

Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 29 Oct 2021 04:06

Dear Chevra,

After a few months of visiting this website and quietly gaining chizuk by reading the incredible posts from this community I've decided to speak up and introduce myself. Over the past couple of years I've become religious starting from an almost entirely non-religious past. Hashem's Torah has transformed my life and imbued me with a new and deep sense of purpose, and it is my greatest desire to live each day with a sense of purpose, perfecting myself and living in connection with and recognition of Hashem. My path in Torah has led me to face the matter of shemiras habris, and in this I've encountered a great challenge. After many failed attempts at breaking free, late into this past Elul I found the resolve to pull myself out of the pit again. Since then BH I have been clean for a couple of months, but I still struggle greatly with temptation. The last time I fell I learned two things: I am not in control, and, more than anything, I want to live a life of kedusha. These two acknowledgements shocked me out of my sleep, but alarmingly I can feel over time that the clarity I gained from my last fall is diminishing. So, I've decided to jump in here to reinvigorate my journey. I look forward to growing together with each of you!

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 07 Jun 2022 20:19

That brought a smile to my face HHM thank you

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 12 Jun 2022 05:10

Shavua tov all! I want to share a somewhat silly but helpful way I've been viewing growth in kedushas habris (this will likely only speak to sports fans, but maybe even to those who aren't). A lot of us have had periods of great success, followed by lows. Think of that athlete whose achievements inspire you and who is, when viewed in history, arguably the greatest of all time (for me it is Ayrton Senna, a truly transcendent formula 1 driver). Pretty much any athlete on the highest level will go through periods of sustained failure, where people doubt their ability, rumors circulate that they've peaked, and it seems like the slump won't end. What makes

champions, those who differentiate themselves from their peers, are the people who never forget that they are champions. They never show up just to play. They show up to win, and, if they ever lose the belief that they will win then it is better that they stay home, they are no longer athletes. If you're in a period of a low, think of yourself as a sleeping giant. Yes you have detractors, the rumor mill circulated by the yetzer hara is fulling, but internally you know you are a champion, one of the greats. You know you have the ability to rise again and your Coach has faith in you. He isn't going to drop you from the team, He knows what you can do and He is waiting for one of His star players to wake up and kick it back into high gear.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 13 Jun 2022 06:35

Very hard day today. One of those days where my neurochemistry just seemed to bottom out, everything because bleak and the cravings just were desperate. Baruch HaShem I made it through. One helpful thought came up that brought some optimism. Regarding the days where you can almost feel your brain crying out for dopamine, I found it helpful to liken it to stretching out a cramped and knotted up muscle. Stretching it hurts like crazy and you don't want to do it, but by tearing those muscle fibers you allow your muscle to restitch itself together in a healthier way. There's a certain satisfaction that came with visualizing and imagining the neural pathways being torn and rewired by the 'stretching' process.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 14 Jun 2022 04:05

Another hard day today, but clean. I don't want to be fighting a milchama, without a doubt my most successful periods have been when I had clarity on the harmful effects of lust/shmutz, was busy with positive things, and was simply glad not to be doing it. But, my life circumstances right now have me pretty hamstrunged (very high fatigue from work and other difficult circumstances associated with a transitional period of life I am in right now), and I am just really in the fight currently.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 15 Jun 2022 04:10

Much more positive day than I have been having as of late. I front loaded my day with positive activities and by the time I got to my workplace, which is just one big nisayon, I was able to say no thank you I've got bigger things on my mind.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 17 Jun 2022 01:40

I had some interesting reflections on mindset today. Not sure why it occurred to me, but I was thinking about the fact that islamic terrorists purportedly believe in the next world they will receive as a reward a harem of women to please them. It struck me that there's something extremely silly about this belief (beyond its already obvious silliness). I have no idea what goes on in the head of someone like that, but it sounds like they think "Granted I cannot have this thing now. But, if I do what G-d says then I will be able to have it in the next life." It's silly, because this totally misses the boat in terms of understanding the structure Hashem has put in place. Hashem doesn't forbid something to us (like lustful and hedonistic behavior) because, although really it is a good thing, He wants to test us and will give us that very thing to us as a reward later on. Rather, what He forbids to us really just is bad for us, and He wants us to grow beyond those lower desires and come to desire the best thing of all, a true and genuine relationship with Hashem. That's why the belief of islamic extremists is just so silly and off. They don't see beyond this base desire and conceive of something far greater and more significant.

