

Shomer's Journal

Posted by mevakesh - 18 Dec 2008 19:22

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I just wanted to start a new thread here to track my progress.

Today is day 7 and I am doing reasonably well B"H. I have been reading the chizuk e-mails every morning and reading the forum periodically throughout the day.

Will try and stay strong through the weekend and will *bili neder* be on Sunday's support call w/ Elya.

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Link to my original post on GUE [here](#)

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by the.guard - 11 Feb 2009 18:30

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For thousands of years we read the Pasuk "**Sur mera Va'aseh Tov**" as meaning - first get away from bad, and then do good. But the Ba'al Shem tov came and was Mechadesh a different way to read the Pasuk, as Shomer said: "**Sur Mera". How? Through "Va'aseh Tov".**

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by mevakesh - 12 Feb 2009 18:23

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Thanks again for the encouragement guys!!!

*sur ma'rah* and *ase tov* really do seem to be 2 sides of the same coin.

The reason why I am hoping that this recovery attempt will be different than all my previously failed attempts (and they have been many) is because both the *sur ma'rah* and *ase tov* aspects are addressed.

As I had mentioned in a previous [thread](#), this past *succos* I decided that I needed to break the stranglehold that secular media exposure was having on me. I had gotten to a point in my life where listening to a *shiur* was almost painful. I listened only to the radio and streaming audio at work and justified watching movies online as being something I *needed* to cope with life's stress (after all it was better than P). My *sedarim* had dwindled to almost nothing and I was accomplishing almost nothing in my learning. I felt empty inside and unaccomplished. The problem was, however, that I had become so dependent on secular media/entertainment that I could hardly imagine how I would ever break it.

This past *succos* I decided that I was going to do something about this growing problem. I had scheduled to take off work for the entire holiday including *chol hamoed* and decided to use that opportunity to break my attachment to secular media.

I remember sitting in shul on the first night of Yom Tov and having some time before mincha and mariv. I knew it would look silly of me to just sit there and stare at the walls, so I felt obligated to pick up a sefer. Normally I would have just looked at the sefer and spaced out counting the minutes to mariv, but I had felt so dejected from having slipped the night before that I knew the change had to begin **now**. I opened the Gemara and just began reading the mishna over and over again, then rashi, then the gemara. I went very slow and repeated what I was learning over and over again. Over the subsequent days I began getting up early to learn and on *chol hamoed* I spent a good portion of the day in *bais medrash*. This was initially **VERY** hard for me as I was so far removed from learning that just the thought of sitting for hours on end by myself with a Gemara was a daunting task. I stayed persistent, however, and over the course of Yom Tov spent many hours doing something that a mere week before had seemed all but impossible. After Yom Tov I confided to my wife what I was feeling and she admitted that she had seen a dramatic change in my patterns but was afraid to say anything. She agreed to support and encourage me in any way she could and told me that she was very proud of what I was doing.

Over the next month or so (before I found these boards) I kept regular sederim and started getting up regularly to the early minyan (I used to be a regular at the kosel for those who know that joke). I was, however, periodically falling back into P. The falls were a bit further apart and

I was getting back up quicker, but I was falling none-the-less.

Thanks to this board and the advice of GUE, I have instituted the safeguards that I currently have in place.

I now see that it is important work on both the *sur ma'rah* and the *aseh tov* when combating the y"h.

May Hashem help that we all be successful in this noble battle and may we merit to see the coming of *moshiach tzidkenu* and the rebuilding of the *bais hamikdash b'mhayrah byamanu*.

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by mevakesh - 13 Feb 2009 19:57

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Checking in @ day 37

The weekends have traditionally been difficult for me so I must be diligent.

We are having guests for Shabbos and have plans for *motzei* Shabbos so that should help get be through *bezras Hashem* to Sunday.

I B"H have been feeling well and have been able to head off potential triggers.

Have a wonderful Shabbos all!!!!

BTW, if anyone has not listened to the Rabbi Reisman shiur being promoted by GUE, do yourself a favor and have a listen.

