

“All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!”

Posted by YMG - 28 Jul 2011 17:12

Philosopher: “All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!”

Philosopher: "... and since kids are ticklish, kids like black jelly beans".

Philosopher: “You’re a kid. You must like black jelly beans too!”

Child: (puzzled) But I don’t like black jelly beans.

Philosopher: Could it be that *maybe* you’re not a kid?

Child: (holding up 5 fingers) - “I’m this much!”

Philosopher: Then *maybe* it’s because you’re not ticklish?

Child: (poking at his ribs) But I am ticklish.

Philosopher: Then maybe you’re not *that* ticklish. Not all kids are *that* ticklish!

Child: Um... I dun know.

Philosopher: (frustrated and upset) Why don’t you listen to me when I tell you “how” kids are and “why” they are!

Philosopher: Look “Kid” – you’ve only been a kid for 5 years, and you don’t know so much about being a kid. Me on the other hand, I’ve been around much longer than you and my child years span greater than your whole life!

Philosopher: “All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans...!”

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Re: “All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!”

Posted by YMG - 03 Aug 2011 16:33

Here are my thoughts:

I find this article *extremely* misleading, and for a number of reasons.

This clearly is in *no way* a scientific, textual analysis and comparison - as the author admits this to be *nothing but a mere “translation grammar”*, a method used to restate cultural disparities in neutral language. You can read that yourself in her own words.

What “translation grammar” means is that *entire halachois, clusters of halachois, or even entire prokim, are stripped down, abstracted of all detail – and put into a single sentence or idea*. You do this with several texts - listing out their ideas, and then you match them up with one central idea that binds them all, and *whaam!* They fit! *Look, they're all the same!*

One wonders *how much is missing* from from the *actual intent* of the Rambam and the Rabbeinu Yona when ideas are presented in the *raw...*

At that; anyone who’s ever been involved in any kind of textual analysis to any extent (as many of us would be familiar with the kind of analysis used in counter missionary work, when we hear textual assertions being made in the name of the Torah – assertion’s that are not in fact Torah), would know that *context is key!*

Her article *proves nothing* about the Rambam's support for the 12 Steps philosophy and all that it entails, and *only* about the Rambam's opinion concerning what she calls; "The Great Awakening", "Turning to a Higher Power", "Moral Inventory", "Admitting Our Wrongs to G-d and others", "Praying for G-d's Forgiveness", "Acknowledging Those We Have Harmed and Preparing to Face Them", "Reperations", "Continuing the Moral Inventory", and "Maintaining the Spiritual Path". She does the same for the Rabbeinu Yona, including that he's in support for "Spreading the Word". *At most*, she can claim that according to them these are important things for a person seeking *teshuva*. Some are even necessary.

I don't think *anyone* has *ever* disputed that!

Yet, the author goes ahead to make *bold assertions* that are in no way founded - asserting a position for the Rambam and the Rabbeinu Yona on the 12 Steps, *by simply checking off their opinions in her chart – without providing a single source, a single detail surrounding those texts, and without providing any contextual basis to those halachos before making her argument.*

Any such derivative from this article is a huge leap!

Another thing I noticed (if anyone else paid it any attention), is that she *isn't* very good at "mix and match" either.

Anyway: I'm willing to demonstrate in another post – provided with sources and context – that the Rambam's view on "powerlessness" is entirely different than what the 12 Steps have in mind.

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"
Posted by YMG - 03 Aug 2011 17:05

[YMG wrote on 03 Aug 2011 16:33:](#)

Anyway: I'm willing to demonstrate in another post – provided with sources and context – that the Rambam's view on "powerlessness" is entirely different than what the 12 Steps have in mind.

Here I'm posting some pages from where this discussed so it can be read from inside the *sefer*.

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"
Posted by YMG - 03 Aug 2011 17:06

... and here's the rest.

And I'll share my ideas on this and sum up all the relevant points...

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"
Posted by YMG - 03 Aug 2011 17:39

For those who are reading this, the real meat's on the 5th page.

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"

Posted by the.guard - 03 Aug 2011 17:40

Thank you for your thoughts on the article.

I don't know if I'll have time to read those pages you posted... although I'd like to.

Here's my view of "powerlessness" and "addiction". It's pretty much based on what I learned from Dov, and you're free to disagree.

It's very simple. A "powerless addict" as defined by AA standards is someone who (1) knows he **must** stop (2) but he **can't**.

So... someone who knows he **must** stop and he **does** stop, is not an addict.

And... someone who doesn't feel he **must** stop and he indeed continues acting out, is also not an addict.

Only someone who knows he must stop or he's **finished** - and yet he can't stop no matter what he tries, such a person is a "powerless addict" and he is ready for step 1 of the 12 steps.

