

Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 01 Nov 2010 10:35

[Note: this is a copy of my post from the Introduce-Yourself forum. I am placing it here as my initial entry for my 90-log. I don't promise to post updates every day, but do hope to do so a few times a week - or at the very least when significant things happen (either good or bad). I thank everyone for their support and hope to share good news with you.]

I am fairly new to GYE and this is my first post to the Forum.

I am a frum married man and have been struggling with this addiction for approximately twenty years (shortly after my bar-mitzva). The word 'struggling' can mean many things; in my case, some of the meanings are:

- the actual sin of MZ"L, the obvious things that precede it, and the **immense** spiritual damage involved
- a constant sense of shame and guilt, sometimes conscious sometimes sub-conscious... but always always there
- brief periods of progress, success and growth surrounded by longer and longer periods of darkness, failure and despair

If I blamed my problems entirely on the Internet - I would be lying. It is true that at this point, I *think* that about 95% of my SA current issues are triggered by internet usage. However, I had this problem way way before the internet existed.

My first MZ"L was a few months after my bar-mitzva. At the time, I thought nothing of it (actually, I remember being sort of proud). After a few weeks of experimentation, I began thinking that there may be something wrong with it; I did recall that my Father had told me not to ever touch myself there (probably some number of months before) but I figured that on a relative scale it was the same level of 'bad' as staying up way-way past my bedtime. How I wish that I would have asked more about it then...

Experimentation gave way to mild habit; I was pretty sure at that point that it was something weird and that I should stop - but figured that I could do that any time I wanted, so no big deal... Then about midway through 8th grade I found out. I was looking at an english Kitzur Shulchan

Oruch, probably studying for a test, and found a strange sounding entry in the index. Looked it up - sure enough it was talking about exactly what I had been doing - and I was shocked. According to what I read, I had been engaging in one of the worst possible sins. I was embarrassed but was also familiar with the idea of being a Shogeg... so I was filled with a resolve to stop immediately. But I didn't. Days dragged on to weeks, weeks to months, months to years. Having cable-tv in the house (with premium channels) when I was in high-school surely didn't help - *although in retrospect, just as the internet - I would not necessarily blame it as the root cause.* One time, my father even found out indirectly and had a talk with me. While I was deeply ashamed, I was relieved at the same time - since there was absolutely no way that I could do that again afterwards, right? Right? But no... We did have a few more talks afterwards, and soon enough I learned to lie just the right way for them to stop..

When I was in high school, I was absolutely convinced that there was no way I would continue doing that when I went to learn in Israel. That was not the case either, although towards the second part of the year - I read quite a bit on the topic (Reishis Chochma, etc) and bought a small collection of various Chassidic/Kabbalistic sefarim filled with various Tikkunim/Segulos/etc. Though I did very few of these tikkunim, I did achieve some level of growth, cried real tears, and mostly stopped for somewhere between two to three months. That was probably the longest period that I have ever been sober since.

When I went back to the states, the old habits came back quickly (even though I was not watching any tv anymore) and then - THE INTERNET.... While the result (MZ"L) was the same as before, the material was so much more vast. Whatever 'preferences' I had before - could be found within seconds. Anything you could think of could be found.... the abyss was complete.

When I was single, I was absolutely convinced that there was NO WAY that I would keep having this problem after getting married - I mean, how could I? Took about a month for it to come back in full force. Then I remember thinking that when my wife would get pregnant, there would be absolutely no way (I am somewhat familiar with some of the kabbalistic ramifications, so I figured there's no way I could do that then...) - but I didn't stop... Then when my son was born, that was the absolute end... but NO IT WASN'T! I don't want to go into details, but one time that really stands out in my mind is looking at porn while my wife and newborn son are sleeping in the same room. I don't need to go on, I'm sure you know where this is going.

I don't think that I've hit rock bottom yet.... I don't want to hit rock bottom. Although I have some tears in my eyes while writing these words - the truth is that over the years it has begun to hurt less and less. That scares me most of all, because if it hurts then there is at least still hope.

My Yom Kippurs are filled with remorse and kavona. I find that it's one of the few days when the shell opens up and the real me comes out. Every year, on THAT day, I find myself feeling like I finally came back, for the first and last time. Never again will I go back to the filth and darkness. Sometimes I make it to Hoshanah Rabba, more often not. This year I did B"H - but after reading what you guys define as falling, I certainly fell way before then (just not the final result).

Still, I did do something very different this year on Yom Kippur. I was a bit more honest with myself and with Hashem than usual. I told him straight out that while I have chorota, and never ever want to do this again - I know that I say this every year. I'm not stupid and I know plenty of practical ways to improve my situation (ranging from a serious daily accounting, daily mussar reading/chizuk - to seeing a therapist privately) but why WHY am I not taking these steps!? Hashem, you have to help me help myself - I don't want to be saying the same things again next year. (This is of course a dramatisation, the above words were not exactly my thoughts/words - but it was something to that effect...)

