

Chooseurnames 90 day trip

Posted by Chooseurname - 11 Oct 2023 20:09

Hello,

I was not going to try for 90 days now. Over yamim noraim I was mekabel just an hour a day to be careful - a machsom l'aynayim. I thought that was where I was holding and it was something I could build real growth on. However, when I heard over yom tov what happened in E"Y I decided I could do more klal yisroel. So here I go for 90 days whatever it takes.

I'm going to try hard to check in daily as I think it'll be really helpful.

It's a good time to start because with all the yom tov I kinda shook loose of some unhelpful habits. On the other hand, I'm glued to my computer following the news so not so great. I wish I could backdate this streak to before Rosh Hashana but alas it was interrupted...

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip

Posted by redfaced - 14 Jun 2024 18:51

[chosemyschem wrote on 14 Jun 2024 16:43:](#)

To clarify in response to Benhashembh and frank.lee's points.

Of course someone who is careful in halacha and "kedusha" is praiseworthy. And there are holy people who are very stringent with shemiras einayim and that's beautiful.

But that guy taking off his glasses in the street is (likely) doing so as a chumra - as an expression of fear of sin that's (hopefully) coming from love/fear of Hashem. I'm not that guy.

I can't look in the street because if I do, it's the first step in a sequence that I sometimes can't stop (or at least, is very difficult for me to stop once the lust train picks up steam.) Not every time I take a second look does it drag me down a path of lust culminating in . . . Most times it doesn't. And stopping at the third look isn't so tough. But that happens sometimes.

So while I understand the pump-up mussar and all, I still sometimes feel like I'm living on a sub-optimal plane. And because it was Shavous I was thinking of that in the framework of having misaligned myself from the Torah. And so my comforting thought was that even with my sickness/screw-ups/struggles, a Torah life is available on my level.

I hope that made sense.

Well guess what . Bh I am in a good enough place that even if I look It will bezh not bring me further. Yet the streets are still torture. Constant vigilance is not just a motto. If you are able to have that convo with yourself and than win, than you are in a waaay better place than all those that pause for a 2nd and 4th look.

You are miles ahead because you know what your fighting for

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by BenHashemBH - 14 Jun 2024 19:21

[chosemyschem wrote on 14 Jun 2024 16:43:](#)

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misaligned myself from the Torah. And so my comforting thought was that even with my sickness/screw-ups/struggles, a Torah life is available on my level.

I hope that made sense.

Mitoch shelo lishma ba lishm and give yourself more credit. I don't know about everyone, but I'm here because I started on the sub-optimal plane. I still have a foot there, and the other is rising for the next step up. That guy's fear of sin is a chumra and your fear of sin is more metzius. Do you really think you're not coming from the right place when you struggle and decide for any reason to try and do the right thing? If you were CV misaligned from the Torah, it would likely not effect you so deeply. This is where it begins. Hatzlacha and have a beautiful Shabbos!

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by frank.lee - 15 Jun 2024 21:23

I'm not sure I understand. Are you saying that there is an issue, and a yh, to look, get pleasure from looking, stare, multiple looks etc. and there is another level where such sights can trigger a chain of acting out? If that is what you mean, yes, I assume the Tzadik is dealing with they yh to look, maybe have some improper or jealous thoughts, and that's it. That is what I meant, that every or plenty of men have this yh. But yes, maybe you have a secondary issue, and BeH you will be able to move up from that level.

Shavua tov!

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by chosemyshem - 16 Jun 2024 19:03

Some really great points guys. Thought about this some more, and had a convo with the illustrious Shevayipol too that clarified some of what I'm thinking about.

Standard disclaimer: These are just my thoughts that I'm throwing on the page. If you disagree then by all means, shoot back.

But let's talk about "street looking." There's three types of street looking: 1) seeing a woman in the street, 2) staring at a woman in the street (we'll call this "looking") and 3) going to the street to look at women (this last one might include someone who davka gets excited by ogling women in public - some flavor of a peeping tom thing.) I'm not talking about this last category - that guy's suffering from lust and just coincidentally engaging in his sickness in the place people suffer with other problems.

But let's talk about the first two types of people. I see alot of brothers bemoaning the streets, and I've done my fair share of that, but without being specific about what the issues are on the streets. So let's get overly analytical here for a minute.

