

The 12 Steps in Jewish practice

Posted by DavidT - 05 Dec 2019 16:31

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Many people are asking how they can start working on themselves with the 12 step program. There are also many questioning how to incorporate the steps with our Torah values.

I put together a short overview of the program based on true Jewish values, all of which can be verified by many sources. I hope this can help many to start working the program and eventually succeed in reaching freedom cleanliness and great heights BE"H!

### 12 Step Program

1. Admit that by yourself you are powerless over the yetzer hara and your life has become unmanageable without Hashem's assistance.
2. Come to believe and proclaim with Emunah that Hashem can help you do things that you cannot do yourself and he could restore you to sanity.
3. Make a decision to rely and turn your will and your life over to the care of Hashem.
4. Make a searching and fearless cheshbon hanefesh of yourself.
5. Admit to Hashem, to yourself, and to another human being the exact nature of your wrongs.
6. Be entirely ready and have a strong will to have Hashem remove all your defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Hashem to remove all your shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons you have harmed, become willing and plan how to ask forgiveness and make amends to them all.
9. Make direct amends and ask forgiveness to all such people wherever possible, except when doing so would injure them or others.
10. Continue to make a cheshbon hanefesh and when you are wrong promptly admit it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve your conscious contact with Hashem, praying only for knowledge of His will for you and for the power to carry that out.

12. Try to carry this message to help other people, and practice these principles in all your affairs.

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by Mark18 - 05 Dec 2019 19:30

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[DavidT wrote on 05 Dec 2019 19:22:](#)

"If one lost his free will" is it possible to regain it (going to sa doesnt seem to accomplish that, for every day he's declaring himself powerless)

R' Dessler coined a concept called "Nekudas HaBechira", which means that a person always has a choice in every situation of temptation, but what exactly is the nature of a person's "free will" will depend on the individual at that time, and with those circumstances; the nature of his free will may even change every day of his life.

Can you please elaborate and offer some examples. Thanks.

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by DavidT - 05 Dec 2019 19:44

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R' Dessler gives several clear examples to illustrate his point:

- A Rosh Yeshiva will never take a gun and murder people in a shopping mall when he is angry. Therefore, in regards to murder he has no free will to murder.
- Similarly, an angry, disgruntled neurotic man with a loaded assault rifle in his car trunk will have no free will not to murder people after being laid off from his job.

In either case, their nature will motivate them to kill or not kill. Free will exists only be in a case where either the neurotic man or Rosh Yeshiva has a doubt about what to do, and choose one way or another. R' Dessler continues to explain that as a person does teshuva, his level of free will moves up. Conversely, when a person sins, his point of free will moves down.

See R' Dessler in Michtav Me'Eliyahu, volume one, p. 10, p. 113, and volume 4 p. 95.

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by Mark18 - 05 Dec 2019 20:29

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[DavidT wrote on 05 Dec 2019 19:44:](#)

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I dont understand without the concept of ultimate free will the whole game is over and we are a bunch of robots and the entire torah goes out the window. I find it impossible to believe that the potential mass murderer has no free choice. If that were really true then jail and the consequences of execution become moot he is just not responsible (!!??) goes on his merry way with impunity and all is right with the world. There must always be a nekudah of bechira except in rare extreme cases such as parah who made many choices which were evil and eventually Hashem took away his bechira to accomplish a greater purpose. Please explain further.

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by i-man - 05 Dec 2019 20:48

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[sleepy wrote on 05 Dec 2019 18:49:](#)

[DavidT wrote on 05 Dec 2019 18:27:](#)

@sleepy Maybe, (in order to help your brothers here) you can post the basis in a nutshell so people can get some understanding in what cases the 12 steps is not a good idea...

im sorry for mentioning anything that might sound negative about 12 steps, its against gye rules ,i have stated many times that **whoever got a psak to use 12 steps** and it works ,go for it , i was just posting since i thanked you and people would say sleepy, i thought you dont do 12 steps therefore my post ,i recently got a message from gye that my posts cause controversy therefore i am apologizing if anyone felt slighted.

Why would someone need a Psak to use 12 steps ? usually its for people who have tried many other things first to no avail , maybe you would need a psak NOT to go....

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by DavidT - 06 Dec 2019 14:56

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[Mark18 wrote on 05 Dec 2019 20:29:](#)

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Do you have free will to drink some bleach or put your hand into fire for 2 minutes? SURE! But would you do it? NEVER!

Why not?? You have free will!

