

my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by ramatganinternational - 11 Nov 2010 17:07

What I am about to set out to you today is something that I have been longing to do for a long while. I wanted to catalogue my feelings and thoughts about a matter that has been directly effecting my life for well over the last decade. You may ask why I haven't done so yet. The answer for this question is oh so simple. Immediately after this year's Rosh Hashanah 2010, I did something that I have been meaning to do for many years. I freed myself from the shackles of the Internet. When I say 'freed' I mean to say that I got to grips with my heart and soul and installed Covenant Eyes on my computers with all the added filters etc.

Ok, a little about who I am. My name is Yechezkel, I am 33 years old. I live in Jerusalem - Israel where I have a family of 6 Bli Ayin Hara. I run a successful business from my office in Ramat Gan. I am from England originally and have been living here for the last 9 years.

I come from an extremely frum family – all my siblings besides my brother with whom which I share the business with here are either in Kollel or klei kodesh. I was brought up and educated to the highest standards of both yiddishkeit and frumkeit.

I was lucky to have been partnered with the most wonderful wife and seeing as her family lived in Israel we decided to settle in Israel.

The internet emerged on the worldwide scene during my teens and developed at a fast pace during my early married life. Whilst maintaining a settled program of learning before Shachris and in the evening as well as earning a trade during the day – I was the typical frum ba'al haboss, living a relatively comfortable lifestyle, bringing up my children and infusing in them the rich heritage that both I and my wife received from our parents. My advice was regularly sought on a wide range of communal matters. I had become an askan in my circles and my stature in the community was one of respect. I was proud of my family and looked on with deep pride when my parents and in-laws visited us. I knew they were proud of me at what I had achieved.

This image I had constructed was all but a screen – a facade of who I really was and what my inner being and soul really looked like. In truth, I was well and truly addicted to the internet and all its terrible associated family. Yes I was able to put on a front as a normal frum man when it came to life away from my computer screen. Yes I was able to preach to my children and portray an example of how a frum Jew should behave, yes I was able to learn the Daf day in day out, but behind all this a lustful and dark man lived. It was a clear case of split personality. Away from my computer I lived the life as depicted earlier on but once I was under the spell of my computer and the internet, I transformed into an animal – yes an animal I am ashamed to say. I will not delve into what I got up to and what I spent time watching on the internet but suffice to say I was addicted to it and it ruled my life, my heart, my brain and most of all my soul.

Year after year resolutions came and went in Elul, year on year I wept through T'fillas Zakoh and klapped the al cheits with every intention to make the coming year a one that removed me from the world of the traps that lay in wait at the end of my fingertips as I typed addresses in my browser. But year after year the temptations were too great, too tantalizing to refuse. I had to feed my addiction I had to nurture my lust and satiate my appetite for everything that is immoral.

It wasn't long before those good intentions and resolutions were lying discarded in the garbage.

Life events and simchas came and went with me posing as the perfect family member and mentch whilst in essence I was putting on a show. I was putting on a show that I had perfected over the years – that of total fakery and deception. After all how would anyone ever find out? How would anyone know? Why did they need to know anyway? What difference did it make to them anyway? I motored through my life watching the world go round and making excuses to myself on how to justify my actions thus allowing me to somehow have a clear conscience of what I was doing - I guess one of the hallmarks of an addict.

This is not the platform with which to describe how the internet is the perfect tool of being able to realize one's fantasies behind a screen of total anonymity. The purpose of this script is both for me to read back and draw strength from as well as for others to read and maybe relate to.

Why now? Why did I do this life and soul saving action of allowing my internet activity to become accountable to a third party? I would compare it to that of a smoker that wants to stop but simply finds the habit and addiction too powerful to take the plunge. On many occasions I made inroads in downloading the software but never took the final most telling step. I always bottled it at the final hurdle. Then one day a couple of months ago right after the Yomim Nora'im, I was about to revert to my usual weak self when I witnessed a terrible accident in Jerusalem. I was due to catch an early morning bus to take me to work but missed it because an elderly yid asked me to help him with his large suitcases. I sat on the bench next to a cute toddler and his parents and busied myself on my blackberry whilst I awaited my next bus. Then, in a flash, the child ran into the road and was hit by a large truck head on. He flew into the air and hit the ground with a sickening thud. It was clear that he had been killed instantly. His parents' cries were heartbreaking. Hatzala just took one look at him and covered his head with a blanket. Everyone there was in total shock. I had never witnessed anything of this nature before. It was a scene that I wouldn't wish on anyone to have to witness, a young cute child being killed in front of his dear parents' very eyes. A tender neshomoh that surely had so much potential to fill – and now extinguished just like that.....