[www.mp3shiur.com/prodDetails.asp?catID=38&prodID=431](http://www.mp3shiur.com/prodDetails.asp?catID=38&prodID=431)

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by boruch - 13 Feb 2009 21:16

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[shomer wrote on 11 Feb 2009 17:53:](#)

As I understand things, the *secret* to achieving long-term sobriety is to replacing the negative coping mechanisms and habits with positive ones. In order to be a *sur ma'rah* one has to be an *asay tov*.

The key to both *sur meira* and to long term sobriety is to recognize that negative coping skills and for that matter any coping skills are never used in a vacuum.

Coping skills and especially negative coping skills are only used because we suffer from **negative emotions** which are the true ra and the true cause of addiction. Addiction is only the symptom. The disease is the underlying anger, frustration, anxiety and disappointment that we try to medicate with addiction.

[shomer wrote on 11 Feb 2009 17:53:](#)

In 12 step programs, great attention is given to building character and becoming more connected to a *higher power* (I have never done the 12 steps, but so have I heard). This strategy does make a lot of sense and I have seen instances in-which P addicts after relatively long periods of sobriety wake up one day and say *so now what?* This reality, in my opinion, is why the 12 steps are so important and critical their adherents.

So how does one go about replacing bad habits and patterns, the foundations of what lead us to P in the first place, and replace them with new and healthier ones?

The answer to me seems glaringly obvious, yet much harder to implement.

*barasi yetzer hora, u'barisi Torah tavlin* ... Hashem is telling us ... I created the *yetzer hora* and I have created the Torah as the **only** remedy.

Up until this point I have taken the external steps (filter/monitor/jnet/accountability) that were absolutely critical to getting me to where I am today.

It is now time to focus inward and look for ways to strengthen myself in Torah and *yiras shomayim*.

12 step programs work on achieving serenity. As Frum Yidden we can relate to the avodas hamiddos involved in recognizing our anger, frustration, anxiety and disappointment, dealing with it, and building on our Emunah and Bittochon to set ourselves free from them.

As all the mussar seforim explain, the Torah we need to learn for yiras shomayim and avodas hamiddos needs to be specific. Whether we work on Alcoholics Anonymous literature or sifrei mussar is a personal choice that must be motivated by what works. It is far too easy to learn mussar in the abstract and to be unable to implement it. Unless one has a very competent Rebbe in mussar the chances of being able to make any significant short-term difference in avodas hamiddos are very low indeed. So, basically the choice is simple, join a 12 step program or get a a very competent Rebbe.

[shomer wrote on 11 Feb 2009 17:53:](#)

Hashem, please grant me the strength to turn these meager 5 weeks of sobriety into a lifelong process of growth.

Hashem, please help all those on this board and all yidden that are struggling to merit a *teshuvah shelema*.

B'Hatzlocho Gedolo

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by mevakesh - 15 Feb 2009 19:47

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As a matter of disclosure I must state that boruch and I are close friends and know (or at least hope) that he will not take this the wrong way.

Boruch, my dear friend .... *noeh doresh* .... a good drasha

One thing that is clear to me is that for a guy who was not long ago as anit-12 steps as they come and is now a card carrying 12 stepper, you have missed the point completely.

The reality is that "negative emotions" (straight from the 12 steps ... right?) are experienced by all human beings, jew and gentile alike. Human beings manifest their emotions in a plethora of ways and we "addicts" use P as a coping/escape mechanism for our problems.

Surfing the web on an open connection in complete privacy in my opinion (as well as the *psak* of many gedolim) equates to being *over* the *issur* of *yichud*.

A person can learn mussar sefarim their whole life, but still must observe the *gedarim* of *yichud*.

I am not saying that *mussar* is the answer and I am not saying that the 12 steps are the answer. In truth, there are probably many ways to achieve sobriety.

What I am saying is that *barasi y"ch u'barasi Torah tavlin* does not mean learning *mussar* at all. *Mussar* is like the preservative that keeps everything else fresh. The key to overcoming addiction (and *mussar* is certainly a part of this) is *amaylus v'yegiya b'Torah*. A person must immerse themselves in Torah and make Torah their main focus in life. This does not mean that a person needs to learn in kollel full time, but it does mean that posting on the forums should not be a reason to miss their daily seder (or any other flimsy excuse for that matter).

