

Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...

Posted by Dov - 28 Apr 2009 22:44

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Your site was emailed to me a few days ago and I enjoyed reading a lot here, thanks. It is always nice to "meet" other people I can relate with and commiserate w/others' suffering.

One comment: After doing my first step and seeing my entire story in one place (and sharing it with others) it became clear to me that I was actually very ill. For years and years, I thought I was just plain "bad", at best pitied by, at worst despised by Hashem. In fact, I was doing severe aveiros and failing miserably at being an eved Hashem. I knew life was not supposed to be this way but always seemed to get in trouble and act on my compulsions. As a result, my emunah that avodas Hashem was really possible for me, was very low. That continued over ten years - then I got married. It got much, much worse after that for another ten years. I went to a few different therapists and spoke w/a few rabbonim, usually under the pretense of "having marriage problems". The real problem was, of course, that I had a double life and it was driving me crazy. Some of those people were a little helpful to me, some quite the opposite. I even called Rabbi Twerski (in 1991 or '92) who told me exactly what you report here: that I probably need a 12-step group. I couldn't do that, I thought, cuz my wife would find out (I couldn't hide going to weekly meetings!!) and the whole complicated recovery thing would "cramp my style". I was sure that the best I could hope for would be dying at a ripe old age with a big, giant, ugly secret in my safekeeping. About six years later, I finally hit bottom. It became clear to me that I was getting worse, never better, and that in order to take even one step further - which I HAD to do - I'd have to leave everything behind - my family, my self-respect, my community, the Torah and mitzvos, and even give up on any struggle for a connection with Hashem... In short, everything I defined myself and life by, was "up for grabs". I saw no way out and was terrified. I had been terrified many times before (usually by getting caught or fearing getting caught), but this was different and I knew it had nothing to do with getting "caught" by anyone. Even alone with myself, "uncaught" this life became unbearable.

I went to a therapist the next week, told her my story, and she suggested I go to SA meetings. I have been going ever since and have been helped directly and indirectly by Hashem - Who I now know as my Best Friend - to stay sober so far. My davening and learning went through a long cold period (about 3 years) soon after getting sober, but with lots of help and a few years of patience it turned a corner and now, like our marriage and my life in general, the davening and learning are better than I had ever dreamed they'd be. I often have some awareness that I am really, comfortably, living with Hashem. Of course, I still have plenty of problems and have ups and downs but they aren't as big a deal as they used to be, and there is a "background music" of hope, telling me it's going to be alright.

Here is my point: The traditional AA approach saved my life. I mean the AA message that I have a mental illness of addiction (to lust), a spiritual disconnect from Hashem and people, and a physical allergy (to pornography and much more) that will kill me, eventually. Using it in any way makes my life completely unmanageable and makes me useless to others. Many other people appear to be able to use it a little without suffering as I do. For them it is just a "moral failing", while for me it leads to a downward spiral of insanity and failure. Just like alcohol is for an AA. For me, focusing on my struggle as having to do with my normal Yetzer Hora was a sure recipe for failure. It made me simply try harder, use new tricks, and get yet more support. The message of

AA to me (through SA) was not about any of those. It was about accepting the fact that I am fundamentally different from non-addicts and accepting that fundamentally, I am not a BAD person getting GOOD, I am a SICK person getting WELL with help from Hashem. I had to accept that this disease had me completely beaten, just like cancer or diabetes. You don't struggle against them, you get the treatment. Plenty of people don't, and die in the struggle. The standard teshuva thing did me no good at all, simply because it is not structured for crazy people. This was not just a "Ruach Shtus", it was my standard of living.

I needed to first learn to get honest with myself and others. That took me about a year and a half of frequent program calls, regular meetings, work w/my sponsor, and steps. And it was still clearly a Neiss (a miracle). Just like Hashem cures people from cancer and other illnesses when the patient takes his or her medicine/treatments, I had to do the same and He did the same for me, and continues to do it each day, for I believe I will still use my addiction and ruin my life, should just I get uncomfortable enough with living. Putting the steps into action keeps me comfortable and sane (at least it has so far!).