?The answer is that free will means that there is an equal choice to do it or not to do it... So here are some examples of the 3 levels of what we consider free choice:

FREE CHOICE: eat Snack, do an easy mitzvah, learn torah for a few minutes

NO FREE CHOICE (positive): drink some bleach, put your hand into fire

?NO FREE CHOICE (negative): guard your mind all day from bad thoughts, don't act out on lust (for people that are addicted to it)

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by Mark18 - 08 Dec 2019 01:43

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[DavidT wrote on 06 Dec 2019 14:56:](#)

[Mark18 wrote on 05 Dec 2019 20:29:](#)

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Thank you for your profound explanation. I've always had great difficulty in accepting the negative and sometimes very hurtful effects on others as a result of their "free choice" or lack thereof and how that unfortunately impacts on others in often a very damaging way. Your thoughts and insights are most welcome.

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by DavidT - 08 Dec 2019 15:45

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The Yetzer Hara is commonly translated as the "Evil inclination." Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (the Ramchal) in "The Way of G-d" describes the role of the Yetzer Hara in man's quest for perfection.

"Man is the creature created for the purpose of being drawn close to G-d. He is placed between perfection and deficiency, with the power to earn perfection. Man must earn this perfection, however, through his own free will..."

Man's inclinations are therefore balanced between good [Yetzer Hatov] and evil [Yetzer Hara], and he is not compelled toward either of them. He has the power of choice and is able to choose either side knowingly and willingly..."

The Ramchal explains that this balance existed prior to the sin of Adam.

After his sin, however, he became more inclined to listen to the wiles of his Yetzer Hara. His job is now two-fold: First, he must even the balance between the spiritual and the physical. Then, he can work to perfect his soul until his spiritual so overwhelms the physical that the physical becomes elevated to its level of perfection.

The Yetzer Hara is an inclination to "stray," but Man has the wherewithal to overcome it. The pull of the Yetzer Hara is the more powerful of the two inclinations, but is by no means impossible to conquer.

The Torah states:

"G-d said to Cain, 'Why are you so furious? Why are you depressed? If you do good, will there not be special privilege? And if you do not do good, sin is crouching at the door. It lusts after you but you can dominate it.'"

And the Talmud tells us how:

"So said the Holy One, blessed be he, to Israel: 'My son I created the Yetzer Hara and I created for it the Torah as an antidote. If you toil in Torah you will not be handed over into his hands...'"

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by DavidT - 11 Dec 2019 15:54

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Ohr Hachayim (Acharei Mos, 18:2)



It is known that all the Mitzvos that Hashem commanded his holy nation are Mitzvos that a man can stand by and cause himself a desire to do, besides for the Mitzva of staying away from arayos (illicit relations) which is something that a person craves and his desires forces him to act, unless one makes an effort to stay far away from two things: (1) Seeing with the eyes, (2) Thinking about it. However, if a person does not keep away from these two aspects (sight and thought), a man will not be able to control himself and rid himself of it.

Hashem wrote in the Torah with pleasant words of life, and the Parsha of Arayos starts out with the words "Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them, I am Hashem your G-d". For it is true that in the human race, besides for the Jewish people, they can claim this complaint and say that they did not find it in their strength to deny the power of this intense desire from themselves. However, with you, the Children of Israel, because I am Hashem your G-d - that is, you can achieve understanding and awareness of G-d - and through this G-dly strength, you will win over the natural physical drives.

**The Ohr Hachayim has touched here on the "core" of the 12-Step program, which is that without bringing G-d into the picture, we are powerless to overcome this powerful desire.**

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by Mark18 - 11 Dec 2019 16:47

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[DavidT wrote on 11 Dec 2019 15:54:](#)

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**The Ohr Hachayim has touched here on the "core" of the 12-Step program, which is that without bringing G-d into the picture, we are powerless to overcome this powerful desire.**

**Thank you for these insights mussar and chizuk to me personally and to all our other brothers.**

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by DavidT - 20 Dec 2019 15:47

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If you really think about it, the 12 steps are all concentrated within the 3 things we say Rosh Hashanah ... **teshuva , tefilla , tzedaka...**

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Re: The 12 Steps in Jewish practice  
Posted by stillgoing - 20 Dec 2019 16:29

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[sleepy wrote on 05 Dec 2019 17:51:](#)

...(for me personally the 12 steps is not an option based on a Psak that i got(yes the Rov knows everything)....

Sleeps, I don't see anything degrading here, so I don't see why you'd need to apologise, but I'm just curious, did the Rav give any sort of Psek about stopping motzei zera livatala too?

of course every psak is individualized and no one should ever copy and paste a psak for themselves, I was just curious. No need to answer if you're uncomfortable.

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