So there I was, mouth agape, clutching my blackberry and briefcase almost in a trance. Why did I have to witness this? Why did I have to miss my bus? Why did the alter yid ask me to help him when there were so many others on the street he could have asked?

I decided that all this was for a reason. It just had to be.

I arrived in my office and did the one thing I had wanted to do for so long. I somehow felt that Hashem was telling me that if this wasn't a wakeup call what is? I installed Covenant Eyes on my computer and set my accountability partners – my wife and father! They would now have full knowledge of what I was browsing on the web.

This was two months ago and now – 2 months later I am a changed man. I have rid myself from my addiction, an addiction that I had so much reliance on previously. I have changed in every way possible – spiritually, mentally and most importantly I am facing the world whilst portraying a true image of who I am. No longer am I hiding behind a smokescreen. No longer do I have those feelings of guilt and shame. Incidentally, my business has thrived and new revenue

streams have been realized – some leads coming from sources I would never have thought were possible.

Why am I writing this? I know that there are many frum men out there that find themselves in similar situations of Internet entrapment. I know that many of you can relate to how I was able to live a life of a split personality – a normal frum yid and that of a cyber animal. And yes, I know many of you out there will agree that whilst all our actions are continuously recorded and monitored by Hashem and we are ultimately accountable to Him, when it comes to the Internet it's a different story. The internet allows your every action to be shrouded in secrecy and this format allows you to push the boundaries further and further safe in the knowledge that no one meaningful will ever know. It's a modern day invention that has become part of our lives and facilitated every yetzer harah and made it all so easy and possible.

But if your best friend knew or your wife was aware of what websites you visited and they saw you every day would you do what you previously were on the internet? No!

I appreciate that it should never have come to this and I pray that the poor child didn't have to die so that I should have to learn this lesson. I should have known and imbued within my heart all along 'hakol goloi ve'yaduah lefnei kisei kevoidecha' and I shouldn't have to rely on the knowledge that my wife and father are aware of my internet activity. But I also know that You will be proud of me for what I did and in effect 'mitoich shloi lishmah bah lish'mah'.

It has brought me closer to You and allowed me to relate to Your Torah and made davening to You such an enjoyable experience. I have done something that has changed my life forever, something I never thought I'd have the courage to do. I feel cleansed and free to get on with my life and face the world with a clear conscience. Thank you Hashem for giving me the strength to make this move and I ask You to help me on my path to be able to serve You with a pure heart.

Thank you all for reading this. May Hashem help us all in our avoda of serving Him with Yiras Shamayim, with purity and sanctity and may we all be zocheh to His brochos in good health ad me'ah ve'esrim shana.

Yechezkel

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by ramatganinternational - 29 Dec 2010 20:39

hi all, - an honest mouse etc

thanks alot for your various tips on ways with which best to inebriate myself - i will bear them in mind when next ordering my tequila at my local! Having said that - the water in my local mikva is

quite intoxicating by late friday afternoon so i may just go for a double dose (and dip) of that instead!

just to say that since i passed that gragantuan test the other day - its been a total turnaround in terms of my spirits and general feeling. I just dont want this 'feeling on high' to end anytime soon.

any idead on how i can acheive this (weed, skunk, drugs rock and roll not included!)?

after speaking in person with a member of this forum recently - i must mention that it is the small tet a tets that make such a difference to me. knowing that i can converse in person with a someone who is not judgemental because they themselves are going through the same struggle is a huge lift for me. so i say this from the heart of my bottom and the bottom of my heart - a groise yasher koiach - you know who you are!

