

15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 08 Feb 2009 21:10

I have been battling this menuval for over 15 years since the age of 16. For the first time in my life I have a social network to reach out to and connect. I have made many attempts to breaking this terrible habit. But I will now once start from over again with what I hope will be the final battle that will ultimately lead to victory. Anyone reading this who feels moved or has encouraging words or words of advice, please share them with me. It will give me chizuk to know that I can give chizuk to others. It gives me chizuk knowing that others want me to succeed and want to give me chizuk. So please do not refrain from even the smallest comment. You never know how far your words can reach.

I have been clean now since Feb 4. I spent last night (Feb 6, motzai shabbos) and today in intense teshuva. For the first time in a long time, I felt the signs from Shamayim that I will be accepted back again. I was so encouraged by these signs it made me focus more on how to continue to work on myself to rid myself completely.

Here is my declaration of Teshuva(based on chovos Halevavos)

Today I am doing Teshuva for the terrible sins of masturbation, spilling seed, gazing at inappropriate material, and all other related sins. I realize full well that I have done these terrible acts. These acts are disgusting and despicable in the eyes of Hashem. Hashem despises them being done. They taint the body and soul.

Great Punishment awaits me for violating these prohibitions; I am afraid of your judgement. And although Hashem has not already meted out retribution for my sins, my sins are still preserved in the book of iniquities; nothing is forgotten from Hashem. I should not think that the reason I have not been punished already is because Hashem let this one slide. On the contrary, He know full well of my deeds but delays retribution to give me a chance to do Teshuvah. This is done out of the the great Chesed of Hashem. For according to the attribute of justice, I deserve to be punished immediately. But, Hashem in his great and infinite chesed gave me a chance to do Teshuvah. I thank you Hashem for granting m such privileges, for creating the concept of Teshuvah. I CAN FIX MY WRONGDOINGS!!!!

But not only this Kindness do you do for me but countless amount of kindness do you shower upon me. But in return for your graciousness I rebelled against you, while in fact I should be praising, thanking and be pleasing in your eyes.

Woe to me for committing these Sins. For instead of receiving great reward in this world and the next I am receiving just a minute and temporal amount of pleasure for my sins. And although I received at least this little amount of pleasure, I will be receiving great amounts of pain due to the punishment in this world and the next.

I, Therefore, take upon myself to remove myself from these sins and return to you Hashem. And although, I realize from the beginning that this will not be easy and I will have to face tough battles with the Yetzer Harah, I am willing to fight and I will never ever give up, no-matter what happens, and I am confident that I will win.

And I end with a plea to you, Hashem. For I realize that without your help I am unable to properly do Teshuvah. I therefore ask of you that now that I have pierced a hole the size of a needlepoint, you widen it like the opening of the Ulam.

May we all be Zoche to Teshuva Shleima

-ykv

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by Binyomin5766 - 06 May 2009 13:13

I am just hoping that the times will work with my schedule. I would like to "try on" ;D the 12 steps, but finding a group near my location has been a little difficult. The one frum group is an hour away and meets at times that don't work with my job hours. If I can just do a phone conference, I won't have to do a long drive in addition to however long the meetings are. An hour or so I can handle; three hours or so once you add in the drive is problematic.

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by the.guard - 06 May 2009 13:34

This is getting exciting... So how do we start?

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by bardichev - 06 May 2009 17:34

wow I am weeping tears of joy to see your name on top of the chart

BMAKOM SHEBAALEI TESHUVA OMDIN...

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by the.guard - 06 May 2009 17:38

In Yakov's Zechus, I added a new column to the Wall of Honor chart that keeps track of the day you made it onto the chart!

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 06 May 2009 19:16

Today is a happy day as I reflect on the past and realize how much I have grown. I thank Hashem for giving me strengths that I always desired to exercise but could never quite figure out how to do it. I now look to the future, with simcha, for continued everlasting growth.

I want to thank everyone that gave me a mazel tov today and in the past few days. I have received a few personal messages from people on this site. And each one of them was really very touching. Some of you may have already figured out that I am a very emotional person. And the thought of the fact that we have created this network of friendship is so special, it

makes me want to cry.