A few days before Hoshanah Rabbah, when I was very close to final breaking point, out of desperation I started typing a plea to Hashem into a google search (I know it sounds tacky, but I do that sometimes...) I don't remember the exact text of it, so will not attempt to reproduce it - but the general gist was how I was frustrated and wasn't meeting my obligations and goals. I don't remember there being any mention of MZ"L or related keywords.. Anyways, something really weird and amazing happened. Even before I clicked on Search - all the results on the page disappeared and the browser was trying to load a page from the guardyoueyes.com forum. It never loaded, but I figured that you don't get more of a direct answer than that - so I typed out the url and after ten minutes of reading felt my first breath or relief in years. Not relief that my problems were solved, but that this was solid proof that I'm not the only one out there and that THERE IS HOPE.

(This is completely an aside, not important to what I am writing, but I wanted to write a bit more about how I found GYE. I would not call the above a 'miracle' - although it is one to me on a personal level. I am a computer programmer, and specialize in web applications. So I kind of understand what happened - to a point. Google has a new feature called "Instant" which shows you results as you type your search. Also, I have a few virus-protection plugins that slightly change the content-results coming in from google. That together explains why all the content 'disappeared' from my screen before I even hit search (i.e. the sentence had so many keywords that google somehow narrowed it down to one site, then gave up, but the plugin was already trying to analyze it & got stuck.. or something like that). It doesn't explain why content from the GYE started automatically loading in the progress bar without my hitting anything though - and though I was not able to reproduce it after trying a bunch of times that day, I'm sure it that it was due to a google/plugin/firefox glitch. Except that it wasn't a glitch to me - to me it was Hashem reaching out to me and showing the way forward. One very practical point that comes out of this, personal inspiration aside, is why didn't I find GYE in the past; I use the internet fairly frequently - read blogs, news, etc... The answer, I think is that I don't really go on Jewish sites that much (other than debka.com - to whatever degree that's jewish). Perhaps there's a way to do an advertising campaign via Google AdWords that somehow targets orthodox men... I realize that this would not be simple to do but in any case food for thought & it's something that I would be glad to contribute to financially...)

Anyways - I've been using GYE 'lightly' for the past month. The first week was full of renewed resolve. Afterwards less and less, but all I was doing was randomly reading articles and entries in the handbook - not doing anything else. However, I think that I am ready to really jump in

now. Over the past week I have:

- signed up for daily chizuk emails (which I try to read, although not every day yet)
- downloaded the guidebooks
- started attending a weekly introductory phone group (Elya's)
- created a 90-day profile (have been clean 5 days now)
- requested a Sponsor (*From my communication with the parter-admin, it doesn't look like any sponsors are currently available. I'll hopefully be set up with a parter soon, so I'm looking forward to that. Still, if any of you reading know of a good Sponsor who you think would be available, please let me know! !*)
- joined the forum (obviously)
- installed & configured K-9 on my computer. (*I have not yet given the password to anyone. This is because I have very specialized uses for my computer, and need to make sure that I can use it for several weeks without any problems from the filter. After a month (maximum) once I am satisfied with the configuration - I will give the password over to either a partner/sponsor (assuming I have one by then) or to the password gabbai*)

Things that I plan to do in the near future:

- join a responsibility-group (in about a month)
- join the noon SA group (when they start a new cycle)
- possibly install an accountability program in addition to K-9 (*tried this in the past, but didn't have a good experience... if I get a partner/sponsor who I build a good relationship with, perhaps it will be a viable option*)
- possibly use some form of the Tapsik method described on the site
- work on true Teshuva (combination of SA steps + some Tikkunim that I am familiar with & have been planning on doing)
- if all above don't work out for over ~half a year - I will contact one of the professional therapists referred to on your site

I realize that this post was LOOONG... I just felt like I had to get it all out (or most of it, anyways) after keeping it bottled in for so long. If you made it this far I really appreciate it. Any advice and/or chizzuk would be greatly appreciated.

I cannot express how much appreciation I have for the people who made this site and community and continue to make it thrive. While we all have our missions in life, and don't necessarily always know what they are - I am SURE that you are making major roadwork in Shamayim. I hope to some day not only be thanking you but contributing as well - although there is so much work to be done beforehand...

Thank you again & chotzlocha to everyone here

- Naftali Z

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by Dov - 30 Nov 2010 06:10

Wow, that was amazing. You covered ground that in the past on GYE was relegated to months of arguing...and you made clear that you are not here to argue - just to get better and move on with the right kind of life.

Me too. Motzo min es mino, ve'Oleh.

I guess what I find troubling is that while our Mesora has these ideas, there are key elements that seem to be left out with this approach whereas our Mesora is that all - such as Teshuva requiring effort and real chorota, earning schar & establishing a dira betachtona for Hashem through hard personal work. Yes I get the idea that we first need to get 'normal' before doing those things - but ultimately, we are here in order to work on those things (Olam Haba) are we not? Look, again, I am not saying this is krum (Chos Veshalom!) and I realize that very BIG people have endorsed it - but I am so So confused when reading these passages. Am I wrong for being confused??

Two things, zeh tolui b'zeh:

1- You are basically taking for granted that gaining sobriety (and it's result: recovery), is pure Teshuvah. I do not see it that way. Rather, I see sobriety and recovery as a program that 'manufactures' progressive healing from a mental, physical, and spiritual illness of some kind.