Kodem kol, there's an issur of lo susuru. Unfortunately, for most of us here, that's probably not a factor that's currently weighing too heavily into our equations. If you're someone who is tortured on the streets because you're terrified of being oiver on a chelek of this aveira then I have a lot of respect for you, but not a lot to say. I, and I think many here would agree with this, am basically a living example of repeating an averiah until it becomes like mutar. That's not justifying transgressing the aveira, and to whatever chelek I can work on not being oiver the aveira I will, but that's not what is causing me pain on the streets.

Again, we're not excused from adhering to this mitzva, but thinking about the mitzva doesn't seem to affect our ability to stop, and the pain we feel is broader than the pain we feel when we transgress other mitzvos.

So back to the streets. Most "normal" people, likely are capable of seeing a woman without looking at her. And if she's an unusually eye-catching or attractive or immodest or just the right type of woman, maybe they'll look a little too. Now, looking is a flavor of indulging in lust. However, it's only taking a small sip of lust, and most people can manage their lust. So maybe they'll head home and let out their energy via the fourth kavana of the raavad, or maybe they'll just feel antsy and settle themselves down, but it won't shter them much.

Some people, however, have a harder time "seeing" without automatically "looking". This might be because they're such a sheltered bucher that any bit of skin is shocking and arousing (not saying that in a bad way. Just that some people are more sensitive for good reasons.) And it might be because they've spent so long throwing themselves into lust and sexualizing women that it's become habitual and hard to stop. But for these guys, seeing a women and not "looking" at her is tough.

Some people have a double chelek of bad luck (or bad life choices), and they also have trouble

managing lust. So they take that small sip of lust that is letting themselves look at a woman and maybe that grows and feeds on itself and demands more lust. Now, where that poorly managed lust will end up depends on the person, where they are holding in the struggle, and many other factors. But the point is once they've "looked" they've entered an area where things are harder to control.

And so here's a point finally. I think one thing that often pains us in the street is that we are trying to cut the cord between "seeing" and "looking". And for the person who hasn't seriously indulged in lust that's not necessarily a huge struggle, and the consequences of losing it are not major (at least, not in this world.) So most people aren't getting bent out of shape over it. Yeah, they listen to vayimaen or take off their glasses for religious growth, but failing at religious growth doesn't cause most people pain most of the time. And if it does cause them pain then it's either 1) healthy yiras shomayim or 2) religious OCD.

But we have a strong slippery slope between seeing and looking. So it's a tough fight. And when we lose that fight, we know we're playing with fire because we've seen where an indulgence in lust leads us. So it really hurts to lose the fight. Even if we know that this time it won't lead back to the hell we were in, it's a taste of that same fire. And that hurts.

And even if we win the fight, it was a tougher fight. And fighting is hard and painful. So that also hurts.

And so we have a few options. For the hypothetical normal fellow, it's probably a good idea not to get too bent out of shape over some seeing or even some looking. Because stressing over it is likely to lead only to more losses. I'm not sure if this mehalach is an option for someone struggling with lust.

And so what I'm trying to do these days is to cut off the struggle at the easiest point, and avoid seeing. While that usually is the least painless, it definitely can result in some neurotic behavior (as discussed above). But keeping my head down and thinking about something so I don't look up seems to be overall the least difficult option and involves the least struggling. (Of course sometimes I'll want to look. This is the third category initially listed above and is just a flavor of lust.)

Sometimes not seeing is not an option (driving, someone right next to you, looking for your wife outside of shul.) As discussed, seeing is not directly linked to looking, and sometimes nothing more will happen. But sometimes you get the drive to look at what you saw, and then it's a fight. And I'm not here to discuss how to fight that fight, but if you lose that fight maybe nothing more will happen. Maybe even most of the time. But sometimes, that sip of lust makes you thirsty. And once you're thirsty maybe the next woman you'll look harder, or you'll click away a little slower. And then before you know it you're riding the lust train straight to hell.

And I guess the part I was feeling down about was actually a familiar feeling. A feeling that I'll need more gedarim and fences than "normal" people. That if I mess up the consequences will be worse. It's a familiar feeling of inadequacy in this area (true or not, that's not the point). It's not a helpful feeling, but if I acknowledge it and accept that I'm okay with always being more on guard if that is what it takes to get clean, then it usually doesn't hang around and bother me.