If a person learns mussar all their life but does not get up for davening on time (or whatever else), then all their work is merely academic.

In order to achieve sobriety a person does not have to choose between the 12 steps or an out-of-this-world mussar Rebbi.

The first step is to stop being *over* the *issur* of *yichud* (install a filter, get an accountability partner etc.) ... *sur m'rah* ... and at the same be an *aseh tov*. In my opinion, however, being an *aseh tov* does **not** mean going to a 12 step meeting. It seems pretty clear to me that going to a 12 step meeting would be part of the *sur m'rah*.

I would certainly agree with you that 12 step meetings are **very** affective, but if you only go to 12 step meetings and stay clean until 120 years, you will be like the truck driver that drives across the country and boasts that he did not get into any traffic accidents, but arrives with an empty truck.

*Aseh tov* means being *koveh ittim la'Torah* (EVERY NIGHT) ... being an *aseh tov* means getting up for *davening* on time (EVERY DAY) ... being an *aseh tov* means being an *umel ba'Torah* (not just being smarter than everyone else).

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To everyone reading this, please don't take the tone I have struck w/ boruch the wrong way. We are very close friends and know one another very well. I certainly have my own flaws and boruch is not shy about making me aware of them.

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by the.guard - 15 Feb 2009 21:10

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Driving across the country without an accident means your truck is already pretty full. In Yiddishkeit, Sur mera is not just an act of not getting dirty. Instead, we BUILD ourselves up with the things we don't do. That is why it is called Yesod. The things we don't do, the things that no one see - what's underground, that builds the very foundation.

See the Yalkut Shimoni here: [www.guardureyes.com/GUE/Images/yonasan.gif](http://www.guardureyes.com/GUE/Images/yonasan.gif)

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by mevakesh - 15 Feb 2009 22:24

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Day 39 ... doing well B"H ... looking forward to hitting the 6 week mark this week.

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by boruch - 16 Feb 2009 21:57

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[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)



As a matter of disclosure I must state that boruch and I are close friends and know (or at least hope) that he will not take this the wrong way.

Shomer, you are right that I did not take this the wrong way. I hope that likewise you understand that what I will write is because I am such a strong believer in what you are capable of.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

Boruch, my dear friend .... *noeh doresh* .... a good drasha

One thing that is clear to me is that for a guy who was not long ago as anit-12 steps as they come and is now a card carrying 12 stepper, you have missed the point completely.

The reality is that "negative emotions" (straight from the 12 steps ... right?) are experienced by all human beings, jew and gentile alike. Human beings manifest their emotions in a plethora of ways and we "addicts" use P as a coping/escape mechanism for our problems.

Shomer, it is because we know each other so well that I post here, and it is because I admire you and recognize potential in you that you, yourself don't see that I am posting. I know what you are capable of and that's why, for your good I am holding you to a higher standard... because you can do it.

But you must first be ruthlessly honest with yourself. And that begins by recognizing that like everyone else you have a lot of negius to preserve the status quo.

So let's start, instead, with some real honesty. You don't think that what I wrote here is noeh doresh. Not in the least bit. You think that what I wrote was total nonsense. It's obvious from

your comments here and it was very obvious from our offline discussion.

So, let's say it as it is. You are sceptical and you don't think that any radical departure from the status quo is necessary. Why, a little tweak here and another there may be enough to kick the addiction, so who says we need to do more than that? As far as the rest? Well, everyone has problems.

But shomer, that is very inadequate and disappointing and you owe yourself much more than that. You recognize that addiction is self-medication. Don't you realize that as long as we are prepared to perpetuate the condition that we are self-medicating even one day more than necessary then we are jeopardizing our attempts to kick addiction? So what comfort is it that other people have problems?

The important thing here is to ask a basic question. Am I doing everything possible to kick this addiction? Or am I setting limits on how far I am prepared to go?

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

Surfing the web on an open connection in complete privacy in my opinion (as well as the *psak* of many gedolim) equates to being *over* the *issur* of *yichud*.