So as far as I am concerned, nothing I write about or do in my recovery from the tyranny of *lust* would be changed if, say, my addiction would be to *alcohol*. Nothing in essence. At the root, they are identical in cause, behavior **pattern**, and ultimate effect (a ruined life). I am simply observing that you are not seeing it that way.

I am not here to argue, just to explain and lay out my position and what works for me - not to say what will work for *you*.

So - *with respect to the process of sobriety and recovery* - the fact that masturbation is a horrific aveiro is actually a boondoggle - completely irrelevant to recovery. This is a yesod that is completely indispensable to recovery as I experience it.

The ikkar point that I believe actually makes me and other people like me miserable about our addiction and *really* need to quit is *not* the horrible issur of what we do. If it was that, we'd have stopped already. I feel that it has very little to do with that, and the fact that we are Jewish is practically irrelevant to the problem *and* to the solution.

Instead, I honestly believe that what drives us to feel like we **have** to "stop already!!" - is our excruciating lack of integrity. We start to comprehend that we are actually a bit nuts. we keep trying the same thing and expecting different results. we keep saying "next/this time it'll be different"

Now, saying that the idea I am saying minimizes the horrible aveiro is unfair - is the point that the person stops, or not? The 12 steps helped me and many others I know to stop. Nothing else did. So for me, *that* is taking the aveiro seriously, no?

And saying that SA not putting a premium on the *moral/religious* issue of the seriousness of zera levatola is a *Christian influence* is silly - for masturbation *is* considered a grave sin in all branches of that religion, as far as I am aware. The dogmas of the 'fall of man' and 'original sin' have no monopoly on sexuality, alcoholism, gambling addiction...those dogmas are general statements about the constitution of man, per the church. In stark contrast, AA, SA, NA, etc, are about *specific* sicknesses that relate to a specific defect a person may have - the powerlessness is not seen as invading every area necessarily. Perhaps the 'frum' 12 step christians *do* view it that way - but it is not *inherent* in the steps.

And no 12 step group I have seen believes that *all* men are addicts, either. But basically every yid believes that basically all yidden need Teshuvah! Boruch Hashem, I see them as two distinct things. Many parallels exist, (as with cheit and addiction) but that's all.

2- I also believe that only a small percentage of people who have a bad habit - even in porn and masturbation - are actually *addicts*. GYE folks (and others including Rav Twerski) use that term far too loosely, in my opinion. That is why yiddishkeit's main shlav of tikun is based on normal bechirah and teshuvah based on yir'as ha'onesh, etc...as you rightfully point out. It is the norm, by far.

In contrast, there are few people who I believe actually *need* the 12 steps - the hopeless ones, like me and many I have met. The ones who *ein maspikim beyodom la'asos Teshuvah*, for one reason or another. All other people with porn and masturbation habits can probably do just fine with another, more standard derech, whether they are Jew, or l'havdil, gentile.

2- I do not believe that Yesod Yosef and Taharas Hakodesh are at all referring to addicts. Addicts are basically ill. The addictive behavior is a symptom of their problem - a lack of unity with Hashem, with people in their lives, and with the world around them.

These sforim are about *the cheit*. That is so very important for a yid whose problem is ***the cheit***. But for a yid whose problem is himself, what good is it to read about the seriousness of zera levatolah!? Should he decide not to ever do that again, he will simply need to find another outlet - typically another addiction.

On the other hand, recovery is not particularly concerned with what the 'cheit' is - in fact nowhere but in the beginning of the first step does the 'cheit' even get mentioned. None of the remaining eleven other steps have anything specifically to do with the addictive behavior! There

are no specific tikunnim for "alcohol" vs "lust"...rather, it's all about cleaning house and being right with Hashem and people, for a change. And putting ourselves in Hashem's 'hands', for a change.

I say, "for a change", because as melumad and frum as we consider ourselves to be, if we were really putting will and our lives in the care of Hashem, I sincerely believe we wouldn't be in this mess to begin with. But that's another shmooze.

Growth by simple acceptance of Hashem and negation of one's ego is certainly within the realm of Judaism - but that's a very advanced level, isn't it?

Well, I know a goodly number of uneducated goyim who are sober from lust for many years, as well as alcoholics and drug addicts by the thousands who have used the steps for recovery and are sober for decades. Are they on this high madreiga? I doubt it.

It has nothing to do with madreigos at all. It is about honesty and acceptance of the truth. Truth knows no race, education level, nor madreigah...anybody can be in successful recovery.

But to say that we have no control over ANY of our defects? One of the main points of our purpose in this world, as I see it, is to struggle through life working on our defects - are we saying that this is not the case? Do we need to accept this part of this white-book in order to recover? If yes, I am very very confused.

No, I agree with you - I do not accept that we are powerless over all our defects, and no, even Bill W himself would have told you, "No, you do not have to accept any othese things - take what you find actually *works* and you are welcome to leave the rest!" As it says at the end of AA: "This book is meant to be suggestive only". As far as the beginning of ch 5 where it says we need to "let go absolutely", and "these are the steps we took" - is about recovery work in a general sense - we need to be totally serious about it, otherwise it will not work at all. It is not apparent to me that any of the steps say we are powerless over every aspect of ourselves. In fact, every single guy I have ever heard share in meetings that he is "powerless over everything" - is no longer sober! So I do not believe that is the Program's message.