I want to thank everyone that cheered me on all the way through. In my first post in this thread, I wrote, "Anyone reading this who feels moved or has encouraging words or words of advice, please share them with me. It will give me chizuk to know that I can give chizuk to others. It gives me chizuk knowing that others want me to succeed and want to give me chizuk. So please do not refrain from even the smallest comment. You never know how far your words can reach. ". Let me tell you guys, your words reached great heights. Your words penetrated deep within my heart. I cannot quite put my finger on why this site is powerful, but it is.

I want to thank everyone on this site for working together as we accomplish the same goal; bringing kedusha to this world.

I want to thank Rabeinu HaGuard for everything that he has done for us; for putting this site up; for organizing it with tons of info; for creating this forum; for writing emails everyday; for constantly giving each one of us chizuk; and the list goes on. But most importantly, thank you for caring for another Yid, all L'Sheim Shamayim. He literally puts endless amount of hours into this site, all so that another yid can succeed. A yid that he does not know and he will never know. You are really makayim the last of the 12 steps, as Boruch explained so beautifully.

Guard, you have given me so much. I do not even know how much you gave me. Thank you!

My only message to all the readers is stick to this site. Do not run away. Do not just read, please post. Don't be scared of failure. Don't be scared to share what is on your mind. This could be the secret to your success.

I look forward to sharing with all your simchas.

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by the.guard - 06 May 2009 19:31

Did you see today's Chizuk e-mail Yakov? It was all yours!

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 06 May 2009 19:36

yes, of course I read it. I always read the chizuk emails. Thank you for sharing my thoughts with the public. It is in zechus of your site that I am able to write what I write and grow the way I am growing. Thank you!

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by yetzertov - 07 May 2009 05:01

Shalom Aleichem, Reb Yakov

This is the first time I post in your site. But this is perhaps the 100th time I have visited it . I have to tell you that I am taken aback not only by your determination to get to the bottom of things but by your clarity of thought and a mamesh humble spirit. Reading your posts made me feel humble and I took it as a challenge that I could also prevail and I thank you for that. As promised I have two amazing quotes from our chachamim regarding these issues.

As I mentioned in a post to Ezra, the main thing is not to feel at all that our personal worth is diminished because of this problem. Aderraba, just the opposite. This matter has been difficult for the Yiden since Matan Torah. Just look at this RAMBAM (Hilchos Issurei Bi'ah, perek 22, halacha 18):

"There is nothing in the entire Torah that is more difficult for the majority of people than to separate themselves from sexual misconduct and the arayos. When the Yiden were commanded regarding forbidden sexual relations, they wept and accepted this mitzvah with complaints and moaning as implied by the phrase "Crying among their families", which means "Crying about family matters".

Obviously we are in good company. This Y'H was implanted on us SOLELY FOR THE

PURPOSE OF OVERCOME IT.

The stronger the Y'H, the greater is your neshama potential to overcome it.

The next is a most amazing story about those that emerge victorious from their fight against the menuval, brought in a Rashi in Sanhedrin 31b (I am transcribing the English translation provided in the Feldheim's edition of the Rambam's hilchos teshuva, page 21) I myself have a personal story about this quote, and feel free to PM me if you would like me to share it:

"Sanhedrin 31b mentions Nathan bar Ukvah as a classic example of a Baal Teshuva. Rashi's commentary relates his story, explaining that he was strongly attracted to a married woman. His desire for her was so powerful that he became sick and had to be confined to bed.

Once this woman suffered a series of financial losses and was in dire need of money. She sent a word to Nathan that if he would lend her the money, she would consent to his wishes. He eagerly did so.

When she came to him, he was suddenly overcome by the fear of G-d and sent her home untouched. Afterwards, his face shone with a

G-dly light which the Sages compared to the rays of Moshe's countenance"

Yakov, there is no question that your face is also shining.

Hatzlacha rabba, and may Hashem provide you and all the Yiden with the strength to do Teshuva Shleima and to bring the Geulah.

YosefYakov

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 07 May 2009 18:30

yosefyakov,

Thank you so much! You have been such a source of inspiration for me since you joined us. Your story is so powerful for many reasons. I really appreciate the two sources you sent me. That Rambam is a source of consolation for us, as you stated. I have never seen the second source before and it is truly amazing. That is one I hope to read from time to time. Thank you!