A person can learn mussar sefarim their whole life, but still must observe the *gedarim* of *yichud*.

Shomer, again I am disappointed. You are evading the issue, yes, avoid the *issur yichud* by installing filters etc. And then when the urge comes to beat those filters? What happens then? Well, I will put your own words to me right here. "When the urge comes nothing helps, because at that point I am not thinking". OK, so at that point where is your *drosho* about *issur yichud*? Absolutely nowhere.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

I am not saying that *mussar* is the answer and I am not saying that the 12 steps are the answer. In truth, there are probably many ways to achieve sobriety.

There are many possible routes to permanent sobriety but they all have probabilities attached to them and they are quite low. The surest way to achieve permanent sobriety is to be prepared to do **whatever it takes**. Your statement above is nice philosophy. And I do mean that. It is really true. There are truly many possibilities for permanent sobriety, some 1%, some 5%. But that is not the question to ask here. The question to ask is how can I do my absolute best to ensure that I achieve permanent sobriety today.

Now, I can see it already. All those reading this thread, including perhaps yourself, shomer, thinking what does boruch want from shomer already? Shomer is really doing well, why not just give him chizzuk? Why be harsh on him? Well, that's because they don't know you when you are single-minded and they don't know how capable you are. I do. I know you when you are single-minded Shomer, and I know what you can do, and right now you are not yet there.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

What I am saying is that *barasi y"h u'barasi Torah tavlin* does not mean learning *mussar* at all.

You are arguing with the Mesilas Yeshorim who knew a lot better than you. And you have even learned that piece of Mesilas Yeshorim many times. But none of us wants to change the status quo easily, and so we learn mussar and it doesn't even go in to our heads, never mind our hearts.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

The key to overcoming addiction (and mussar is certainly a part of this) is *amaylus v'yegiya b'Torah*. A person must immerse themselves in Torah and make Torah their main focus in life. This does not mean that a person needs to learn in kollel full time, but it does mean that posting on the forums should not be a reason to miss their daily seder (or any other flimsy excuse for that matter).

You are defining your own terms for beating addiction. Another Mesilas Yeshorim you know very well explains that every kula needs bedika. Your definition here is definitely convenient and certainly is a kula. How much bedika have you done on this one? I will tell you for your own good, not enough.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

If a person learns mussar all their life but does not get up for davening on time (or whatever else), than all their work is merely academic.

The point is not learning anything. the point is making change. That's why you need to either join a group of people who really believe that they have to do whatever it takes to change as soon as possible or find a Rebbe who can convince you not to make excuses to go slower than you need to.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

In order to achieve sobriety a person does not have to chose between the 12 steps or an out-of-this-world mussar Rebbe.

To play the sobriety lottery you don't need to do anything, who knows you may just outgrow the addcition? 1 in a billion says you can. If you are really serious and determined there is no

reason at all that you would settle for anything less than BOTH the 12 steps AND an out-of-this-world mussar Rebbi.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

The first step is to stop being *over* the *issur* of *yichud* (install a filter, get an accountability partner etc.) ... *sur m'rah* ... and at the same be an *aseh tov*.

Beautiful philosophy but it blissfully ignores the question of, well what is going to happen next time the urge strikes? I'll tell you again, until it finally sinks in. Absolutely nothing. At that point there will be no *issur yichud*. No *sur mera*. No *aseh tov*. Nothing at all. And not just will there be nothing then. There is nothing now either. You don't even have a plan for next time the urge strikes. And you know it. Don't allow your posts to be an excuse for doing less than you are capable of.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

In my opinion, however, being an *aseh tov* does **not** mean going to a 12 step meeting. It seems pretty clear to me that going to a 12 step meeting would be part of the *sur m'rah*.

I would certainly agree with you that 12 step meetings are **very** affective, but if you only go to 12 step meetings and stay clean until 120 years, you will be like the truck driver that drives across the country and boasts that he did not get into any traffic accidents, but arrives with an empty truck.