Recovery is about **responsibility**. There is something for me to do, rather than laying back and

letting this addiction kill me. No! I *will* get help and do the work! "These are the steps **we took**..." And if G-d wills me to get better, then I *will* get better!" That, to me, is the basic message of the 12 steps.

As far as the three core beliefs you stated, I probably share them with you. What about me? I have individuality, a life, a family b"H, and am living my dreams - it's far from perfect, but so much father from what I was sure I'd be living by now while I was acting out 'full time'...I was sure I'd be buried and they'd be out there being maspid the wrong guy! I was weighed down by the volume of secrets I was carrying to my grave.

Teshuvah is certainly guided by Hashem. **He** is the "Yoreh chato'im baderech". I believe that Hashem has a special way of guiding special people into the teshuvah they need - I put my Teshuvha in His hands as much as I put my life in His hands. In fact, exactly as much. The moment I take matters into my own hands, I will probably start trying to manufacture oso isha, oso makom, etc....gevalt.

You know the medrash about the kings that Rav Dessler explains. Two were Dovid haMelech and Chizkiyah. I can't remember the others. Dovid haMelech could actually go into battle and swing his sword and guide his troops - and still know it was Hashem doing it **all**. The others could only *watch* the battle or *daven* in the palace, otherwise the increased participation would drive Hashem's role right out of the battle, in their hearts - it would seem to them that it was *they* who were beating the enemy.

Chizkiyahu was lower. he could not even daven, lest he take a part in the battle in his heart and 'push Hashem out', in his heart. So he elected to go to sleep! Bye Sancheriv!

I see addicts place like Chizkiyahu haMelech's. Now, c'mon...normal people do hishtadlus all the time and it's not a aveiro! What's chizkiyahu so hung up on? I see addicts as needing to put Hashem in that role specifically in the arena of their sobriety and recovery. Because we need to admit that all along when we were using our addiction, we were really taking G-d's place, weren't we?

We were saying, "my life isn't going the way it should. Hashem You obviously do not really know what You are doing, so I'll do what needs to be done in order to pleasure *myself*! I need to manipulate others to treat me the way I want. I need, I need, I need. Life should be going this way, that way, etc.

Recovery is not a time for more of that. Now it is time that of all people, we self-pleasurers need to step back. We have lost the right that normal people have of being 'Hashem's co-pilot' - *especially* in our response to our addiction. It is a luxury we have abused too often. It is poisonous now.

The silver lining is that in recovery, the certain path to gaining luxuries - is by giving them up. In Tzedaka, what you give away is what you keep. Same in recovery. When we give up on demanding sex from our wives, they relax and start to be OK with sex. When we let go and stop trying to stop ourselves from thinking about lust, we actually begin to be free of it. When we relax and let go of all outcomes - stop trying to control our lives 'so that it all goes right' and instead start to learn how to depend on Hashem for a change, our lives actually get better and better.

"He who runs from kavod - kavod will chase him!" Same idea. But he needs to really surrender - as the Chofetz Chayim pointed out, he cannot be turning around to make sure that kavod is

I flew all over the place with this very long one, and hope this mishmash was clear enough to understand, I am really tired and sorry if it is disjointed.

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 30 Nov 2010 07:43

[dov wrote on 30 Nov 2010 06:10:](#)

I flew all over the place with this very long one, and hope this mishmash was clear enough to understand, I am really tired and sorry if it is disjointed.

really chasing him!

) - what you wrote was very clear, and presented in an order that matched the topics troubling me.

You did not in any way fly all over the place (as opposed to me, who did when I was eleven years old or so... man what a sobering thought...)

Again **thank you** - when I've thought more I will write again (but it won't be as long as the last ... I hope not anyways ;D)

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Posted by ur-a-jew - 30 Nov 2010 15:55

1. Reading your post I see you questioning how does the concept of powerlessness relate to the concept of Bechira Chofshis (free will). That is, if I have the power to choose between right and wrong how can I be powerless. The answer I believe is a Gemara in Sukkah (:??)

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In other words, notwithstanding our ability to choose right or wrong, even if we choose right we still need the RBSO. So the way I see it the concept of powerlessness is a Torah concept.

2. What does it mean to "turn our will over to Hashem" One thing that it is clearly not is the Christian concept of salvation through acceptance of "the Lord." You quoted yourself from the White Book "there is no faking surrender." It is not mere lip service. If I had to give an analogy I would say it is the difference between Viduy Peh and real Teshuva. Viduy Peh is not just meaningless it requires its own teshuva. Teshuva is where we turn to Hashem in humility and admit that we had it all wrong. Our way was the wrong way.

It is also not "Okay, I am turning my will over to Hashem so now having turned over my will I can just continue looking at porn, because after all I've turned it over to Hashem." Because that's just more lip-service and self-will. At bottom "turning our will over to Hashem is about humility and the menuchas hanefesh that comes from the recognition that I am not in control.

