

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 Vehkam - 05 Apr 2022 03:40

So sorry for your disappointment at work. I have a lot of anxiety when I am perceived as making mistakes at work and although I believe I do a good job, I can start doubting myself very quickly.

It is obvious that when this happened to you you went to your "safe place" As you continue along your journey as you will find and prepare safe places that are healthier.

It is important to see the difference between acting on urges which this was probably not; and using p&m to cover up pain - which this probably was. If you learn to recognize and identify your pain early on it will be easier to avoid the p&m that you are using as an escape.

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Re: Living a holy life
Posted by Shtarkandemotional - 05 Apr 2022 05:00

[committed_togrowth wrote on 05 Apr 2022 01:59:](#)

I regret to inform the chevra that I fell today. It was a miserable process from start to finish. I had a large public failure at work, then had to conduct 9 hours of work in what is essentially a closet where a particular instrument is located. This instrument feeds into an unfiltered computer. A large psychological trigger for me is being perceived as incompetent at work, and my mind unfortunately crumbled today under the stress. I did not have the mental resources to handle the day.

As I believe shtark said elsewhere on the forums, if someone falls apart after losing a long streak who are they really serving? G-d or themselves? I will not stop fighting this fight until I am victorious.

You are doing amazing. Think of it like any other mitzvah! Meaning, it's completely normal at times to mess up and our goal is to just get better and better through understanding our journey and growing and better planning. So there's nothing to feel bad about because it's expected. It's normal. At this point by now, you retrained your brain so one slip won't effect much if you quickly get back up! If you would ask me, I'd add another ten days to your previous streak since you have an opportunity to grow so much from this slip and the insight you can gain it's worth 10 days and probably much more. I'm davening for you that you don't fall into the perfectionism pit and ch"v think your back to square one! Your in a new place and this fall won't effect you one bit if you get up right away. Think about it.. if you continue strong for the next 100 days you think you'll feel the interruption between the two sets of 100 days? NO! Because small slips don't effect us much if we get right back up! Let's get moving! :-)
Hatzlacha buddy your an inspiration! If I can add one last thing.. in fact getting up strong at a time of slip/fall is a real strength it shows your dedication to keeping Hashems torah! That in itself is a gigantic zchus and kiddush hashem!

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Re: Living a holy life
Posted by Hashem Help Me - 05 Apr 2022 11:10

Ditto to what everyone wrote above, just make sure to celebrate those 100 days.... Awesome

accomplishment - and it was done in a most healthy way.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 05 Apr 2022 20:56

Thank you guys, each of your words have really uplifted me. Vekham, that is a very helpful distinction to make, actually one that I have not considered before. I'm going to think this week about how to make an actual "safe space" at work in case my brain goes into crisis mode again. Maybe it can be something simple like a drawer in my desk with a chocolate bar and a note to myself in it to call my mom that I go to when the extreme stress kicks in. Sounds a bit funny but I think that might work for me.

Shtark, it is very helpful to think of this in the manner I would any mitzvah. BH I am not falling into the perfectionist decline in much part to your perspective you have shared here and in the past. This morning I made sure to double down and be very strong in limud haTorah as a counter measure to any possible decline/depression, and I'm going to keep that dial turned up a . I'm confident this was a blip in my journey that will push me to raise my bar higher.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 11 Apr 2022 06:13

Hi all,

Holding well BH. Just posting a stream of conscious here to help digest some things, feel free to read or skip over it (it will be about my recent fall, no graphic language but maybe skip if you're easily triggered).

I'm not dwelling on my recent fall, this really is to my surprise as I have a strong tendency towards perfectionism. BH despite that nature I'm not reducing myself or the work I've done to a number next to my username.

With that being said I do want to unpack a bit what happened during that fall. The first step was, I realized that I was in an unprotected situation and suddenly free of my gedarim. Then, I had a very large stress trigger. I believe the absence of my gedarim allowed me to subtly abdicate responsibility. "What can I do? This is a crazy situation, it's not really my fault if I fall, success can't be expected." I think abdicating responsibility was really the thing that opened the flood gates and made room for the fall to happen, I rationalized not fighting and just letting my guard down.

The next few steps were very painful. First I opened a browser window to try to search for something highly inappropriate. But, I couldn't think of anything that wouldn't cause me to just be out and out disgusted. At the time, I completely, truthfully did not want to see nudity. I spent five to ten minutes trying to think of something I would find appealing, but I couldn't do it and I closed the browser. What happened next was paradoxical. I wanted to fall, but I didn't want to see shmutz. I don't even really know how to explain that. So, I googled very borderline stuff. Then, very deliberately I started to ramp up my search until I was looking at pretty much the real deal. At this point really I felt severe sadness, and I felt it in my chest. It felt like I was stick a knife slowly in. But I kept firing shot after shot at myself, looking at another image and then another, chipping down and breaking the part of myself that wanted no part in this act at all. Finally, that part of me broke and I fell.