Anyway. This was alot of words. But that's my take on looking on the street.

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by redfaced - 16 Jun 2024 19:11

[chosemyschem wrote on 16 Jun 2024 19:03:](#)

This was alot of words. .

I came to the same conclusion as you. I just did it waaaay before you.

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by chosemyschem - 16 Jun 2024 19:44

[redfaced wrote on 16 Jun 2024 19:11:](#)

[chosemyschem wrote on 16 Jun 2024 19:03:](#)

This was alot of words. .

I came to the same conclusion as you. I just did it waaaay before you.

Standard disclaimer: These are just my thoughts that I'm throwing on the page. If you disagree then by all means, shoot back

Disagreement- I'll learn something new. Agreement- doesn't help much.

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by BenHashemBH - 16 Jun 2024 19:51

[chosemyschem wrote on 16 Jun 2024 19:03:](#)

I, and I think many here would agree with this, am basically a living example of repeating an averiah until it becomes like mutar. That's not justifying transgressing the aveira, and to whatever chelek I can work on not being oiver the aveira I will, but that's not what is causing me pain on the streets.

Again, we're not excused from adhering to this mitzva, but thinking about the mitzva doesn't seem to affect our ability to stop, and the pain we feel is broader than the pain we feel when we transgress other mitzvos.

Do you think this could change? After implementing your necessary gedarim and adhering to them for a while, perhaps you will recover some sensitivity to this aveira of lo sasuru. It doesn't have to be high levels of yiras Shomayim, just a change in your personal standards as to what is and isn't ok as a standalone - whether it leads to worse things or not.

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by upanddown - 16 Jun 2024 22:04

[chosemyschem wrote on 16 Jun 2024 19:03:](#)

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Love what you wrote. That's the best, to fight the YH when it's still relatively "easy".

I also find ?????? ?????? a hard one. I absolutely love looking at girls (who doesn't?)

Here's one of the things I tell myself:

If every day, on my way home from work, I walk past a house that has an amazing smell of freshly fried steak, and I would looove to have it, but I it's not for me and I will definitely not get to eat any of the steak, isn't it sensible to avoid that street? Because if I don't, then I could get ill from it. Yes, the smell of a fresh piece of steak in itself is a great pleasure (similar to the pleasure of looking at those beautiful girls), but if I ain't getting the real thing (s*x) then I'm better off avoiding it. And if I continue walking past that house then I'm an idiot.

Keep up your great work,

??? ????,

Upanddown

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip

Posted by chaimoigen - 17 Jun 2024 05:32

Good stuff.

Two points:

1. Part of what you're saying reminds me of some of Dov's posts about how "unmanageable" means not being able to enjoy list without getting out of control. Doesn't have to come from being an addict. Can also come from habituation and having greased the pathway to perdition, as you're sayin'

2. The good news is that It gets easier. The rewiring helps. After a while that inadvertently seen slightly triggering sight does no longer trigger an avalanche of uneasiness and crashing red waves of lust. after a while clean a lot of guys find that it gets an lot easier.

Will it be that way for you? I cannot promise but the amount of good guys who have recorded that selfsame experience on this site makes me think it's highly likely.

And that means that keeping your head down at all times isn't a life sentence.

I have recently been in situations that have previously been extremely triggering, that bh now barely bother me.

I hope it will be thy way for you, too, friend.

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip

Posted by chosemyschem - 17 Jun 2024 14:14

The recognition that the stimulus/response reaction is screwed up (whether from seeing to looking or in the response to that sip of lust) 100% came from Dov's explanations on what powerlessness means.

I totally agree with BenHashem and CO that brains can be rewired and sensitivities regained. I've even seen that in myself to some extent. For example, once I put the skin tone filter/wizimage on for awhile I became shocked retroactively at the casual immodesty I had been allowing in my house. I put it on to avoid triggers. But once I got used to I realized how important it was regardless of "triggers". Just the level of dress in every news article, ad, linkedin post, whatever "kosher" browsing, is well below objective standards of what should be seen in a Jewish home and what is allowed under lo sasuru. But I was totally numbed to that until I was clean from it for quite awhile.

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by chosemyshem - 19 Jun 2024 16:17

Was thinking about the slippery slope nature of this struggle. And I guess one thing that hit me was that I want to stop for like a whole bunch of good reasons. But I need to stop because despite all those good reasons I can't stay stopped. And that lack of control is a taste of death.