3. Finally, I agree with Dov that while looking at porn is halachacily wrong, the program should not be based on that. Since viewing the equation in the parameters of halacha requires some amount of emunah which in the past when confronted with lust I've demonstrated that I don't have. Rather it is simply logical, my experience tells me that my life becomes unmanageable when I act out even if it were not wrong and even if I would not get punished for it. And I don't want an unmanageable life.

Don't know if all of this makes sense. But you have my take on the matter for what its worth.

Hatzlacha

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 30 Nov 2010 18:21

UAJ,

Everything that you wrote certainly makes sense and I really appreciate it.

Vis-a-vis us still needing Hashem's help independent of choosing right - 100% agree.

First off - let me be clear: after reading Dov's response I am not really troubled by this anymore. I had been looking at 12-steps as a 'hashkofa'/teshuva-program/way-of-life/etc. Once I understand that this is (at least for us) essentially a TOOL for getting normal, regaining inner balance & breaking free of a disease - it certainly isn't an burning issue to me what 12-steps' stance toward Bechira is - anymore than it would be an issue to me what a marriage counselor's or accountant's stances towards Bechira are- if I were going for help in those areas (etc). Now, I do still need to think ALOT about the ramifications of using a TOOL vs a classic approach - and what that means to me - but that's something that will take at least a few days of reflection...

So the below is just some musing in relation to what you wrote - as I don't really have any issue with the main concept (I think).

In terms of the topic of powerlessness - I think the part that was troubling me could be explained by an analogy:

Let's say that I'm playing with my son and helping him draw a picture. He holds the pen completely wrong, makes basically random lines (if I can even call them lines) - and then tells me "Look Abba - I made a horse!" I say "wow Naftali Jr. - that's a great horse! hey would like to draw a bear together?" and he's like "Yeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh" and then I hold the pen in his hand and help him make the lines and circles - and he looks at the end result and says "Look Abba - I made a bear! Do you like the bear that I made?" and I say "yes Naftali Jr - that's such a great bear that you made!" and then I ask him - "Hey Naftali Jr, can I show you how to hold a pen the right way?" - etc - etc -etc - and eventually, after many such iterations/sessions, he makes a picture that *vaguely* looks like what he's calling it - and I am beaming with this huge silly fatherly smile.

So what's the point? My point is that throughout that time - obviously I was the one making everything happen. I was holding his hand, helping him learn how to make lines and circles, etc. But he was putting in work too - even though he thought that HE was drawing those pictures -

he really did put in effort while doing so. Furthermore (and this is key to the point that I'm making) IF he had focused that entire time on how I was really the one doing all the work - I don't think he would have felt that HE was doing anything - and would not have really learned the skills. In relation to children at least - my understanding (and I am by NO means an expert, although I do have an educated opinion) is that it is key to build their self confidence and independence. Now, we of course are grown-ups not children (well ok - i'm certainly still a child.... but at least in principle) - we should know better and realize that Hashem is always holding our hand (or carrying us on his back) [not to mention that He constantly recreates all of existence...] BUT... I'm not completely sure that this is what Hashem wants us to constantly focus on to the exclusion of our own achievements... and that's the part that was troubling me. If one completely gives up a sense of self, and just focuses on Hashem doing everything (even though this is indeed the reality) - then it may be true that everything could in principle become much easier - but is that really the Rotzon Hashem for an average jewish person? **I'm NOT saying that it's not by the way.** Just saying that it isn't necessarily so clear cut (i.e. if essentially the point in life is to struggle with your middos/desires/etc until you reach a high level of awareness, and then look down at the mountain and realize that Hashem carried you there the entire time - can the same thing be achieved if you know the entire time that Hashem is carrying you?) Again I AM NOT SAYING THAT THEREFORE 12-Steps is WRONG - I'm just trying to explain the essence of what was troubling me.

As stated above - I think that Dov's explanation makes a lot of sense to me. Whatever reservations that I have with the above would perhaps be valid IF we were recommending that all Yidden take this way of thinking to run their daily relationship with Hashem & approach to Torah and Mitzvos. But that's not what we're saying, and this is what I misunderstood. We are sick people (or at least I am anyways) who inner balance is severely off kilter! Whether this state of affairs is due to poor personal decisions early on in life, or due to a biological disposition/chemical-imbalance, or due to traumatic life experiences, or due to early childhood emotional issues, or all of the above - DOESN'T MATTER. Since we are messed up (i.e. not in control of our life anymore) we need to get fixed (or - assuming I understood properly - the right work would be 'rebalanced'). 12-Step is one option - whether it is right for me I have to think about - but the point that I think I was missing, and now see clearly - is that you can't take an approach that is designed for a properly functioning person and apply it to a crazy person. In a sense, in relation to my above analogy - the way that you would teach a special-needs child to draw would (I imagine) be very different than a regular child. (And perhaps a child-prodigy would ... I kid)

In terms of your point regarding "turning our will over to Hashem" vs the Christian concept of salvation through acceptance... I see the validity of your point. I may have been reading a bit too much into the text (there are some additional parts that I can quote to support my original point - but that would just be getting into pointless polemics - I see the overall validity of what you wrote & agree with it)

Again thanks so much for writing! I have a lot of things to still digest and think about - but in the meantime much Hatzlacha to you as well!

