

A fall and a new beginning

Posted by Binyomin5766 - 24 Sep 2009 02:09

Well, over the course of the last two days, I had a "slow motion" fall. I began acting out on Monday evening, viewing things on the net that perhaps wouldn't have qualified as a fall, but definitely began the process. Through the day on Tuesday, my thought/fantasy life began getting out of control. Last night (Tuesday) I began acting out by going to definitively inappropriate sites and topped it all off by m****. So, after a little over nine months clean, I have fallen off the wagon. So, now what?

What went wrong? Some things were in my control and some were not. First issue I should have worked on more: guarding my eyes in public places. Second: getting a handle on my thought/fantasy life (i.e. dispose of the fantasy unless I'm going to fantasize about having all the time I want to learn Torah). Third: finding a way to block inappropriate sites on my work computer (perhaps I should just put K-9 on my computer and let Rabbeinu Guard control the password. They are pretty quick to wipe and reload computers at my office so they would be able to get rid of it if they so desired. Question: can they get rid of K-9 that way if they need to?). And out of my control? A one month business trip. All I can do about that is try to prepare better.

I have the further issue, that some here will likely remember, that my wife and children are struggling with their Yiddishkeit in a big way. I have a strong tendency toward depression, anyway, and this particular struggle is a strong push toward depression. For me, depression is a contributing factor, although it is frequently difficult for me to tell which comes first: the depression or the acting out.

At this point I have to confess, last night I really didn't want to come back here ever again. How could I let myself do this? How can I humiliate myself by coming here and admitting what I have done? In the end, though, this place is **LIFE**. Where I went last night is nothing less than death itself, and I want to **LIVE**! Even now, my eyes are welling up to think of it. But even now, the Y"H is actively on the offensive. I can feel the desire as a physical ache. Part of me (the animal soul) wants so badly to give in, but part of me can't go back to living that way: the hiding, the secrets, the lies....

What now? What is my strategy? my approach? Some things won't change, because they shouldn't. I will keep trying to increase my Torah learning to the new level I'm aiming for: one aliya of the Parsha of the week with Rashi, and one Gemara shiur mornings Monday through Friday (the latter after my business trip ends). I will keep trying to work through Mesillas Yesharim (I never make it very far, and I have started over many times. There is just so much

even in Rabbi Luzatto's intro, though, it really isn't a waste). What needs to change, though? I think I have to dive in deeper to the effort this time. I think it is time for me to begin some kind of a 12 steps program. I hope that I might be able to join one of the phone groups here. My job can be pretty demanding in terms of the hours and/or location, but I can make a phone call almost anywhere. I need to make some changes in how I am guarding my eyes, but I'm not sure what that will be quite yet (perhaps one of the tzedakah type vows may be effective here). The fantasy life thing will be quite difficult. At times I find myself fantasizing about my wife (especially in the few days before mikvah time), and that unfortunately only encourages the broader habit. I will have to find some other things to occupy my mind; that will be challenge. The computer issue I discussed above, and depending on the answers I get, it is likely that I will load k-9 on this machine.

At any rate, I am getting quite tired. I have just pulled my third twelve hour day in a row, and tomorrow is likely to be longer. I bid all of you a good night as now begin day 1.

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by Binyomin5766 - 09 Oct 2009 14:12

Well, I'm headed into Shabbos/Shmini Atzeres/Simchas Torah just over two weeks clean. I'm feeling pretty good about the journey, but even more, I'm looking forward to Rosh Chodesh Mar Cheshvan. I begin calling in to a phone group that day. My copy of the Big Book is somewhere in the US Mail; hopefully it will arrive in plenty of time.

In the meantime, I am finding the mitzvah of simcha for the chag to be fairly difficult this year (though not as difficult as last year). Some of you may remember that my family is seriously struggling with Yiddishkeit. If anything, over the last year they have drifted further away. I think the only reason they have any observance whatsoever is because I'm in the house. They are holding to kashrus in the home and something resembling Shabbos observance (though I don't know what may happen while I'm at shul- don't really want to know either). My wife holds to family purity. And that's about it for them. It's very frustrating and I can slip into depression very easily. Of course depression is, in and of itself, a big problem and a lack of emunah. It is also a big hindrance in the battle for continuing purity. I still keep hoping for the best, but I confess it's getting more difficult to do so. As they continue to move away from observance, I feel more

Adding to my difficulty is the fact that we moved to our current community a little over a year ago. I have been so consumed between dealing with my family issues and work that I have not developed any significant friendships. The only person I can really speak to is my rabbi from my previous community. I can talk here, too, but that only accomplishes so much.