In a smaller and less overtly ridiculous way, this is something I realized I have not been working on as of late and I think it's been the cause of a lot of my difficulty. The idea that indulging in lust is actually a fantastic thing, and I am missing out on something. The subconscious hope that maybe it isn't really forbidden, or maybe at some point it will become permitted. The feelings of crankiness and deprivation on account that I cannot have this thing. The sense that this ultimately is what I machshiv and I can't see beyond it. BH today I took a small step towards moving beyond this today.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by sleepy - 17 Jun 2022 05:32

[committed_togrowth wrote on 17 Jun 2022 01:40:](#)

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now that you mentioned it, it is funny. a religion that promises you if you do the will of G-d ,you will granted a reward that essentialy is that youll be able to be a pervert without any restrictions! wow!

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 22 Jun 2022 02:29

30 days BH, feels good to have some breathing space

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 27 Jun 2022 06:27

I was to share something embarrassing that happened (I invite you to laugh) as I think there is a lesson to take away from it. A few days ago, I forgot exactly when, I was working a very long day. Sometimes I work these 12-13 hour days in isolation where I have to do simple repetitive tasks on a regimented schedule for long periods of time. I usually listen to a bunch of shuirim during these days, but eventually my mind runs out of juice and to keep the morale up I like to put on nostalgic kids shows in the background when things start to get tough (yes this is a bit silly but it helps me). I got to the point in the day where I was feeling super wiped and lonely, so I turned on the background tv to help distract while working.

It happens to be that the G rated cartoon I had on showed women in bathing suits and, given the state I was in, I got triggered. My mind went into frenzy mode, and I thought "I have to see

those images again." I actually tried to search around for images of these cartoon women from a child's show like a mad man, and it seemed I was ready to fall. Then, it really struck me how incredibly pathetic this all was. I am a yid and an eved Hashem, but even at the most basic level I am a man that purports to have life goals, a sense of priority, self-control, an aspiration for higher things. Was I really going to throw away all of those things away over cartoon images? Is that all it takes for me to fall apart? What would that make me?

?While there was something viscerally silly and alarming about nearly falling to a child's cartoon, I realized the same principle applies to women I see on the street. Do I really want to be someone who gets blown over like a blade of grass? Am I really so shrimpy that I will abandon my values to stare at women, even young high school students in the city who don't even know any better yet?

I'm not typing all of this out to be hard on myself. But becoming acutely aware of how low my behavior actually is (or I would like to say was) has helped me break my pattern a bit and set a higher standard for myself. Not necessarily for a deep philosophical reason, but because at face value it is a low and debasing way to behave.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by frank.lee - 27 Jun 2022 07:20

Hey CTG - great point!

I use a similar tool when on a bus and I watch the driver ogle/stare at women getting off the bus or whatever, (instead of me looking at her) - it gives me the perspective of how low it looks, helps me not do that...

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by Markz - 27 Jun 2022 17:23

[frank.lee wrote on 27 Jun 2022 07:20:](#)

Hey CTG - great point!

I use a similar tool when on a bus and I watch the driver ogle/stare at women getting off the bus or whatever, (instead of me looking at her) - it gives me the perspective of how low it looks, helps me not do that...

Time to get rid of the out dated Google Drive and download the 2.0 oggle drive, it has a ton more storage capacity and other features!