Somehow, the 12-Step program seems to work best for such people.

If you were able to stop when you decided you **must**, then you were never an addict in the first place.

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"

Posted by YMG - 03 Aug 2011 18:43

I think attend meetings therefore I am.

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"

Posted by YMG - 03 Aug 2011 20:55

Here are some point by point notes on the above pages, all based on the *Rambam's Hilchois Teshuvah*. The references are in the text.

Hopefully, from here we can gather a better understanding on the Rambam's attitude towards the "powerlessness" idea...

- When a *Yid* does *teshuva* as a result of an outside reason (where his life has become unmanageable and he feels a life of burden and affliction, for instance), such a *teshuva* doesn't really relate to him on a personal level. True *teshuva* has to come from within, and it has to come from him. (page 3 & 4)

- When a *Yid* approaches *teshuva* he has to realize that, as a *Yid*, he was granted free-will; free-will that has never left him - even during the time of sin. He has to recognize that all his sins were only in his own hands and assume full responsibility for the time of sin. (page 5)

- As long as he can provide any level of justification as to the reason he's sinned (even if he realizes that he's a fault, only that there were circumstances that brought him to sin, and that he was at a state where he was unable to escape from it) this is not a true *teshuva*. (page 5)

- If he doesn't recognize that his sins were in his own hands, then, this too isn't real *teshuva*. (page 5)

- A *Yid* must understand that even at a time of sin he was granted the tools as well as the ability to overcome his sins. (page 5)

- Despite the odds against him (from having come from such a distant place), nothing stands in the way of a person's *teshuva*. A *Yid* has total *bechira* to do *teshuva* – in which he has the power to come close to *Hashem* and overcome anything at all. (page 6)

- When a *Yid* approaches *teshuva* out of his own free-will, he can then make a total transition of his sins “as if they are his merits” – doing the type of *teshuva* we're told about in the Gemara, a *teshuva* purely out of a love for G-d. (page 5 footnote 30)

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Re: “All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!”
Posted by the.guard - 03 Aug 2011 21:27

From Principle 17 in the handbook:

We must also realize that we didn't always have free will in the past. This is clear from various Sefarim and in various places in Chazal. To quote one of the foremost baalei mussar of our times, Rav Shlomo Wolbe, [zt"l]:

The great [Jewish] philosophers established *bechira* as the cornerstone for the whole Torah.... But from this resulted a common misperception among the masses; that all people actively choose their every act and every decision. This is a grievous error. (AleI Schur, Vol. 1, p. 156)

What, then, is *bechira*? To answer this question, Rav Wolbe refers us to Rav Eliyahu Dessler's "phenomenal essay on *bechira*" (Michtav MeEliyahu, Vol. 1, pp. 111-116). In this essay, Rav Dessler describes how the “*nekudas habechirah* – the point of free choice” is different for different people and in different situations. He explains that *bechira* is not a theoretical concept that can be applied to any circumstance where a person can hypothetically choose between two options. Rather, it only applies to moral conflicts where the two opposing forces are of approximately equal strength, the person is aware of the internal conflict, and he makes a conscious decision in one direction. When a person does something over which he does not experience conscious conflict, or if the compelling force on one side is significantly stronger than

the other, the fact that he is theoretically able to decide either way does not qualify his act as an expression of bechira.

“Ain Hakadosh Baruch Hu ba beterynya im habriyos – Hashem doesn’t come with complaints to his creations.” As the Pasuk says: “He created together all their hearts and understands all their deeds,” and he knows that almost all men stumble in this sin at some point in their youth.

There’s a well known adage that if Hashem gave us a test, we must have the ability to overcome it as well. R’ Tzadok HaKoehn says though, (in Tzidkas Hatzadik) that this is not as simple as it sounds. It is true that we all have free choice to do what Hashem expects of us in this world, over the course of our lifetimes. However, in the process of our journey, there are many times when a person is considered an onus.

After the sin of the golden calf, the Midrash says that Moshe said to Hashem, if a father gave his son gold and sat him down on the doorstep of a Beis Zonos – “ma ya’aseh haben velo yecheta? - What can the son do and not sin?” In other words, we find in Chazal that there are times when a person may not have full Bechira.

See also the Rambam Hilchos Issurei Biyah 1:8 – “for the Yetzer and human nature forced her to want,” and see Tosofos in Sanhedrin 26b where they discuss how someone suspected of illicit relations may still be a Kosher witness, since it could be that his desires simply overpowered him. And see the Gemara in Brachos, 32b: “Asher Hari’osi” where Hakadosh Baruch Hu acknowledges to Eliyahu Hanavi that He was the one who had turned the Yidden’s heart away from him.