At any rate, thanks for listening. It does help a little.

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by Rage AT Machine - 09 Oct 2009 14:24

ben,

here are my two cents even though its not worth one...

firstly, you must understand that no family is immune from the issues you are facing...i have seen family from the furthest right to the modox left struggle with family memebbers that have chosen not to be observant...there is no rhyme or reason...this is NOT your failure in any way...you must also bear in mind that whether or not a person chooses to be observant is a very personal decision...if your children are adults their choices must be respected...the only thing you can press them on is to make a RATIONAL decision...ive seen people become less observant or not observant because they wanted to "fit in" or "be accepted" or out of laziness, etc....this is not a "choice" to be non-observant...also, ive seen countless young people lose their observancy for a period of time after high school...after leaving home they have come back to some level of observancy...finally there are many programs out there that can redirect or enlighten your family...i dont know if youre u.s. or israel but there are program there and here...arachim, aish, ncsy/ou, chabad and countless others in all different forms...maybe they need to be introduced to a different brand of observant judaism...there is no right way, you know, so long as the torah and mitzvot lay in the center...take a family weekend "vacation" to one of these programs...and remember that for such things you need a tremendous amount of help from above because in this area, rational people can come to very different conclusions...

lots of luck

ratm

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by the.guard - 10 Oct 2009 22:41

Ben, I really sympathize... RATM offered some good advice, but I really feel your pain and wish I could offer advice too. It seems this is all part of the "package" Hashem gave you to "carry" in this world... May Hashem give you the strength to hold it all with Emunah, and may He guide you...

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by 7yipol - 10 Oct 2009 22:57

Im not sure I have more to add to RATMs post, othher than a sincere tefilla that Hashems helps them find their way home soon, and gives you the emotional strength for your difficult journey.

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by Binyomin5766 - 12 Oct 2009 15:19

Thank you all for your responses. For the most part, I am able to maintain an even keel. I have a tendency to be more keenly aware of the issues during the holidays, especially being the only one in my household who is trying to be fully observant. The loneliness I feel is particular strong on these days. Already, now that the holidays are past, I am feeling better. This is not to say that my family situation has changed, because it really hasn't.

It is challenging for me to not feel responsible in part for my family's response to observance. Five years ago, we were just beginning to explore Orthodoxy, and I hadn't even begun studying for conversion. In retrospect, I charged ahead far too quickly for my family and I failed to listen to my wife (who, BTW, was born Jewish in a non-observant home and was given nearly no Jewish education). Now, my wife and children are actively backing away from observance while I am trying to grow. It leads to a lot of tension, even though I am trying to focus on areas that won't require them to make any changes (like guarding my eyes!) We began this journey through Chabad and we want to try to get back with them, but that will require relocation as Chabad has no organized presence in our current community. I really like the learning opportunities I have in this community, and I would like to live close enough to continue to pursue those. That said, I have to be careful not to push that so hard that we end up living someplace that the family still doesn't like very much. Oy! How many tightropes can I walk?

I like the idea of a family weekend that RATM brought up. I will have to pursue that; we live close enough to the NY area that I am sure there are plenty of opportunities. I just have to ask around.

Back to the main topic of the board: I am still holding clean, but last night was a fairly big struggle. There wasn't a lot of simchah in my Simchas Torah, and my yetzer was really on the offensive.

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by the.guard - 12 Oct 2009 17:46

Ben, I would like you to read [this post](#) of Dov's. I think it will give you some good perspective)

Let me know if it helps!

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by Binyomin5766 - 12 Oct 2009 18:31

This is very good advice and exactly what my rav is telling me to do. I am (most of the time,) able to keep my mouth shut when I should. I am even doing decently about maintaining at least the appearance of cheerfulness. As always, most of my problems are between my ears. I am sure this comes out in some way, but I am not sure how it manifests. One thing, it is nice to have someplace to vent, and the beautiful thing about venting here is that no one (to the best of my knowledge) has a clue who my wife and children are.

