

Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by kavanah - 25 Nov 2013 11:41

Yesterday, I fell again. This Friday, I plan to go to the mikveh and begin the 90 day plan. What I'm going to detail below is meant to be a reminder to myself of where I'm coming from and where I'm going to.

As such, I'm going to share a few details that I think are important for some people, and not important for others. Like everything we approach online, please think about that carefully before reading ahead.

Why is it important for some? Well, for myself, coming from a secular background, it was/is often a trick of the yetzer hara to say, "Of course *those* guys can do it, they're not conditioned in this area the way you are. For you, it's already embedded in your nature, so don't fight the impossible." I haven't looked around the forum much, but something tells me other people might think this way as well.

I'm here to prove (to myself primarily, but the world as well) that this is a lie, and sincere lasting teshuva, even in this area, is possible and difficult for everyone, no matter their background. Though I haven't been successful yet, it is a journey.

So where to start? I'm not going to write an essay or a novel, rather I'm going to present some facts.

First of all, growing up, I was taught and conditioned from every possible angle that masturbation was healthy, and it's abnormal to *not* do it. My father had a porn stash that he hid from me, as did almost every one of my friend's father's hide from them. When we started hitting puberty, around bar-mitzvah age it was a rite of passage to have our own stash- it was *encouraged*. Sex-ed in school basically re-enforced these ideas. Although in a much more subtle way, my mom even acknowledged it as a normal thing boys do. At home, we had unlimited controls on the t.v. and everything that can be seen, was seen.

The only rule about it all was that it's something you do privately, but even that faded away.

As I got older I started getting into drugs, and a new world opened up. Free love, no boundaries, do what feels good. I lost my virginity while on LSD. I had sexual experiences in public places. Not that these experiences were often, but the highs they brought were often extremely addicting (Ecstasy (MDMA), tongue rings, so on.) Again- I apologize for those details, but my goal here is that somebody else who's coming from that world might think- "yeah but it's impossible when you've been through xyz", and I am trying prove that it's still possible to win this battle.

Anyway- fast forward a few years and I had quit drugs, got into Torah, and moved to Israel. Went to Yeshiva, army. As a Torah-observant Jew, the abstinence was overwhelming. But to my complete shock- in the circles I ran in, these things were still considered okay as long as you keep it really private. I was still hooking up with girls, still masturbating. The only difference was that I knew it was wrong, and got very depressed each time it happened, so it happened less often- but it still happened. I tried all sorts of things (Mikveh, Tzedakah, Tehillim, Tikkun HaKlali, confiding in helpful friends, so on).

To be brutally honest, nothing really changed that much from that point to when I met my wife. I've gone some long periods of time without, and then I fell again. One of the problems I've had to face is that it very much depended on the circumstances. For example, when I'm busy with projects and shalom bayit is great, then it's not so difficult. But when I'm bored or depressed or mad my wife, it's inevitably like fighting a demon inside.

For anyone who's had drug problems (around a decade clean btw), this sounds eerily familiar. It was easy to be calm and collected and chilled out when high, but take away the crutch and I can be the most uptight person you know.

I guess this isn't in chronological order but I want to interject something else at this point. I had absolutely no idea that my yetzer here was this difficult. I suspect most guys coming from my background don't either. Because until you try and fight it head on (without distractions, without having your wife available, etc.) - you have no idea. Oh, I should point out, I'm not saying we should fight it head on. This is a serious battle and only a fool would go into battle with bare hands if they have weapons available. I'm just saying that I wasn't aware of what was really screwed up in my upbringing/cultural perspective, and I suspect many guys, even religious, aren't either.

Anyway, where do I stand now? The cards are stacked against me. Besides my history and conditioning outlined above, I work from home alone every day, requiring internet. The work is

often boring. Sometimes I'm upset about things. The cards are *greatly* stacked against me.

BTW, I've installed the filters, my wife has the only password, but I work with technology and I know about ten thousand ways to bypass anything we can think of. Once it gets to the point where I'm intentionally looking for stuff, the filters are useless (but they help alleviate the accidental temptations).

And this is why I'm starting the 90 day chart (this Friday). I'm also making a personal rule- I am going to (bli neder) tell my wife when I screw up.

To be honest, that was a huge issue in the past. I told my wife, she got extremely upset, I felt extremely guilty and depressed, and the cycle began again. So then the next time I didn't tell my wife, thinking it did more harm than good. I'm sure some would disagree, and think it's an excuse, but it's not- I think that **did** do more harm than good. But I still fell, and it's not a solution. So the only solution possible is that I tell my wife everything, and she has agreed to work on herself so she can be there for me- to tell me to get back up on the horse instead of kicking me when I'm down. If we can truly keep both ends of that, I think, over time, we can beat this thing together.

The Torah says that we are a stubborn ("stiff-necked") people. That is a great advantage in this area. While we can be very stubbornly stuck on our previous ways, it means we can be stubborn about doing teshuva as well. I plan to be stubborn about sticking to the 90 day chart. And you know what's more important? If I fall and screw up, I plan to be stubborn about starting from day 1 again and again and again.

