help..

Let's beat this monster together!!

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