I have to tell you something. When you share with me these sources you are not just providing me with info, you are providing me with life. You are providing me with YOUR life, which in turns gives me life. Your emotions and experiences is what brings the dry words to life and makes them real. You have now transferred that feeling to me, and I get life! Thank You!

Regarding your personal story, I would love to hear it. So, expect a PM from me!

B"H, today was an amazing day! If I have time, I will write about it later.

May we all be zoche for the our faces to shine like the rays of Moshiach's countenance!

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by yetzertov - 10 May 2009 19:10

Yakov, thanks for your devarim hayotzim min halev...

I just read your recent in the "vitory" post. I just would like to share some, I think, daunting words explicitly supporting your comments. I apologize for the somewhat long divrei torah, but I am sure that you and the chavura will appreciate and internalize it. This article was written by Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson and taken from algemeiner.com

The paradox

The composition of the Torah portion named "Acharei" in the book of Leviticus, is probably one of the most puzzling in the entire Chumash (the five books of Moses), as it blends splendid holiness with grotesque profanity.

The portion (Parshas Acharei, Leviticus chapters 16-18) is basically divided into two sections. The first half of the portion deals with the holiest and most spiritual day in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur, and its magical ingredient for renewal. It discusses that rare moment, occurring once a year, when the holiest man of Israel, the High Priest, would enter the holiest space on earth, the chamber in the Temple known as the "Holy of Holies" where he would perform special services. This day was designated to bring atonement, cleansing and healing to the Jewish people and to the entire world.

Yet, soon after this, the Bible moves on to caution us against vulgar expressions of intimacy.

"Do not follow the ways of Egypt where you once lived, nor of Canaan, where I will be bringing you," states the Torah (1). It then proceeds to enumerate a long list of sexual activity from which a human being should abstain, including intimate relations with one's father or mother, siblings, uncles and aunts, very close relatives, other married women, etc.

Finally, the Torah concludes (2), "Do not perform any sexual act with an animal... A woman shall likewise not give herself to an animal and allow it to mate with her. This is an utterly detestable perversion."

"Do not let yourself be defiled by any of these acts... You shall not cause the land to vomit you out when you defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was there before you."

How does one understand the juxtaposition between these two extremes -- Yom Kippur and immoral relations.

Wrong time, wrong place?

This same anomaly plays itself out, rather dramatically, on the holy day of Yom Kippur itself.

On the morning of this awe-inspiring day, we read the first section of this particular Torah portion, dealing with the sanctity of Yom Kippur and its special services. But then, during the afternoon service of Yom Kippur -- as the holiest day is drawing close to its peak moments -- we read the second half of this section, dealing with the above mentioned laws of sexual profanity.

The question is strikingly dramatic:

You are standing in the Synagogue during the holiest day of the year, enveloped in white (3). You haven't enjoyed a morsel of food or a drink for close to twenty-four hours. This is the day in which we are compared to angels (3), the one time during the year in which we attempt to transcend our bodies and become, for 24 hours, all soul. Yom Kippur is an island in time; an oasis of transcendence, a taste of another world.

What must your ears pay heed to during these most spiritually charged moments of the year? Not to cheat on your wife, not to violate your mother, and not to be intimate with your cow! Is this what the sages thought was on our minds on Yom Kippur standing and meditating in Shul?

Is Yom Kippur not the one time a year we would expect people to be thinking about other, more lofty, ambitions?

The enigma is increased significantly as we often read this portion following the Passover holiday. You have celebrated seven or eight days of psychological and spiritual liberation, and what do you have to hear about the following Sabbath? Warnings against full-fledged human degeneration!

The moment after

The answer to this question may be discovered in the very name of the Torah portion, "Acharei," which means "after." In Judaism, a name is significant, as it says something about the soul of the individual who carries this name (4). Similarly, the name of each Torah portion embodies the soul and the inner message of the entire portion.

In our case, however, the name of the portion, "after," seems absolutely meaningless. It's certainly not connected in any way with the actual content of the portion!