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 30 Nov 2010 22:01

I just wanted to write a short post here to balance things out.

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 01 Dec 2010 01:15

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ok so I really set out to make this one really short - but it still wound up really long....

I did a good deal of thinking today - still feel that these ideas need to "cook" for longer. Here's where I am holding in the thought process though (and I've come up with one additional CRITICAL/CORE question at the end of this post. It has to do with - what is the essential definition of LUST from the perspective of 12-steps)

ARE NOT QUESTIONS. UNLESS
YOU (the reader of this post) THINK THAT I'M COMPLETELY OFF-BASE, THERE IS NO
NEED TO RESPOND TO THEM BECAUSE I HONESTLY FEEL THAT I NEED TO WORK
THROUGH THEM ON MY OWN FOR THE TIME BEING. WHY AM WRITING THEM HERE?
I'm not sure.... probably because I'm self absorbed and unsure of myself - and writing them on
my thread gives me some sort of feeling of clarity. Hope that's ok

A) I've accepted the idea of the POSSIBILITY that my addiction is severe enough to qualify for an approach that is not self-directed. **Until now** my outlook on this was that the 'correct' way for me to use GYE was to do a **personal & intense cheshbon-hanefesh/classic-teshuva** approach (i.e. primarily **self directed**) in combination with constant contact with a sponsor/partner/phone-group/accountability-group/etc - in this scheme though the 'contact' would primarily serve to keep me out of seclusion and add a '*shame deterrent*' against falling - and essentially **I would still stay in the 'cockpit' - either as pilot or co-pilot**. My current understanding is that ultimately **12-Step is a TOOL that removes me from "cockpit" - this makes sense to me, but I need to deeply think about if I am ready for this**. Much of my internal world revolves around me being (or at least trying to be) in control. Certainly this reflects at least a partial lack of Emunah on my part - but this is where I am holding and I need to decide if I am ready to 'let go' of that... because that's a big decision to make emotionally. In addition, if I am to make a decision of that level of magnitude - I need to weigh the pros/cons of doing that vs. other outside-driven options such as hypnosis, etc (Yes yes I understand the argument that something like hypnosis wouldn't really work on re-balancing the ultimate inner imbalance... It's obviously a much more complex discussion - and I'm making an effort to make this post shorter than the last one...)

To a lesser degree, I am thinking about the hashkafic ramifications of the argument that the regular teshuva/torah approach doesn't apply to (a significantly-advanced level of) lust addiction. Certainly it makes sense to me on a logical level (especially if I view a p&m addict the same way as a drug or alcohol addict). What I'm thinking about though is the ramification of this on my view of Chazal/Torah. Although we live in a vastly different world than what existed hundreds or thousands of years ago - it is inconceivable to me that addiction did not exist then too. I can think of many proofs to the contrary. Now since addiction to masturbation (or more correctly - LUST ADDICTION) DID exist in the time of Taanach - why is there NO clear-cut solution to this in ANY seforim for ADDICTS? If lust addiction ultimately falls into the category of "Ein maspikim beyado laasot Teshuva" - then in my view of the world - this would be an act of evil on Hashem's part - and I know that is impossible. Again, I'm not asking a question YET - just thinking through it on my own. (Currently I can think of two answers to this question... one related to yeridas hadors and the loss of nevuah/ruach-hakodesh/mediation-ability over the centuries, and the other related to the opposite (i.e. each generation being able to come up with novel approaches to growth up to the age of Moshiach which we are hopefully reaching now..) - but I need to let it 'cook' for longer before sharing them and asking you guys if they make sense...

OK SO NOW MY CORE QUESTION: I am going to write down how I now understand the **CORE** of what **LUST ADDICTION** is (in Jewish terms mostly, but also in personal terms). I came up with this (long winded as usual) definition based on your posts on this thread, the daily-chizuk emails, and other threads that I have read over the past month. **Could you please tell me if this definition is on target (both in terms of 12-steps as well as Hashkafa in**

general)?

My personal definition:

LUST ADDICTION ultimately does not have to do with a desire for porn/erotica/taboo or even being sexually 'poretz geder' - these are simply external branches/core-symptoms similar to how an extreme anger problem is an external manifestation of deeper emotional problems. So what is the core problem in Jewish terms? Ultimately the addict does not believe (usually subconsciously) that Hashem can be trusted to 'take care' of him. What does 'take care' mean? It probably means different things to different people - but some things that come to my mind (i.e. are relevant to me, or have been in the past) are:

- to **provide** me (the addict) with **loving relationships** with other people
- to **provide** me (the addict) with (healthy) **respect** from other people
- to **protect** me (the addict) **from ruthless emotional attacks** from those who wish to harm me
- to **provide** me (the addict) with **enjoyment and fun** in this world
- to **protect** me (the addict) from the outside world that is **ultimately constantly conspiring against me**
- to **let me** (the addict) finally **fit in** somewhere and **be normal**