Closing thought- I'm scared for the state of our world. Provocative imagery is everywhere. The things I outlined about society (especially secular, but in some worlds religious too) whitewashing it are as true now as they ever were. And men who have not tried to fight this head-on (the vast, vast majority) have no idea how strong it is. Women, by their nature, can't really relate (just as we can't relate to them in some areas). People like you and me are extremely rare, and the future of our world truly depends very much on these tikkunim (I don't just mean in a mystical sense). All I can hope is that we can teach our children the right way and make them strong enough to make it better, and better, and better.

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Re: Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by Pidaini - 25 Nov 2013 16:19

Welcome Kavanah!!!

Interesting, I can relate to a lot of your present feelings even though I don't have anything similar in background!!

Have you read the GYE handbook? there is a ton of extremely usefull information there.

Have you opened up to anyone else besides your wife? IMHO, and that's all it is, my opinion, I doubt your wife knowing every wrong move is going to help you, even if it does, it will be minimal. There are plenty here whose wives knew for quite a while and it took them a long time to get real help.

It's great that you're here!! Stick around, there's a ton to learn!!!

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Re: Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by kavanah - 25 Nov 2013 16:31

Thanks! I started reading the handbook but then I stopped, will pick it up again.

For sure, the personal rule for telling my wife is not intended as a solution but rather just as helpful incentive for me to do the real work. I think the more important point with that part of the story is it can be either helpful or hurtful, and we're trying to make it a helpful thing... food for thought.

For me, I know that the biggest issue is to completely stop consciously looking at inappropriate

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Re: Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by gibbor120 - 25 Nov 2013 19:24

WELCOME kavanah! Thanks for joining the forum and sharing. We are all in the same boat not matter what background we are from, and what we are struggling with specifically. We have a common struggle. I look forward to hearing more from you.

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Re: Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by kavanah - 25 Nov 2013 19:40

Absolutely... in case it wasn't clear, and it seems now that it might not have been... that is really my point with sharing my background a bit. We're all in the same boat even though one might think (mistakenly) that it's some how more impossible or unfair for them.

I hope my story might help others reach the same conclusion.

Addiction is Addiction is Addiction... doesn't really make a difference how it got there, it takes time and effort to get over it and there are no healthy shortcuts.

Looking forward to training in this and getting better at it with all of you :D

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Re: Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by cordnoy - 25 Nov 2013 20:25

Welcome kavanah.

Although I was not secularly brought up, I experienced these things (not those you mentioned)

for over 30 years.

My humble advice (and you don't need to listen): Forget the 90 days

Keep the chart.

Update every once in a while.

But focus on today.

What are you going to do today to avoid this?

What can I do right now?

What is the plan?

And finally, as big of a techie as you are, there are ways (providing that you want) for others to install filters/monitors on your computer that even if you tamper with them, someone will know. I am not saying you should do that, for ultimately, we need to be in control over ourselves, or as some will say, we need to realize that we have no control and we give the controls to God, and therefore it is our life that presently is in sick mode and we need to get healthy.

Refuah shleimah to me, you and to all.

b'hatzlachah

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Re: Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by SIB101854 - 26 Nov 2013 07:07

Welcome aboard! When my Eshes Chayil confronted me and a huge stash of porn that I had downloaded, and my constant resorting to masturbation as an escape from any stress, and I found a great therapist and this great chevra, I decided that I had to become clean. Somehow, I have been clean since Motzaei Shabbos Nachamu, and I intend to stay that way. You can also just take it one day at a time, and remember that emotional intimacy with your Eshe Chayil can go a long way in the relationship with your wife.

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Re: Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by kavanah - 26 Nov 2013 12:44

Thanks guys

Day 1 to my pre-counting was successful. A little "slip", but not a "fall."

Even though it's only been 1 day, I can already see that the distinction of not doing anything to *intentionally* arouse myself is a HUGE benefit. I stopped from clicking on a whole bunch of links due to that, links I really wouldn't have considered a problem in the past, and honestly- being less aroused made the bigger self-control issues much easier. Still not easy, but much more manageable. Clearly- this is the key for me. It's too hard to fight when it gets past a certain point (I'm not calling it impossible, but very difficult), but making the battle line much earlier on will help GREATLY.

In the spirit of wanting my wife involved with this as openly as possible (again- not saying that's the right choice for everyone), I talked to her about the "slip" and more in general about my decision to fight this etc.

She freaked out, we got into a big fight, but then we made up. The fight basically centered around her being upset that I'm not sensitive enough the pain I cause(d) her, and me being upset that she's not understanding what's really going on in me, i.e. that I'm sincere in my teshuva and desperately trying to work on myself, and never intended to hurt her, that it was always something I viewed as between me and Hashem. At the end, I apologized for the *unintentional* pain I caused her, and she is going to do her best to accept my teshuva and be more sympathetic to my journey and be more my friend in this than an antagonist. Also, I've decided (and she agreed) that I will tell her about every "fall" (G-d forbid), but not every "slip", though if I'm not sure whether it's a slip or a fall I will tell her what it was and she'll help me make the conclusion.

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Re: Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by SIB101854 - 27 Nov 2013 07:08

Why not let her know about your progress towards the 90 days?

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Re: Chozer b'Teshuva

Posted by kavanah - 27 Nov 2013 10:53

For my situation, the damage caused is at least as much about issues of mistrust and secrecy as it as the acts themselves. I'm not saying it's good advice for everyone, but for us it seems like the best way to undo that damage.

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