I think this is one of the strongest experiences of cognitive dissonance I've experienced. At the same time that I was hounding after content on the computer I was thinking what on earth even is this. Why am I looking at the most intimate aspect of a human being publicly displayed in the most exploitative way possible? It's bizarre. And what is up with the dark hunger to consume it? It's not a part of my waking consciousness. It doesn't exist in my self image. In short, it is not me.

That's my main take away from the fall. Simply, doing this is not me. I'm a nice and respectful person. I care about decency and I want to do good. I know the nature of our relationship to the yetzer hara and the yetzer tov is a complex subject and in truth I'm totally unqualified to say anything on it. But I can't help concluding from this experience that really, we are the yetzer tov. In order to do bad we have to betray ourselves. We have to shrink ourselves down and put our real self in a box. We have to become someone else. The experience hurt but by sharp contrast it did draw into clarity who I really am. Time to move forwards, and please pardon the stream of thought.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by Vehkam - 11 Apr 2022 12:32

Very thoughtful post. What stood out to me was that you wrote that you had a very large stress trigger- that is obvious what was driving your yetzer hara. It kept telling you that in order to calm yourself down you just need to numb yourself for a few minutes etc....

If you are able to change your thought process and turn towards hashem when these stresses hit (e.g. Tehillim, davening, throwing yourself into a sugya) instead of trying to numb yourself - then you will find these stresses will actually help you grow and become closer to hashem.

Obviously this is a high level but is attainable and something you can reach if you strive for it especially given the depth of your introspection.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 11 Apr 2022 16:52

Thank you Vehkam, that sounds like an amazing goal. I would like to work towards this. Could you share what sort of things you do to make your stress responses bring you towards Hashem? Is it as simple as having a sefer Tehillim (or something of the like) near you and deciding in advance to reach for it if the stress hits? I notice it's very hard for me to daven and connect when I don't have a clear mind. Stress scatters me and so I reach for the lowest hanging fruit. Climbing upwards in that state has to be quite a feat although I believe you that it is possible. Thank you for your insight!

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by Vehkam - 11 Apr 2022 18:41

yes, it can be as simple as that. depending on the person. everyone is different. However, it takes preliminary work. You have to really internalize the fact that the ultimate goal is to connect to hashem and that hashem loves you more than it is possible to imagine. Once you internalize that, connecting to hashem in any concrete way becomes the ultimate stress relief.

i also experienced many years in which i could not daven well. My thoughts were scattered, i had a lot of guilt, i didn't think my tefilos were important or worthwhile, i was a hpyocrite etc... all the things that can come to mind.

At some point i changed my perspective. i started to daven to hashem to give me the desire to daven. eventually my tefilos grew from there. Korov hashem lchol ko'rov, lchol asher.. b'emes. If you recognize that the "emes" is that you really want to do the right thing, you can use that to daven. "hashem, i want to be close to you but i am just not feeling it". this has worked tremendously for me.

sorry i am eating, working and responding at the same time but i hope this makes sense...

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Re: Living a holy life
Posted by committed_togrowth - 12 Apr 2022 00:14

your answer certainly makes sense. I'm going to think about how I can internalize this. I'm spending time with shaar bitchacon recently but not regularly, I think a first step is I'll make that a regular seder (just 10-15 minutes per day).

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Re: Living a holy life
Posted by Vehkam - 12 Apr 2022 00:21

Tax season will do that to me!

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Re: Living a holy life
Posted by 5Uu80*cdwB#^ - 12 Apr 2022 12:29

[committed_togrowth wrote on 11 Apr 2022 06:13:](#)

I believe the absence of my gedarim allowed me to subtly abdicate responsibility. "What can I do? This is a crazy situation, it's not really my fault if I fall, success can't be expected."

Thank you for this post. I think it's a very astute observation that you recognize that once you decided you weren't in control of your actions, then you were able to proceed without hinder.

It seems like so much emphasis on filters has made many people feel like they are utterly helpless and ????? the second a loophole is found or they are not in front of a screen but rather walking down a street and something pops up. (I actually heard this observation, too, in a shiur that was posted here on GYE from a mashgiach in Yerushalyim, pardon me for forgetting his name at the moment).

I think we all need to emphasize to ourselves that filters are nothing more than a guardrail. EXTREMELY important, but they are just a guardrail on a mountain road. We ultimately are responsible for our decisions even when they guardrail goes down for some reason (may it never happen).

Keep on growing!

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Re: Living a holy life
Posted by Vehkam - 12 Apr 2022 13:45

Rabbi stark

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Re: Living a holy life
Posted by committed_togrowth - 12 Apr 2022 14:20

Well said!

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 13 Apr 2022 03:13

Very difficult battle today, I held on by a thread. Felt like I had no daas and was operating exclusively on panic stemming from a basic unwillingness to take on even another minute of my day. Not very much unlike a 3 year old having a meltdown at the grocery store! Climbing back on the horse is proving harder than I thought it would be, but I am climbing up.

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