oh, and by the way before you all get the impression that i'm a 'user' of alternate medicinal boosting therapies - i'm not! but i should be so lucky!! nah kidding

much love

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 29 Dec 2010 20:50

hi RG,

i must admit i never tried using the mikva water for it's alternate medicinal boosting therapies

i feel the same way about talking with other members in person, it showed me that i am not the only one who went through this and that we can support each other in the struggle. good for you for finding a 'chavrusa' to give/get chizuk.

what you said about how you feel 'high' and that you're floating on the clouds, i think we can safely assume that it won't stay that way. inspiration comes and goes. we need to utilize the inspiration while we have it but ultimately the challenge is how we live when it's gone. did you ever read "Living Inspired" by Rabbi Akiva Tatz? he speaks about this idea a lot.

anyway, it's great to have you here as part of the forum and i wish you continued hatzlocha

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 31 Dec 2010 01:39

I second **ZemirosShabbos**'s statement that the feeling will ebb. Remember how good it felt! Use this as an incentive to help you stay afloat next time. Ask Hashem to let you relive it again & again!

Concerning the talking with others; I found that I was helped even more through talking than posting!!! Boruch Hashem, I have the phone numbers of a few guys whom I regularly call. It is thanks to them that I am in my present state!!!

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 31 Dec 2010 07:51

In fact, I think we do much better if we can stay even keel.

When we're high, we become too sure of ourselves. When we're low, we feel hopeless and run to our fix for comfort and relief.

The trick is to be able to pull yourself up when you're down (call someone, this usually helps), and to bring yourself down a few notches when you notice you've got to look down to see the clouds.

--Eye.

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by ramatganinternational - 03 Jan 2011 17:00

another day, another battle but my guard is still up.

be strong i hear myself say.....i wish i had the strength and pray that i can be strong all of the time....

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by bardichev - 03 Jan 2011 18:08

KOT

Don't react to triggers

No matter what

Tishma! (Herr ois)

The real growth is now

When we are on the HIGH of the initial braek that's terrific

But here is the real work

The chafets chaim

Explains that in the initial break the YH gives u some "space"

But then he will come roaring back

He has a mashal for it

I must have posted it many times

A wealthy man notices things are missing from his house

As soon as he calls a detective

The thievery stops

The thief is actually a hose person he is doing an inside job

The thief actually helps with the investigation

When the police leave. The theft goes on and on

So be wary of an inside job

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by ramatganinternational - 03 Jan 2011 21:38

Ty bard!

Lovely stuff!

Yeah I was half expecting him to have a go at me

But luckily I'm standing firm so far.

Long may it last!

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 18 Jan 2011 22:55

How long are you gonna keep us waiting for your next post?

You are one of the GYE Heroes. We all want to hear from you!

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by ramatganinternational - 20 Jan 2011 01:40

Hello everyone,

I'm sorry I've taken soooo long to re-post but I'll explain...

Firstly, just that you should all know, bli ayin hara, I've had no falls and am still 100% clean since ellul.

I have been travelling to and from Germany on business for my sins and I haven't had the time to even pick my nose never mind writing essays!

But the main reason why I went quiet was because I tried some advice that was posted on my thread that suggested that I take a short break from GYE and work on myself without putting pressure on myself to constantly 'update'. I have since learnt that I owe it to u guys to keep you informed so here goes....

As u know I underwent a monumental change in my life. From a life of cheating with my heart and eyes to a life of admission, submission and sincerity.

It started out well and good and I gave myself the proverbial 'pat on the back' for my perceived good changes. Don't get me wrong, I was and still am proud of my achievement as only I will ever truly know the difference of what I once was to what I am now.

As I originally posted, my particular issue was the notion that I was intensely addicted to online p**n. My whole life circumnavigated around unsupervised web access and I always knew that if someone knew of my web activity, I would change for the better.

Well that day did arrive as well documented and yes, my life did change. And yes, it was and is damn hard but the changes I've made are beginning to take root.

Of course there were lows, times of lust and there are still times of 'regret'. On a few occasions I have come oh so close to total capitulation and reversal from all the good work done...and I still fear that the harder I work on myself the harder the challenges present themselves.