The Steipler too, in regards to a specific behavior that someone had difficulty controlling, writes: “He is not a Ba’al Bechira now in this area, and the only thing he can (and should) do, are Tikkunim that will help him over time.”

Once we understand that we didn’t always have free will in the past, we will prevent the guilt from dragging us down into a vicious cycle of despair and continued falls. And guilt can be even more dangerous than the falls. As they say: "It's not the one cookie you ate that broke the diet. The diet ended when you felt bad about that one cookie, and then went on to finish the entire BOX!"

And even if we may have had some freedom of choice at the time we fell, it could be that we had very little. The sins we did are only judged according to the circumstances and the level of free will that we had at the time. Only Hashem knows if we could have done better or not.

But when we talk about the present moment, we can never know how much free will we have and we must always try our very best.

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"

Posted by YMG - 04 Aug 2011 04:00

[guardureyes wrote on 03 Aug 2011 17:40:](#)

Thank you for your thoughts on the article.

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Here's my view of "powerlessness" and "addiction". It's pretty much based on what I learned from Dov, and you're free to disagree.

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Only someone who knows he must stop or he's **finished** - and yet he can't stop no matter what he tries, such a person is a "powerless addict" and he is ready for step 1 of the 12 steps.

Somehow, the 12-Step program seems to work best for such people.

If you were able to stop when you decided you **must**, then you were never an addict in the first place.

And with that definition, at *what point* does a he say that he's failed at his attempt?

When is it determined that he can't?

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"
Posted by YMG - 04 Aug 2011 05:32

I did read this when I first joined GYE, and I had some mixed feelings about the things written here.

Since the Rambam has been the general flow of this conversation, let's begin with that:

In the Rambam's *Issurei Biyah*, check your source. The *halacha* where the Rambam writes "for the Yetzer and human nature forced her to want," is actually 1:9, not 1:8. It's also taken way out

of context - to the degree that the point you're trying to make is actually *the opposite* of the Rambam's general perspective on free-will at the time of sin. That's apparent to anyone who'll looks things up in their source.

Here's the *halacha* in it's entirety (as quoted from chabad.org's translation):

"A person compelled [to engage in forbidden relations] is not liable at all, not for lashes nor for a sacrifice. Needless to say, there is no obligation for capital punishment, as [reflected by Deuteronomy 22:26]: "And to the maiden, do not do anything." To whom does the above apply? To the victim of rape. **When, by contrast, a man engages in relations, there is no concept of being compelled against his will. For an erection is always a willful act.** When a woman is **compelled into relations** at the outset and afterwards, she consents, she is not liable. **Once [a man] compels her to engage in relations**, it is beyond her control whether to desire [or] not. For man's natural tendency and inclination is compelling her to desire."

The Rambam is in clear opposition of the "powerlessness idea" - that a person sins without free-will, and his *halacha* says that loud and clear.

I suggest you change that in the handbook.

No disrespect intended. Just trying clarify some things.

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"

Posted by trying123 - 04 Aug 2011 05:40

[YMG wrote on 04 Aug 2011 05:32:](#)

the point you're trying to make is actually *the opposite* of the Rambam's general perspective on free-will. That's apparent to anyone who'll looks things up in their source.

Do the other sources check out???

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"

Posted by YMG - 04 Aug 2011 05:56

While talking about the Rambam, I'd like to make 2 important notes:

The Rambam's *Yad HaChazoko* is a *sefer halachois*, and the contents written inside aren't merely his *hashkofs*, but his *psak halocho*.

In regard to the *halochois* of *teshuvah* - since there's no formal *Shulchan Aruch* on this subject - we're taught to follow the Rambam.

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"

Posted by YMG - 04 Aug 2011 05:57

[Tried-123 wrote on 04 Aug 2011 05:40:](#)

Do the other sources check out???

Be"H - if my time permits it, I'll address those too.

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Re: "All kids who get ticklish like black jelly beans!"
Posted by ToAdd - 04 Aug 2011 06:48

Great thread here.

I can't remember the last time I ate a black jelly bean. It must have been when I was a kid.

I had an experience a while back where I thought I was cured. I was clean for a long time and thought that now I can start being 'normal' again. This was just my Y"H talking and I crossing a line that sent me on a downward spiral.

I think that some of the comments on this thread were placed by people who fear that if an addict starts to consider himself cured, that he may fall into that trap.

It is possible that when someone thinks of themselves as cured (I'm speaking about my own experience here), that this thought comes from pride or arrogance. I think for me, the thought of being cured removed H" from my thoughts and placed me in the hands of society.

May H" continue to carry out his miracle for you.

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