Because (for whatever reason) the addict does not believe (mostly subconsciously) that Hashem can be trusted to provide the above - unless perhaps the addict constantly begs for it during Tefilla, or completely restructures himself into a new (Super)man. Since the addict does not have the strength/resolve to completely rebuild himself (*either through tefilla, cheshbon hanefesh, or extreme life experiences - this type of growth IS possible for the lust addict - but is EXTREMELY difficult. So difficult in fact that the Yetzer Hora keeps the addict sinking deeper and deeper by making him believe that salvation through these means is right around the corner, etc*)... since the addict lacks the strength/resolve to constantly climb the cliff directly, the addict still has the above deep internal needs and does not truly believe that Hashem will grant the above unconditionally - so the addict decides that he will temporarily take 'control' and take care of things on his own (this is all mostly subconscious) and take what he needs. So then, the ultimate internal subconscious internal dialogue goes something along the lines (and here I am speaking of myself, personally, not a generic addict...):

Since the world (and especially all the people in the world) is against me [and the few real friends and people who truly care about me are EXCEPTIONS] and I am the underdog - I have to do it on my OWN and SHOW them all how wrong they were to ignore me and/or attack me. I

will take care of what I need when I need it, I will find a better way to perfect myself - I will do what I need to do until the rest of the world cannot deny my existence any longer, and will come running to ME (instead of me chasing after them...) However... until I achieve that LEVEL (and it will be a long journey) - I will take what I take when I need it, since Hashem will not give it to me unconditionally (although I do need to do teshuva for all that stuff to eventually reach my goal).

An that constant internal dialogue and lack of emunah is ultimately the root cause of lust addiction.

Dov/others - does this definition of LUST ADDICTION sound consistent with your view? Or is there something deeper/different that this at the core? This is very important to me to understand - because before coming to terms of what to do - I need to understand what I am fighting against.. (If it's as I described it the above, then I definitely don't think I can do it on my own and will need something like 12-steps... although I have a pretty good idea of when it started in my childhood and why... the last time I remember truly trusting that Hashem is taking care of things, and not constantly analyzing what everyone else is thinking & fighting against the world... was when I eleven years old... My G-d... where have I gone all those years... ok enough for now)

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by Dov - 01 Dec 2010 10:47

Yeah, I agree with the red thing 100%. That is what Lust is. Ultimately, Lust is not just for sex, but for everything. And the secret of recovery ultimately depends on my ability to accept that kol d'oved Rachmono l'tav oved - in other words, He loves me, and does no wrong. In other words, Sh'ma Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echod. Ashreinu that our neshomas are 'yotzei'-zein all our sefishness and lusts with the word "Echod". Rabee Akivah would be proud of us, I bet, cuz his great neshoma was yotzei with that word, too.

And that's not gibberish.

OK, so Naftali, maybe you can chill on some of the thinking soon, and just get to the work of recovery? The control thing you wrote about above was big. We all try so, so hard to *mold* and *direct* and *define* our recovery, by *figuring every dang thing out!* But the serenity and freedom only come through *action*, and in the end they are a gift, plain and poshut, a gift, period.

Chill, He's got your back, man.

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 01 Dec 2010 17:34

[dov wrote on 01 Dec 2010 10:47:](#)

Yeah, I agree with the red thing 100%. That is what Lust is. Ultimately, Lust is not just for sex, but for everything. And the secret of recovery ultimately depends on my ability to accept that kol d'oved Rachmono l'tav oved - in other words, He loves me, and does no wrong. In other words, Sh'ma Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echod. Ashreinu that our neshomas are 'yotzei'-zein all our sefishness and lusts with the word "Echod". Rabee Akivah would be proud of us, I bet, cuz his great neshoma was yotzei with that word, too.

And that's not gibberish.

Thank you so much for the confirmation.....

Although the red-stuff above isn't something I consciously think normally, I'm pretty sure it's buried there underneath since I think bits and pieces of it now and then. Based on what you explained with LUST addiction - I was finally able to combine it into a solid naarative..

This really explains A LOT - but no need to get into more details/analysis - since as you said I
) Wow, I'm a heck more messed up

Ok well at least now I have a better understanding of what I'm dealing with.

Thank you.

than I thought I was! :

[dov wrote on 01 Dec 2010 10:47:](#)

OK, so Naftali, maybe you can chill on some of the thinking soon, and just get to the work of recovery? The control thing you wrote about above was big. We all try so, so hard to *mold* and *direct* and *define* our recovery, by *figuring every dang thing out!* But the serenity and freedom only come through *action*, and in the end they are a gift, plain and poshut, a gift, period.

I completely agree.

The thing is that the above is a 'paradigm shift' for me (Hashkafikly, but even more so in terms of my emotions & self-image). Shifts are hard for me, and it takes a bit of time to 'cook' before I'm ready to jump in - but when I jump in, I REALLY do though. (In addition I have a tendency to write my thoughts in a really long, drawn-out fashion. Once I start the practical side of the recovery-work, I'll try to limit this to the best of my ability - although sometimes I just feel like it all needs to come out... Perhaps that itself has to do with the 'control' thing... we'll see)

Again thank you so much!

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 01 Dec 2010 19:10

[dov wrote on 01 Dec 2010 10:47:](#)

Lust is not just for sex, but for everything.

That's deep. I'm just starting to notice "urges" for all sorts of escape mechanisms. Nosh. Checking E-mails. etc. etc. I'm trying to become more aware of this--HERE'S ANOTHER ESCAPE! And try to stay in the present. Overall, life is much more enjoyable this way.