Yet it is here where we come to observe one of the most meaningful lessons in the Jewish approach to morality and spirituality. You may be flying high in heaven; your heart may be melting away in celestial ecstasy; your soul may be ablaze with a sacred fire and your heart may be swelling with inspiration. Yet you must remember that in one day from now or in one month from now as circumstances alter, you may find yourself in the muck, tempted toward profane and immoral behavior. Thus, at this critical moment of an inner spiritual explosion, you must stock up the resolve and commitment to retain your integrity during your lowliest moments that may lay ahead.

By juxtaposing splendid holiness with grotesque profanity, the Torah is teaching us that no matter how sublime you may feel at a particular moment in your life, you must remember the moment "after," the brute and beastly temptations that might emerge at a later point, under different circumstances. Never believe that what you have now will be yours forever. The tremendous holiness of Yom Kippur is only real if it will effect the "after" (as the name of the Torah portion), if it will leave its mark on the days and months that follow that may bring with them abominable urges and cravings that you could have not dreamt of during your high moments.

On the other hand, the Bible is teaching us that holiness is not reserved for those extraordinary individuals who manage to transform their hearts into heaven's mirror. As Judaism sees it, it is that very same human being who is capable of engaging in repulsive promiscuity and must be warned against it -- who can discover the light of G-d contained in the depth of his consciousness, and enter into his own "holy of holies."

The Ladder

This was also the secret behind Jacob's Ladder, "A ladder standing on the ground and its top reaching heaven (5)." Judaism is not so impressed with a soul that resides in the heavens. It is far more moved by a human ladder that is so deeply etched in the grit and gravel of earth, yet still looks up toward heaven. Even when you think of yourself as the embodiment of earthiness, remember that you are forever linked with heaven.

And conversely, even when you are standing in the deepest heavens, you ought to never forget that part of you is still very earthy (6). This will ensure that when you do fall, a little piece of heaven will still remain with you in the abyss.

(This essay is based on a talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Motzei Shabbas Acharei 5738, May 6, 1978 (7)).

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#### Footnotes:

- 1) Leviticus 18:1-30.
- 2) Ibid. 23-28.
- 3) See Ramah and Schulchan Aruch Harav Orach Chaim section 610.
- 4) The Talmud tells of the great sage Rabbi Meir who would gain insight into the character of human beings as a result of knowing their names. Cf. Tanya section 2 chapter 1 and references noted in Likkutei Sichos vol. 15 p. 13. The Arizal teaches (Shaar Hagulgulim) that when parents name their newly born child, they become "prophets for the moment." G-d speaks through the parents, ensuring that the infant receives the name suited for his\her individual soul.
- 5) Genesis 28:12.
- 6) That is why the Talmud cautions (Niddah 30b), that "even if the entire world proclaims you as a tzaddik, a super-righteous individual, you should consider yourself [in some ways] like a Rasah, an evil man." What this means is, that even when you feel extremely pure, you must know that you may soon experiences all of the ugly cravings harbored regularly by an evil human being. You must know that though you feel healthy right now, you have an essential "heart-condition," as deep inside in your heart lingers a beast who may arise from his sleep at any given moment (Tanya chapter 13).

7) Published in Sichos Kodesh 5738 pp. 232-235.

It would be worthwhile to note that while the Rebbe was asking the question presented above -- how is it possible that when a Jew is standing in Shul in the midst of Yom Kippur wrapped in white, the Torah feels compelled to warn him against lowly promiscuous behavior? -- he wept bitterly, using the heartfelt Yiddish expression of "Gevald."

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory  
Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 11 May 2009 20:57

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yosefjakov,

Beautiful words. At a later point, I hope to share a personal experience that relates to this idea you conveyed.

For now, I would like to relate a nice idea.

### **Reflections at the medura(bonfire)**

As I stared at the medurah tonight, the music blared in my ears, my kids ran around with ice cream sticks, the fire roared high in front of me, a thought came to mind. We know that Lag B'Omer is Hod Sh'BHod. A lot can be said about each one of the midos, both from a nistar and a nigleh standpoint. I would like to explain what Hod means in terms of nigleh, based in the words of Rav Hutner, and explain how it related to us as addicts and baalei teshuvah.