Most of the time, I am concerned about them, but with the realization that I can do nothing to make them change. I treat my wife and children with all the love that I know how to give and there are a lot of positive things going on in that respect.
on how to "deal with" your family (or "not" deal with

My rav has advised me that when my wife comes to speak to me about her anger, frustration, etc. with some aspect of Jewish life (or life in our particular community), I need to focus on understanding and supporting her and communicating that to her. In doing so, my rav says, I need to set aside all my fears, anger, concerns, etc. I find that when I am successful at doing that, when the conversation is over all those feelings are there waiting for me. I really don't have a good way to deal with these feeling right now. My rav lives a good distance away, so it is difficult to keep up on a frequent basis. End result: I have had a pretty good amount of stress built up over the last few weeks. Add to that the usual assortment of boneheaded remarks I tend to make (with the resulting problems), and you have a great recipe for a "nervous breakdown."

The amazing thing is: in spite of all these problems, my wife still loves me. I really don't get it.

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by the.guard - 12 Oct 2009 22:17

Add to that the usual assortment of boneheaded remarks I tend to make (with the resulting problems), and you have a great recipe for a "nervous breakdown."

I highly suggest joining Duvid Chaim's 12-Step group starting next Monday. It will help you learn to deal with all the problem areas of your life, lust, stress, etc... Looking forward to having you on the line! :D

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by Binyomin5766 - 13 Oct 2009 12:19

My copy of the Big Book arrived in the mail last week. I am very much looking forward to being in the group. Of course, I'm feeling nervous too. I think that is pretty normal for me when I'm getting ready to make a big step in something...

Last night was a pretty good night at home. Things were pretty quiet for the family and I got a lot done around the house before dark. I'm almost done with the post Succos cleanup (yay!) It was nice to be tired from physical activity, though. That seemed to have a positive effect on my struggle. That leads me to ask, is there a correspondence between increasing physical activity and decreasing difficulty with the temptations we are fighting here? (I realize this has probably been answered already, but I haven't seen it yet).

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by Binyomin5766 - 16 Oct 2009 13:40

Things are going OK in the battle, but not great. For the last day, I've been struggling a lot with memories and fantasies. So far, no acting out in terms of the internet or m****, but I have my warning. Thankfully, Shabbos begins tonight, and historically Shabbos is the one day I've almost always remained clean. So, for now, I'm trying to hold on until the light of Shabbos can do its work (and yes, I did read today's chizuk; sometimes holding on is all I can do).

I'm hoping for an extra infusion of chizuk this Shabbos. My family had the z'chus to be invited for Shabbos lunch to my rabbi's home. His uncle, a pretty significant rav from Eretz Yisroel, is visiting, so we will be eating with him. I am hopeful for some great things to happen with my family's various struggles as a result of spending some time with him. Actually, I suspect that the rabbi and rebbetzin are thinking the same thing.

Bli nedar, I will be starting Duvid Chaim's phone group on Monday. I'm looking forward to effecting a change in myself through this along the lines of today's email, to spend days in recovery and not just getting by.

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Re: A fall and a new beginning

Posted by Binyomin5766 - 20 Oct 2009 15:29

It's been a little bit since I've had a real chance to post. I'm still holding clean and I've begun one of the 12-steps phone groups in an effort to take this battle to the next level.

Since Sunday afternoon, though, the struggle has been much more intense. The best I can figure out is that the Y"H wants me to fall and become discouraged so I don't attend the phone conferences. So far, though, the effect of the struggle has been to highlight my need for the group.

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Re: A fall and a new beginning
Posted by Kedusha - 20 Oct 2009 15:32

Well said, Ben.

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Re: A fall and a new beginning
Posted by Rage AT Machine - 20 Oct 2009 15:49

ben, im curious how it went over shabbat...did the rabbi from israel have an impact?...stay strong, my brother...keep your eye on that solid line that never ends....

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Re: A fall and a new beginning
Posted by Binyomin5766 - 20 Oct 2009 15:56

Actually the rabbi from Israel ended staying in Boro Park for Shabbos and came to our shul for a special Rosh Chodesh event on Sunday.

Shabbos was good, though. My family had lunch with our shul rabbi (and his family). Lunch turned out to be very interesting in a number of ways, but I can't really go any further than that here. For me, personally, Shabbos was quite uplifting as I got to go to two different tisches in addition to the lunch.

The Rosh Chodesh event was quite uplifting, but no one else in my family came along. I can only hope that the after effects of the positive experiences will be contagious to my family.

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