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Re: Naftali's log
Posted by Dov - 02 Dec 2010 04:21

Reb Eye,

You remind me of an SA old-timer (he's dead about ten years now) who used to say that Lust seems to be about sex - in the beginning. But later in recovery it becomes clear that it is not about sex. It's the experience of not being content with whatever it is that G-d has in store for us and living in the desire for something else than His gift.

It's Lust - desire.

Desire for anything one does not have.

A very interesting idea, no?

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Re: Naftali's log
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 02 Dec 2010 18:11

[dov wrote on 02 Dec 2010 04:21:](#)

Reb Eye,

You remind me of an SA old-timer (he's dead about ten years now)

OY VAY!

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by Dov - 03 Dec 2010 05:50

Gevalt! It really came out very wrong. Sorry for that. When I read it over I can't believe I wrote it that way! You deserve more respect. I should have written, "you remind me of an SA old-timer (he is incommunicado now)..." is that better?

:-*

May you live to 120 years in sobriety, serenity, and good health!

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 07 Dec 2010 08:18

Hello Oilam

Ok - so after a week of heavy introspection, looong posts, and lots of help&patience from you guys - I've come to a personal 'maskana' that I am indeed a 'lust addict' in the way that the 12-steps folks define it. Whether my addiction is mild or advanced is not really important; what is important is that it ultimately stems from a lack of true trust that Hashem is taking care of me. That is a critical point, and one that I have been completely missing all these years. It explains so many things - although now is not the time to dwell on them..

Most importantly, now that I understand the true nature of my problem - I admit that I'm powerless to deal with it alone. I need to connect with others, share (as opposed to engaging in replay & intellectual analysis), and ultimately give myself back to Hashem. I have no interest in giving up responsibility or becoming a shmata; rather that I should open my eyes, see that Hashem is running things for my (and everyone's) true good, and become a real 'eved' and 'son' to Him again. I am not saying that I have gone through "Step 1" - not even close! Even when writing above that I am 'powerless' - I don't think that I fully mean it. But in any case, I definitely recognize that I can't move beyond my lack of true emunah on my own... and I think that's where I need to start.

On a completely practical level - I've committed to joining a serious 12-step group. We will I"H be starting very soon (in the next few weeks) - and I am extremely excited to be moving forward with this.

In addition, I'm going to take your collective advice and "chill" on the heavy-duty self-analysis) and concentrate on my practical plan & current progress. I'll be posting about how I'm doing, challenges & victories, and any interesting insights that come along.

On that note - here's where I'm holding. After about one clean week - I had another fall this past Motzaei Shabbos (:-\ -1 from smile gemach for me) .

A few practical take-aways from this:

1) the weekend - and especially Motzaei Shabbos - is very difficult for me. It's almost as if I get 'reset' over Shabbos and go into Sat. night without whatever mental/emotional progress I had made the week before... I am not sure about the reason why (have some theories, but am trying) - just noting the problem for now..

2) I am realizing that having unrestricted access to netflix.com's instant-view on my PC is a BIG problem for me. I'll go on it intending to watch a kosher (or at least non-triggering) movie or show, and wind up casually clicking here & there - and whooom - I'm somewhere between slipping and falling. I can of course completely block it with K9 - but... well, let's just say that it's not a philosophical dilemma but rather an emotional one. Just don't know if I am ready to do it. We don't have a TV in the house - but I grew up with it and being able to watch movies occasionally (sometimes with my wife, sometimes by myself) is the last bond I have with that part of my life... just something that's so hard for me to let go of. I know that I'm probably going to see some responses from you guys stating that if I want to be free, I need to completely give up on TV/movies. Perhaps this is true... right now I don't feel ready for this but understand the problem & am sharing it.

(for a while anyways

I had a few positive thoughts over the weekend.

They are by no means a signs of 'true progress' - just some things that helped me avoid getting depressed after my fall:

- I took a look at my overall progress since signing up on the 90-chart. For the past 41 days, I have fallen 4 times. So about once every 10 days. While that's certainly not where I want to be - before joining GYE, I was probably averaging a conservative 2-3 times a week. I know that looking back isn't healthy, and I need to focus on the "now" - but it still feels good to know that I'm making some improvement compared to the very recent past.

- for as long as I can remember since getting married, I've often had recurring dreams (nightmares) about broken-relationships and the "D" word. Over the weekend, I realized that ever since starting with GYE - *even with the meager progress that I've made thus far*- I haven't had a single one of these nightmares and my dreams have in general become less morbid & bleak. Hope this doesn't sound weird (probably does, but heh) - but it really makes me think that

Anyways - I'm really looking forward to starting (& living) the 12-steps, and in the meantime - hope that this will be a great day/week!

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 07 Dec 2010 15:55

wow, Naftali Z, you really are making progress and your determination to start working the steps is wonderful. quite an accomplishing week,

you joined GYE,
accepted that you have a problem (which can be very hard),
reduced the acting out,
and are committed to working the steps.
that's really some list!

thanks for those, we
need to remember not to take ourselves too seriously

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oops, forgot to add that you also drew some really quality text-characters