But, I cannot reiterate enough how much better I feel. One thing is certain and cannot be ignored, my eyes have not seen an impure image for nearly 5 months. That can't be bad! As a result of my accountability to my partners, I have not been on any website that is even questionable. Having accountability partners that are aware of ur web activity does have its amusing moments it must be said. The other day I got a call from my wife (she gets my reports along with my Pa) asking me why I was on a particular ladies gifts website!

In truth, I was trying to buy her a gift (she just passed her driving test after 5 years of learning!), so the surprise factor was lost! All the same, its a price worth paying in the long run!

So, yes, I'm still here to keep u all abreast of my progress, hopefully I won't need to be travelling to europe in the coming weeks so that gives me more opportunity to connect and interact with my fellow warriors.

The hour is late and its well past my bedtime so I'll sign off for now, still got lots to dissect and discuss but I'm here to stay, I'm not going away!

Much love,

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Ps) special thanks to Bard for constantly worrying for me and keeping me on my toes!

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by ur-a-jew - 20 Jan 2011 04:21

RGI glad to hear you're doing well. Continued hatzlacha.

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 20 Jan 2011 05:18

thanks for checking back here

you inspire me and methinks it can only do you good to be here as well

chazak ve'amatz

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 21 Jan 2011 08:25

Glad to hear you are doing so well.

--Eye.

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by Dov - 26 Jan 2011 05:26

Mazel Tov!

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Re: my story.....Confessions of a Frum Internet Addict
Posted by ramatganinternational - 26 Jan 2011 14:50

Thanks all for your support....

If only you guys knew how amazing g-d is, seriously....

Let me tell you why. I still can't believe it and it shocked me to the core and suffice to say gave me a powerful dose of reality check.

As you know, i have been making steady progress since my clean break nearly 6 months ago. I have witnessed firsthand the benefits of a clear mind and conscience to my heart and soul and i know that the real benefits are still to come.

But as we all know, trying to live a new life without addiction is tough - very tough. Essentially, we are like new blind men - trying to learn the route home with no aid other than a white stick. We will stumble from time to time on things we never knew existed, then we will learn to navigate away from areas we know contain trip hazards, then we will learn slowly to face the world with confidence - only for a new trip hazard to spring up right outside our doorstep.

I was fortunate enough through GYE to make contact with a fellow equal. Someone who has been there got the sun tan and autographed T shirt to boot. We started conversing on a semi regular basis and gave each other strength and chizzuk from time to time. For me it was a first. Being able to actually talk to a man who understands me and is no different to me in areas where we both struggle. Then it sort of became less regular as we both got on with our lives.

Then yesterday, I was having a really tough day. It started out really well and things were going to plan. But then, a wave of lust overtook me when I was feeling vulnerable. I was away on a job and alone and deserted from my natural surroundings. This wasn't something 'new', I had experienced this in the recent past but was always able to fend off the YH advances before it was too late. But this time, my entire body and skeleton convinced me to act out. I made millions of on the spot calculations and chesboinos on how it was going to be fine if I 'fell' and all would be ok. Then I went fully focused on my way to doing what I intended.

I was a hairsbreadth away from my 'task' when, out of the blue my chaver called me! He never usually calls me during the day as we both have jobs. I was stunned, gobsmacked. He asked how I was and I slurred my way through a brief conversation with him my mind in a trance. He told me a beautiful d'var torah – his own shtikkel on the words Boruch Hagever asher yiftach ba-shem, vehoyoh ha-shem mitvacho.

If this wasn't a clear case of Hashgacha Pratis– my name is Elvis Presley.

We ended the conversation and I just sat there allowing the realization to sink in. How did he know to call me? Why now???

Initially (for the first few seconds) I was annoyed that he had 'ruined' my plan but those feelings were quickly replaced by feelings of gratitude to Ha-shem and my chaver for being there for me when I needed them most.

I slowly began to return to my senses and the danger passed b'h.

That type of Hashgacha has never happened to me before – so clear cut, so direct, so timed to perfection!

So, in tribute to my chaver and with gratitude to the yoide'ah machshovois, I decided to post this.

Thank you so much, it has made me into a better person already.

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