

The crux of the issue

Posted by Dov - 13 Aug 2009 00:17

[Holy Yid wrote on 12 Aug 2009 21:35:](#)

[kutan shel hachabura wrote on 12 Aug 2009 17:37:](#)

A big tzadik... was known to walk over to teenagers learning Sharei Teshuva and advise them to stop. He would tell them "Sharei Teshuva is for Sinners".

He knew they were not tzadikim. But he was a long time mechanech, and knew that today the avoida is to realize that we are NOT sinners, that we are special.

This thought is mentioned by Rav Pam also. He writes in Atara Lamelach that today we cannot do teshuva by focusing on how bad sin is. That would only hurt us and drag us down more. Rather we should focus on our miylos and how chashuv we are as the descendants of the Avos and as the bearers of Yiddishkeit and strive to improve ourselves.

Dear yidden who are on many different paths -

I am uneasy with this approach. *Not with the facts* - I **agree 100%** with everything said above - technically speaking. Where I differ is in the *approach*. That is, how these facts are *used*, specifically when applied to *addicts*. I have written about this before and actually first posted my story on this website (Guard used it in the webpage later on) in hopes of communicating this *one point* that made a real difference for me in recovery. It apparently irks some folks and, well, . Eilu ve'eilu is a two-way (or 70-way!) street, you know... W/Hashem's help it'll come out the right way:

I do not intend on criticising *anyone at all in any way*, just to bring to light what some holy, beautiful, and truly loving yidden may not be at all aware of. Misphrasing things in a way that hurts is an accident and **please correct me if I do**. I love you and hope it helps, not hurts c"v.

Yes, we are special. Sha'arei Kedusha basically opens w/this fact and posits that the lack of recognition of how wonderful it is to be a yid and to carry such a high, ancient, and beautiful neshoma, is at the root of falling to aveiro. Yes, it's true.

And yes, thinking of ourselves as "sinners" carries great risks. We carry so much baggage regarding that label. It may mean to us that "it's all over" and be depressed; we may give up and do worse things; we may lose emunah in Hashem's Power, Love for us, and in His Wisdom; and our chances of growing/fulfilling our potential may then be quite poor, etc, etc.

But it seems to me that some people, especially from yidden, tend to throw the baby out with the bathwater on this one. Here is what I mean:

I am sick. I have a progressive, fatal disease. It is also chronic. It does not *have* to kill me, as I am in remission because of my medication. But I need to take it correctly for it to work. We know of many people who have this disease and successfully live full lives nonetheless. Mine has been full since getting my treatment and, as my wife told *me* yesterday, life is getting better every year. It'll probably stay that way as long as I don't take the credit. Cuz taking the credit would really mean I have stopped "taking the meds".

You know what I'm talking about. It's sexaholism, lustaholism, call it what you like. Surviving it isn't a "challenge" for me, it's not about being on a "higher madreiga", and it isn't very pretty, really. But it's the truth.

Did Hashem love me fifteen years ago? You'll say "YES!". Was I "special"? You'd say "YES!". And I agree. **And by the way**, *while* I was special, I was also teaching a shiur and then leaving to the red-light district to act out. While I was special I was also hooked on a seven year-long telephone relationship with someone I wasn't married to, and while Hashem loved me I made many secret rendezvous to see people who definitely didn't love me at all but *looked* like they did, to me. Just plain nuts...really.

And if you asked me to stop, as my neshoma did, I'd have told you (as I told *it*) "You *know* I will tomorrow, I HAVE to quit!!". It was the same torture many of you know too well. What was I doing? I figured I just really sucked at serving Hashem, and was a first-rate "sinner". In actuality, I was truly serving *myself* in the temple of lust, carefully using the instructions the p* industry had taught me. To me, this is not just a cute moshol, it's the truth. Why am I reviewing this?