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 30 Jun 2022 02:18

300 cumulative clean days today, thank you Hashem. Working on kedusha will inevitably bring highs and lows, the joy of success and the pain of momentary failure. But the process is undoubtedly, 100% worth it.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 05 Jul 2022 14:54

Can someone let me know how to update the days counter on the new site? I haven't figured it out. I fell yesterday unfortunately. I'm in a situation and environment currently which is a big challenge for me spiritually. As long as everything goes to plan my life will change and improve dramatically in the next year or so, but while I am in this situation I need to learn how to rise to the challenge and I haven't done it yet. This is a process and I'm not at the end.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by Lchaim Tovim - 05 Jul 2022 17:40

[committed_togrowth wrote on 05 Jul 2022 14:54:](#)

Can someone let me know how to update the days counter on the new site? I haven't figured it out. I fell yesterday unfortunately. I'm in a situation and environment currently which is a big challenge for me spiritually. As long as everything goes to plan my life will change and improve dramatically in the next year or so, but while I am in this situation I need to learn how to rise to the challenge and I haven't done it yet. This is a process and I'm not at the end.

Click on the icon in the top right corner (to the right of the donate button) then hit "my progress". Hatzlocha on dealing with the challenges coming your way. So awesome that your getting right back up.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 07 Jul 2022 04:35

Fell twice more since my last fall. This is certainly the lowest I have been since starting the journey. It's odd because externally things seem to be improving for me. My learning is going better than it ever has, I've really felt called to the Torah, and I've felt some very positive internal changes and perspective shifts taking place. I've been going for runs regularly. I've cleared off a long-looming list of financial chores/life responsibilities that have been causing anxiety for months. I've been reaching out regularly to friends and family, maintaining the relationships that are important to me. And then...came this collapse. I don't have clear thoughts on it yet. But, I've realized that despite the work I am doing on the various spheres of my life, there is still a fundamental unhappiness and lack of alignment. I am actually quite bitter about my current life circumstance! This I believe is a root cause for my collapse.

I went through a process this past winter that broke me psychologically. I came out of it with a shattered confidence, self-doubt, and persistent anxiety as I have never experienced it before. I have never struggled with these psychological aspects previously in my life (thank G-d), and to the contrary these areas have historically been my strengths. I am having to put myself back together in a new way without drawing on the psychological solidity I used to rely on. The objective reality is that the external difficulties have in large part passed, baruch Hashem. And

yet, I myself have not let them go. I hold on to them and use them as a reason to be unhappy, to go through my day feeling like I am in the wrong place and in the wrong circumstance. I've realized that I carry around the narrative of my own difficulties every hour of the day. I feel anger towards the stresses and anxieties I feel I am a victim of, and it makes me hostile and angry towards my own life. The only thing I have as a clear reflection right now is I need to accept my life, and to connect with Hashem and find simchah where I am. This is my path and this is where Hashem wants me to be right now, that much is clear to me.

On the practical level, I have taken three new measures towards freedom. My falls were caused by an unfiltered work computer which I have many chances to become secluded with. To that end I have taken a knas to destroy \$100 if I use that computer for anything that isn't completely essential work. Day one of that knas went well, there were large taivas to use the computer but I simply didn't feel it was worth it. That in and of itself was an interesting point to me, to see that this desire which so dominates my mind is actually worth less than \$100 dollars. In contrast, I wouldn't sell a single one of my mitzvos for any sum of money, so that was helpful in terms of clarifying the actual value of positive vs. negative acts. Second, I've created strict screen time controls on my computer and had a friend set the password. It turns out there was a hole abyss of shmutz I still had access to through computer apps without even knowing it. It is amazing how the yetzer hara can bring to your attention a huge blind spot in your defenses during the time of a nisayon. Lastly, I've started the flight to freedom course, it was nice to see Rabbi Shafier is involved in the classes there.

I don't feel yeiush right now although I have in the past. It struck me that there is something incoherent and strange about walking around feeling like life is over. I don't have any idea how Hashem makes His calculation of our merits and failures. But, it is a fundamental assumption of mine that life must be ultimately fair and make sense. Walking around broken and depressed on account of this failure simply does not fit into that picture. While this is the lowest I believe I have fallen thus far, I will b'ezras Hashem rise.

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