Hod means growth through constriction. Many times in life growth can only come about after a low point. G-d's revelation in the worlds is referred to as Hod, because he is infinite and he constricts himself into the finite. This seems to be a bad thing. constriction and falling low is viewed as a weakness. But, the midah of Hod transforms that constriction into growth. Hashem's revelation in this world, albeit, a constriction leads to an ultimate purpose of growth and greatness.

But there is two facets to Hod. Number one, during the times of constriction, care must be taken not to fall lower. If a person who falls and constricts does not use Hod he can fall lower,

which is called ??????. So the midah of Hod means learning how to hold on tight when things are rough. But, number two, is taking that constriction and bringing forth growth, this is called ????. Through the Hod, a person can create the the ultimate beauty. This is true because what created beauty in this world is through extremes. A good artist knows how to contrast colors properly to bring upon beauty. A musician uses the contrasts of music notes to create beautiful compositions. So too, the eved hashem that uses the extremity of life by goind from lowest of the low to the highest of the high to grow, is called beautiful, Hadar.

This is so relevant for us for both reasons. When I look back at my life, as much as things were difficult with my addiction, I needed to hold on tight to Judaism. I did not feel like davening all the time. There were times, when I felt that I could not hack life anymore. I had to force myself to do mitzvos even though my heart was so terribly concealed and hard as a rock from my addiction. My emotional state was non-existent. G-d has pushed me in this low state, and I had to use Hod to hold on tight. I had to make sure not to make the downfall an endless pit. I needed to make sure that my problem remained isolated to addiction and not let it carry over to the rest of my life. And when I look back and realized that I remained true to the Torah and mitzvos despite these challenges, I am awed from my own self. This was Hod. Don't get me wrong. Things were not always gloomy. But when they were, it was a nes that I remained firm to the commandments.

And now when I reflect, I realize more. I began to appreciate that my past is an entrance to my future. I realize that I have grown from my state of constriction. I have learned a lot about life. I have learned a lot about human nature. I have learned a lot about honesty. I have learned a lot about Hashem. I have learned a lot what it means to be an eved hashem. And I realize I have potential for growth. Where I used to view my addiction as an impediment for growth, I realize it can serve to be an impetus for growth.

As I stared at the holy fires tonight, I realized how the fire itself has the midah of Hod. The Fire consumes and destroys. It is a destructive force in the world. However, the very act of destruction is constructive. The fire can create so much. When you look at the bottom of the fire, all you see is destruction. When you look above you see how high the flames can reach.

The rock bottom of of the addicted individual is destruction. Life is gloomy. There is no hope. All he can see is ashes. But through that force can come construction and growth. If you look up to the sky, your flames can reach great heights.

May we all be zoche to learn how to grow from our constriction!

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory  
Posted by bardichev - 11 May 2009 21:21

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Ykv

you still make me cry. You have a way of talking straight to my neshama.

if you are in meron chap a Tantz for me and all th yiddin here.

h&h

bardichev

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory  
Posted by yetzertov - 12 May 2009 23:17

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Ykv, your reflection really reached me. You are pure EMES. If you don't mind, I would like to take advantage of this and ask you to further elaborate on this that you wrote:

*Where I used to view my addiction as an impediment for growth, I realize it can serve to be an impetus for growth.*

*But through that force can come construction and growth.*

There is no doubt whatsoever that Hashem has accepted our Teshuva and that the aveiras stemming from our addictions are being erased. The question is how do we make up for the things done in the past and for the things we failed to accomplish? How do we go in converting our aveiros into zchuyos?

YY

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory  
Posted by the.guard - 13 May 2009 10:19

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I believe that when we use our addiction in the way Yakov described, as an impetus for growth, and when we learn how to give Hashem our hearts through this struggle, and through the very falls we had, we learn how to make better fences, and we learned the nature of the Yetzer hara and how to avoid him, and we learned how to help others who struggle as well, through our own past falls, then I believe that we are uplifting our past sins into zechuyos in a very real way. Chazal say the torah cannot be miskayem unless one was *nichshal bo techilah*. If we use the *nichshal bo* as the very "kiyum" of our Torah today, then the *nichshal bo* is uplifted too!

And that's the beauty of the fire that Yakov described...

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