Shomer, I respect you a lot and I care for you. That's why I say with all sincerity that you are trying to be far too smart for your own good. Stop the droshos. Let's talk *tachlis*. You never went to a 12 step meeting and you are not prepared to. If you were desperate enough you would. If you were determined enough you would. Right now you are neither. That's why you don't know what happens at one.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

*Aseh tov* means being *koveh ittim la'Torah* (EVERY NIGHT) ... being an *aseh tov* means getting up for *davening* on time (EVERY DAY) ... being an *aseh tov* means being an *umel ba'Torah* (not just being smarter than everyone else).

*Aseh tov* on your own terms means being half-hearted. If you are ready to be ruthlessly honest with yourself and not just with me, you will go very far.

[shomer wrote on 15 Feb 2009 19:47:](#)

To everyone reading this, please don't take the tone I have struck w/ boruch the wrong way. We are very close friends and know one another very well. I certainly have my own flaws and boruch is not shy about making me aware of them.

The chochmo is to grow from each other.

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by the.guard - 16 Feb 2009 22:40

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Wow, I can't believe Boruch is a believer in the 12-Step groups now. I really underestimated you at first, Boruch. I thought your harsh sounding, long winded posts were a sign that you thought you knew it all and could never be convinced otherwise. But you have surprised us all.

I have literally never seen 1) such **ruthless honesty** and 2) such **single minded determination** in anyone. Truly unbelievable and inspiring!

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by boruch - 17 Feb 2009 16:11

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[guardureyes wrote on 16 Feb 2009 22:40:](#)

Wow, I can't believe Boruch is a believer in the 12-Step groups now.

Anyone who really wants to make the 12 steps work for them can. More than I am a believer in the 12 steps I am a believer in stopping at nothing. Any frum Yid has to know that there is no way forward with sex addiction without teshuva. Any frum Yid need to understand that halacha lemaaseh the basic and fundamental minimum halachic requirement of teshuva is an absolute and total azivas hachet, a once and for all lifetime committment to stop for ever. If anyone thinks that half measures will achieve that they are deluding themselves. Anyone who thinks that filters, accountability partners and attending night seder every night and shachris every morning will guarantee that needs a major reality check.

Yes, chas vesholom to sit on one's hands waiting for a full committment. Absolutely, do today whatever you can, even if it's only a committment to one hour of sobriety.

But there is no reason whatsoever and no excuse whatsoever to set limits. Do what you can today and it's fine if it's less than perfect but there's no need to fool oneself into thinking that whatever we do today is enough. Anyone who is at all serious about doing teshuva with a full azivas hachet will recognize that there can be no knowing how far one needs to go to do teshuva and there is no reason at all, other than making excuses, to try and idealize our current behavior as if it is lechatchilo and as if it is enough. Better to be humble and say I should probably be doing more but I am not there yet.

[guardureyes wrote on 16 Feb 2009 22:40:](#)

I really underestimated you at first, Boruch. I thought your harsh sounding, long winded posts were a sign that you thought you knew it all and could never be convinced otherwise. But you have surprised us all.

If my own experience here can be of use to anyone else, I can share with you that when I first signed up here I had issues that needed to be worked out. I came here on this board and went the distance. I confronted my issues and worked through them. Not perfectly. Not without mistakes. But I worked them and didn't shirk them. I worked out for myself what I thought needed to be done. In my original estimation the 12 steps were not part of that picture. They did not seem to be a good fit (from my own initial perspective at least) and they seemed like more distraction than they were worth.

What changed everything for me was my therapist's advice. For me more important than any ideology is the ultimate goal. Total azivas hachet and teshuva sheleimo. And you can't even dream of that if you are not prepared to be very serious. And if you are very serious and you have a therapist who advises you to try a 12 step group once then no matter what you think of them, you will change your question from whether the 12 steps are a fit to how can I make them work for me. Chasdei Hashem I discovered to my surprise that they can work for even the biggest arch-conservative (like me). But there is one pre-condition. You need to be honest about the absolute life and death necessity to make a total azivas hachet and teshuva sheleimo.