I think some frum people, especially those who feel strongly about either beating the Yetzer Hora themselves as a supreme kiddush Hashem, or who feel that the answer must be in Torah if they look hard enough have a hard time with this approach. I doubt they do the same with any other disease. Most of what I have seen in this website revolves around using teshuva and mussar advice to beat this yetzer hora one day at a time, etc. For me, it was too confusing to mix mussar concepts with the 12 steps, particularly early on. It was toxic, actually.

I know that lust, using and acting on lust is not *exactly* like alcohol, as it involves aveiros chamuros while drinking alcohol is not an aveira, per se. Nevertheless, hanging onto the purely religious approach would have left me as I was for twenty years: looking for the answer **with broken eyeglasses**. The way I read them, the 12 steps are about getting my eyes (mind and body) fixed and THEN getting frumer, *not about getting frumer in order to stop*. In fact, I got very frum and the frumer I got the sicker turns my addiction took! I grew quite disgusted with myself along the way, to put it mildly.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not saying anyone is wrong, just sharing what worked for me. Even though the principles are Torah-based, AA, in my experience is a **sanity-building tool**, not a religious one. Because I am a yid, thank G-d, after I started to gain sanity and some freedom from the compulsive sexual acting out and lust-thinking I was able to start growing into the jewish man Hashem wants me to be. The steps are a tool I use to stay on that path now. I hope nothing I have written insults anyone. I hope it was helpful.

I wish all the people using this site hatzlacha and send my love to all of you, my brothers!

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Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...  
Posted by lionking - 11 Sep 2019 14:38

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[sleepy wrote on 11 Sep 2019 13:36:](#)

what im trying to get at is, it sounded like dov was saying that those who try to deal with it with Torah and Mussar are hypocrites,because they wouldnt do that for other illnesses.(now after you read this point , if you reread my post youll hear better what i was trying to say, sorry for not clarifying the first time.)

Have you ever spoken to Dov? He never says such a thing. He actually recommended to me that I shouldn't join a 12 step program. You can email or call him to clarify what he did mean or not mean. He is not mean.

By the way, this is totally off tangent. But I've heard of people who treat regular health issues based on what they consider the torah says. Some one didn't want to vaccinate his child for measles, because he claims the torah doesn't allow it, however when his dayan paskened that all pi torah he is obligated to vaccinate, his response was that the dayan doesn't know what he's talking about.

some people can distort torah to whatever suits their agenda best.

Someone on the forum, once posted a good line regarding if torah allows a person to join a 12 step program? His response was, Does torah allow a person to masturbate and look at porn?!

A lot of people that join 12 steps have tried learning mussar, etc... But it is in the abstract. They needed to actual live with Torah and Mussar.

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Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...

Posted by sleepy - 11 Sep 2019 15:47

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Posted by sleepy - 11 Sep 2019 15:56

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***Have you ever spoken to Dov? He never says such a thing.***

he may not **say** it but thats what his post inferred and thats why i asked my question.(to find out what he meant)

its ok to ask questions ,isnt it?

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Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...

Posted by sleepy - 11 Sep 2019 15:59

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btw ,i dont think or have inferred that dov is mean.

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Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...

Posted by sleepy - 11 Sep 2019 21:10

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[sleepy wrote on 11 Sep 2019 03:12:](#)

*Dov wrote:*

*"I think some frum people, especially those who feel strongly about either beating the Yetzer Hora themselves as a supreme kiddush Hashem, or who feel that the answer must be in Torah if they look hard enough have a hard time with this approach. **I doubt they do the same with any other disease.**"*

Dear R' Dov,

I think why this disease is not a good comparison to other diseases is, because the cure to the disease of addiction is not a pop of a pill, or chemo. I don't know of anyone who has a deadly disease who requires medicine or chemo, will not take them, and will use Torah and Mussar as a cure just like they won't call a Talmid Chacham to fix their air conditioner. whereas addiction, as I understand it from reading articles here, the cure is steps in mental attitudes/steps and **working** those attitudes/steps seriously. therefore one can assume that maybe there are attitudes to be found in Torah and Mussar, Sefarim, especially when we have Hashem helping us find the right sources and seeing that we are searching how to be meta-here ourselves from lust, there is a glowing hope that He will bless our efforts. (I'm not referring to addicts who are in danger of harming **others**, or physically harming themselves, meeting up with others, prostitutes, they should probably take meds.)

the sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh discusses a person who is walking in the street when he comes across a woman of ill fame's block, and visits her, after that episode he decides I'm not doing it again but when he approaches that block again, he visits again, although before he reached the block he was determined not to fall and this keeps on happening. (*sounds like addiction*), and the Cheshbon Hanefesh explains what happened when he reached that block and how to avoid such a problem.

**thanks for clarifying .**

i read someone post here:

*by the way, that the steps do not have anything about drinking/acting out, **just learning how to live right and think right so we do not get so uncomfortable that we may need to medicate Ch"v.***

just to clarify my point,

Dear R' Dov,

I think why this disease is not a good comparison to other diseases is, because the cure to the disease of addiction is not a pop of a pill, or chemo, the cure is steps in mental attitudes/steps and **working** those attitudes/steps seriously( **to learn how to live right and think right**) .therefore one can assume that maybe there are attitudes to be found in Torah and Mussar (**to learn how to live right and think right** )

the cure to yene machla is not learning how to live right and think right ,so dont open a gemara or mussar sefer for a cure ,run to your nearest hospital and scream , "help someone save me, i need chemo!"

i happen to know of a certain sefer that teaches one how to live and think right, but it has to be learnt seriously, and i know of talmidim of that author who **live** very exalted **lives** and **think** very exalted **thoughts**.

so to summarize, im not knocking 12 steps, i would just like clarification ,yes, they learn Mussar and Torah to deal with lust, to teach them how to live and think right in this world(Rabeinu, lamdeynu orchas chaim-Our Master teach us the ways of **LIFE** ,the Torah is called Toras **CHAIM -A Torah of LIFE** which teaches one how to live, KI HU CHAYECHA VIORACH YAMECHA -Torah is your life and length of days in THIS world AND the next world, KACH HEE DARKA SHEL TORAH- PAS BAMELECH Tochal etc.- This is the way of Torah, bread etc, if you do this ASRECHA VTOV LICHA fortunate are you, and it will be good for you ,ASRECHA-BIOLAM HAZEH fortunate youll be **IN THIS WORLD** ,VITOV LECHA BIOLAM HABA and it will be good for you in olam haba, and other statements the Torah teaches someone how to live right and therefore not need to medicate themselves with lust-why **should** they do the same and learn Torah and Mussar for any other disease, the Torah itself says for other diseases V'RAH'PE YI'RAHPE-go to a Dr.."

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btw ,i dont think or have inferred that dov is mean.

You haven't.

It was just a play on words. Mean as is meaning, versus Mean as is being a bad guy that people are afraid of.

Sorry for my ill sense of humor.

p.s. This time around, I think you were very clear. And Kol Hakovad for those that can learn a certain sefer and live exalted life's. I hope to be able to reach that level one day.

Everyone should do what works for them.

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amen, i just wanted to know why he felt that those people were hypocrites , meaning i just wanted to know what he meant, after all that i wrote maybe he disagrees,i was just asking for clarification.

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Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...

Posted by sleepy - 11 Sep 2019 22:02

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and be well, btw.

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Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...  
Posted by sleepy - 16 Sep 2019 15:59

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i hope i was clearer this time.

sorry , didnt mean to put you in a uncomfortable position

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Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...  
Posted by sleepy - 16 Sep 2019 19:13

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does anyone know if dov stays away from gye during elul?

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Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...  
Posted by cordnoy - 16 Sep 2019 19:53

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[sleepy wrote on 16 Sep 2019 19:13:](#)

does anyone know if dov stays away from gye during elul?

He stays away, period.

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Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...  
Posted by sleepy - 17 Sep 2019 05:22

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thanks

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