So I wrote a little forecast of that taste of death. (It's little because I need to work.) I tried not to disasterify things. Just a natural progression of where I see this loss of control leading. Without further ado:

A TASTE OF DEATH

All the new staff at MedHomes Home For the Aged ("Voted #1 Place to Wait To Die") get a little intro tour. A more experienced staff member will take them around. They'll show 'em the coffee room, where the best place is to take a quiet break away from the residents, and they'll warn them about Room 302. "You'll want to be careful when you go into 302," they'll say. "Always leave the door propped open and have a buddy within shouting distance."

302 is Old Man Shem.

"Keep one hand free so you can block his hands" they'll warn. "He's feeble. But he gropes anything that moves."

But we're going too fast. How'd Shem end up in this cold room by himself? Well, old Man Shem is completely gaga now. Can't take care of himself. His kids, though they can afford to and some of them would even like to, can't keep him in their homes. Jim doesn't want to - Shem and him never really talked much after the divorce (but that's coming.) Sarah's got old beef and won't have Shem either (yeah we'll get there too.) The third kid, Rebecca, always loved her Daddy, no matter what. And her husband, Jason, is pretty chill. So they took in Shem when it became clear he couldn't take care of himself anymore. Sweet kids.

And that worked out pretty well for awhile. Shem's good at making the grandkids laugh - he's always been a bit of a clown. And he was pretty with it at the beginning. But when when Shem would forget who or where he was and loosen those fine reigns of control he held for so long, weird things would happen. Rebecca dealt with it when Shem masturbated in the living room. ("It's so sad, but the doctor said it's normal for someone in his condition" she whispered to Jason later that night. Jason gracefully agreed, though he thought that was pretty messed up.) And when he sat in the office watching porn (sound on baby!) while the kids were doing homework, they dealt with it. But it was what he did to Samantha that screwed things up.

As Jason told his youngest brother-in-law, Jerry, later: "Listen, I love your Dad. But he's dangerous. If I hadn't come in when I did, he would have raped his own granddaughter. Sammy has been crying nonstop. We just can't keep him in the house. Frankly, I don't want to see him for a long time either."

So off went Old Man Shem to a quiet little room where he could wait to die. He cried when he realized. And when he realized. And when he realized. But by now he doesn't realize often anymore.

"Sad," the new staff member will tut. And then move on.

And moving forward to that inevitable very awkward and emotionally messed up funeral will be too depressing. So let's move back in time instead. How far back can we rewind? To Shem's bochur years, watching movies and porn instead of night seder? To his early marriage? Too . . . real. Let's go back to July of 2024, when Shem left GYE for the third or fourth time.

We'll fast-forward (in a cute little montage) through a couple months of binging, quitting, binging and giving up to Elul of that year. The occasion? Shem's first business trip. Now, Shem's kinda given up, but he's a fighter. So he arranged a buddy and a chavrusa to keep him "clean". First

night goes well, but the second night his chavrusa ditches him. Shem's lying around in his hotel room, tired, feeling "urges" and grumpy. His wife's pissed at him and it's been a few days since he's gotten any action. He turns on the TV to distract himself.

[Yo, part of the chill of being an omniscient narrator is I get to do these really cool interludes. So let's tune into Mrs. Shem's mind:

I really don't like it that Shem's gone. It's so hard to take care of these kids without him to help with bedtime. And I wonder what he's doing out there all alone. I hope he's not doing anything inappropriate. Ever since I caught him looking at those disgusting things, I've never felt like he loved only me. And who knows what he could be doing out there by himself. Sigh. And why has he been so mad at me recently." And she cries, but just a little.]

Shem's found a good movie to distract himself. And wow is that female lead hot? Shem has a shot from the minifridge to numb that whiny voice in the back of his head. (we'll draw a curtain over the scene. But we know how it ends.) Shem told his wife the trip was fine. But etched in the stone of his heart he knows he's set a new pattern of behavior.

It's a couple months later, and Shem's on another trip. He feels confident - after all, he cried so much over Yom Kippur that he must be a new person. And he's back on GYE with 34 days clean.