Yes, people say, you have to take it slow etc. etc. I am not going to talk for others right now. I will just speak for myself. I tried 36 years of that and all it did was to get me more addicted than ever. Having been there and done that I can tell you that it is all excuses. 100% excuses. Habo letaher mesayin oso is not just an inspirational saying it is a MASSIVE MECHAYEV. If you aim for total azivas hachet you will be surprised at how much you will be prepared to do, how far you will be prepared to go and how much siyyatta dishmaya you can get. If you go for anything less the overwhelming odds are that you will spend your time waivering, slipping and falling. Having been there for 36 years I can tell you that it's a horrible place to be. So why not give yourself the break you deserve and go for the Gold. Do it the right way, do it the whole way, it's so much easier, it's so much better.

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Re: Shomer's Journal



Posted by the.guard - 17 Feb 2009 19:21

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Wow. I am speechless. You have taken the example of Rebbe Eliezer ben Durdia completely for yourself, minus the dying part.

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by mevakesh - 17 Feb 2009 20:30

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Thank you for taking the time to explain yourself to such great lengths boruch.

I think that it will be obvious to anyone that reads boruch's discourse to conclude that he means business. I am glad to see the reaffirmation of boruch's commitment to change and his willingness to "do whatever it takes" to get better is truly impressive.

Being a close personal friend of boruch for a long time now, however, I reserve the right to draw my own conclusions beyond the clearly elegantly discourse the boards were fortunate enough to receive from him.

Just to clarify a few points, I have been struggling to overcome my addiction for years now. I have previously been an active member on the no-porn forums, at one point I was maintaining a blog about addiction through which I was approach by many competent individuals (including none other than GUE himself) and have reached out personally to rabbonim (albeit in an anonymous manner).

Boruch on the other hand (and I am sure he will agree with this), although aware of his issue with P addiction has been brushing it under the carpet for years now refusing to admit the severity of his problem.

After I had found these forums and taken the advise of GUE to install a filter and set up an accountability arrangement, boruch woke up one day (or to be more accurate one night after a binge P session) and realized "hey, I have a problem too".

Since that time (about 4 weeks ago) boruch has been extremely vigilant in researching and getting involved with the 12 step group he currently attends. I respect and admire boruch for this and am truly in awe of his willingness to travel and attend the meetings. I wish boruch only the best in his recovery, and in all areas of life for that matter, and am grateful for the friendship that he has extended to me for many years now.

That being said, I have and continue to believe that there are many paths to recovery. I would certainly agree that there are common denominators to these methods, but do not feel that the 12 steps are one of them.

Are the 12 steps effective, yes ... are the 12 steps the most consistent path to recovery, absolutely ... are the 12 steps for everyone ... I will quote the old boruch on this one ... absolutely not.

While the 12 steps may be the best choice for boruch, my decision to do it another way in no way constitute less of a commitment than boruch.

As things stand right now, I will *bezras Hashem* hit the 6 week mark tomorrow.

Apples to apples (and I use comparisons very reluctantly here), as far as what is *lemaysa*, I am running just a little bit ahead of boruch with regard to what can actually be measured.

My commitment is no less than his, my strategy no less effective and my resolve no less firm.

Boruch ... you should have much *brocha v'hatzlocho l'orech yamim tovim* ... and I mean that

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by the.guard - 17 Feb 2009 21:22

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**If I ever had any question in my mind what the words of Chazal mean "*Kinas Sofrim Tarbeh Chachma*" I think you and Boruch are the perfect examples. Not just "*Tarbeh Chachma*" for those involved, but for all those who witness the kina of these two great souls striving for perfection.**

**I hereby challenge you both to take all of us on this forum along with you two, on a journey of complete, 100% Teshuvah and recovery, in the shortest amount of time possible, and each in his own unique way. And at the end of the day, we here on the forum shall judge and be inspired, learn from and root for, these two great and inspiring Neshamos who are lighting up the world with their steadfast determination to face down the 'evil within' until the very end.**

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Re: Shomer's Journal

Posted by battleworn - 18 Feb 2009 13:39

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Shomer, when you say that the 12 steps are not for you, do you mean the groups or the actual steps?

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