Because I believe that as long as a person is *truly* struggling with his YH, he is really lucky! There are s'forim, shmuessin, nigunnim, etc., all there to help him fly right. **The overwhelming majority of people fall into this category, I believe.** They need to employ every aspect of Toras haTeshuvah to be saved from lusting and acting out their lust, to learn how to live lives with progressively less shmutz and be the holy yidden they are meant to be. And they may learn a lot from addicts, too - even the really "bad-off" ones.

However, once a line is crossed enough times and the "struggle" becomes an addiction, I believe a person actually becomes ill. There is little evidence that he will get cured. It is not a matter of hashkafa/machshava - take it out of the library, please - it is just a matter of experience the addict comes to. I had a theory that addicts are like Par'oh (see RMB"M hilchos teshuvah) but all this is irrelevant, in my opinion. (Some may disagree here, and I respect that 100%) I believe it is then time for what is now revealed to have been a saucy and ecstatic

teshuva game, to end. That is, unless he *enjoys* being road-kill. *I do not mean* he then ought *give in* to the desire **at all**. I mean that the addict needs to bite the bullet and get the help he *really* needs - in my case it was actually working (*not studying*) the steps, SA meetings, and a sponsor. In any case, it means living life differently (ie. not really the same!)...before his *disease* changes it drastically **for** him.

If you are with me so far, then you understand why romanticising the struggle of a guy who is truly an *addict* by referring to it as an epic struggle with his YH, can perpetuate the pathetic slugfest indefinitely. In some cases it may be all that is needed, fine. But promising a shining light at the end of the tunnel for someone who actually, truly believes that *Lust* is his best friend, may be cruel. Why? Because he simply will not believe you *inside*. Would *you* in his shoes?

Somehow this idea has been misconstrued as an insult. How, I do not know. I do not mean this in any way as an insult to yidden who are addicts. **Once the point was reached when I believed I truly had no ability to control myself, (though had no idea why or how) all that the "YH/teshuva approach" really left me with was guilt.** In most cases, encouragement to **fight** for K'vod Shomayim and for the beautiful life a yid deserves to have, is the greatest meleches shomayim and love for a yid. And reminders of Hashem's love are indispensable in this struggle against the YH. But there are cases, like mine, where a yid sees that he has an illness. "Normal people do not do anything like this stuff!" They see that it has taken control of their lives and that it has been getting only worse, never better (step 1). **These people need to be allowed to say they are truly mentally, physically, and spiritually ill.** In my opinion, they (as I did) interpret their failure with using standard Torah concepts of teshuva as proof positive that they are *inferior*. And that is a total lie. A yid who is an addict is not inferior at all. In fact, addiction often comes with a powerful sensitivity that is valuable, a striving for perfection that needs to be learned how to live with. But for one caught in it and left with the "standard YH model", no "self-esteem talks" from Rav Twerski will convince them otherwise. I am a loser - when it comes to lust. In my opinion, *we simply do not have the power to "win", and won't - until we are allowed to admit the illness and to learn how to **live** with that fact.* If they are told that "don't worry, (per RMB"M in 8-perakim) *everyone* who does aveiros is ill! Join the club," I believe these people may not get the medication they need and will take their families down with them. This probably happens frequently. You read about it on "Yeshiva-thingie.org" or whatever it's called...

Furthermore, if after a short period clean, these yidden are convinced that they are ready to live as others do and resume the struggle because they are better, (after all, per RMB"M: been with same whatever, wherever, etc, and not "sinned" is teshuvah sheleimah and won't go back, right?) these guys fall hard and **keep falling hard until they realize they are really sick, not bad.** For decades, I thought I was *fine* in the head and it was only my *body* that was screwed
I won't belabor this point further.

Just one more thing: The goal of the path I am referring to is definitely 100% only closeness to Hashem and learning to live with a clear hakorah that Hashem is with us. It leads to freedom from the aveiros, with Hashem's help. It leads to discovery of our gifts and the fact that they came to us *through aveiros*, makes them even more precious. It was the *last* place we'd have thought to look for Hashem!! But he was there. Can you see a difference in approach here? The route is very different to me, though the goal is similar.

Love,

Dov

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PS. Anyone who read this whole megillah must be a tzaddik, of some sort