By the fourth day of the trip, Shem's not feeling so confident anymore. He's out looking for the only kosher restaurant in Town, when he drives by a massage parlor. A thought crosses his mind, but he pushes it away and keeps on going toward the restaurant. A couple hours and a few beers later, Shem's sitting in his car outside the massage place shaking. He's never done anything with a "real person" before but something irresistible has taken hold of him. Shem sits in the car and cries, watching as his body opens the door and goes in . . .

Shem's wracked by guilt in the bright light of the next day. But we'll spare you the histrionics, the teshuva, the anger at himself that he takes out on his kids. Suffice it to say that three weeks later he's got a trip to the same place and ends up in the same bed.

And time goes on. Shem's being as good a father as he can be. Trying to be a good husband. And he's managing to keep porn and masturbation down to just a couple times a week. Still, his work is suffering due to his bi-weekly 3 hour porn binges. Eventually, the business needs to downsize and it's Shem who's let go. His boss apologizes. Tells him that he's a great employee and they're very sorry it came to this. But he's just not producing as much as the other guys and someone needs to go.

Shem is broken for a couple weeks. A bad couple weeks. Tells his wife he's going to look for work but spends the days in a strip club. First time going to a strip club in his own city, but he's not in control.

Eventually, a friend sets him up with a job. But this job has a little more traveling involved than the old one. His wife doesn't like it, but what choice do they have. Another thing this job has that his old one didn't: a really friendly secretary. She's a few years older than Shem, and honestly pretty ugly. But she's friendly and loves to schmooze with Shem.

And so before we talk about the new relationships Shem's working on, let's talk about the old ones. Shem's got 6 kids now, and loves them to bits. But somehow, just somehow, he's never gotten as close to them as they are to his wife. There's just something in his way. Shem wishes it wasn't so, and tries to spend as much time as he can with them. But sometimes he's gotta take a break, watch a little porn and masturbate real quick. Just so he can focus.

As for his relationship with Mrs. Shem. Well, spoiler alert, she doesn't even get a name in this story. Oh, they had some closeness in the early years of their marriage. And she's a nice lady. But he's come to blame her for his struggle - if only she was prettier, kinder, sexier then he never would have to abase himself in front of some prostitute. And he knows that he takes out some of his self-hating on her. But what can you do . . .

B'kitzur, they run the house together. And Shem's very makpid on his mitzvah of onah. But that's about it these days.

Shem flirts alot now. Runs into an ugly little relationship with his high-school daughter's friend. It never gets physical (his daughter realizes before then) but it gets pretty weird. His daughter never tells anyone, but she never feels comfortable with him anymore, and that makes family dynamics pretty awkward.

And so things go on. Shem's actually not really watching porn now. He hasn't tried to stop anything for a long time, but porn just doesn't do much for him anymore.

And so the business with the new secretary runs its course, until the day Mrs. Shem catches on. It's seeing one text, that leads to another, that leads to the whole ugly revelation. Suddenly, her worst fears (that she denied to herself for such a very long time) are realized. Oh there's shouting and tears. And even an attempt at couple's counseling. But this marriage has been dead for a long time, and this was just the nail in the coffin.

Shem moves out. It's over. Shem makes a desultory attempt at joining SA (for about the third time) but it's a joke.

He travels a lot now for business. Goes to his two married kids for shabbos sometimes, and that's nice. He's only in his 50's, plenty young enough to get married again. But he can't seem to work up the motivation (though he happily dates a lot.)

And that's how the next 15 years go. Alot of loneliness. Shabbos by his kids is nice, Shabbos by himself is sad and lonely, and Shem finds himself watching porn on Shabbos, just to cover the loneliness. He hasn't cried on Yom Kippur in a long time.

And so we're back to the beginning. Old Man Shem sitting in a room waiting to die. But honestly, he died a long time ago. Very, very slowly.

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by BenHashemBH - 19 Jun 2024 16:35

[chosemyshem wrote on 19 Jun 2024 16:17:](#)

A TASTE OF DEATH

Mamash the stuff of my nightmares. Thank you for not keeping that all bottled up inside. Here's a virtual hug my Brother. Please accept it because now I need one too.

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by Bennyh - 19 Jun 2024 17:23

Someone help me gather the lower part of my jaw up from the carpet, please, thank you so much.

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Re: Chooseurnames 90 day trip
Posted by youknowwho - 19 Jun 2024 17:37

EPIC!!! Just WOW.

Speechless.

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