

From a deep pit to a tall roof

Posted by qi - 05 May 2013 15:38

Hello all,

I'm in my late 20s and have been masturbating since I was 12. By the time I found out it was wrong I was so used to it I couldn't stop. I saw lots of pornographic pictures online but wasn't addicted until I discovered pornographic videos. I tried hundreds of times to stop but when the inevitable fall happened I despaired of ever fully recovering. That changed about a year ago when I started really trying to stop and when I fell I got right back up.

However, I'm far from recovered. The longest I've gone is 40 days with no P or M. I found GYE a few weeks ago and joined last week. I think it's fantastic that we have a frum site on this. And, it's much better organised than goyishe equivalents.

So here I am trying to kick the habit of a lifetime for a lifetime. I'm interested in the 12 steps although I don't fully understand how they work. But here goes:

Hi, my name's Qi and I'm a porn addict. Porn has damaged my life considerably. It affected my school work when I stayed up till 2 am looking at it. It affected my learning when I needed to leave mid seder to M. It affected my shidduchim in a profound way. It made me depressed when shidduchim were hard. It affected my shteiging because nothing else matters compared to this. It affected my moods. It affected my relationship with my family. It affected my relationship with HKBH.

When I first found out it was wrong I still didn't know how bad it was. I'm ashamed to admit this but I actually masturbated on Yom Kippur once. HKBH please have mercy on me and forgive me.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof

Posted by Dr.Watson - 30 Mar 2014 02:22

I woke up a little early today so I sat and read AA literature for about 20 minutes then opened up my gemoroh for the first time all week. Sigh. Anyway, opening up to sotah 4b I was amazed by what I saw:

kol odom sheyesh bo gasus horuach lebasof nichshal b'eishes ish.

This disease is progressive. If I don't humble myself at least a little bit and ask Hashem for help, in the end I will end up where the gemoroh describes. That is the natural progression.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by skeptical - 30 Mar 2014 05:50

Something is hidden for guests. Please log in or register to see it.

Everything is about Yiddishkeit. It's why we were put in this world. There are halachos concerning every little detail in our lives, including going to the bathroom. Why make separations?

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by cordnoy - 30 Mar 2014 07:27

While its true that everything is about yiddishkeit, it cannot be forced upon every person in every struggle, and it shouldn't be ...imho.

I also don't agree that the struggle is a "simple" one.

That being said Doc, I think you set the stage correctly, but (again imho), it is a dangerous and risky move to tell her more. Make sure you are both ready for the consequences.

b'hatzlacha

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dr.Watson - 30 Mar 2014 12:53

[skeptical wrote:](#)

Something is hidden for guests. Please log in or register to see it.

Everything is about Yiddishkeit. It's why we were put in this world. There are halachos concerning every little detail in our lives, including going to the bathroom. Why make separations?

I can only talk about me. what you said would be fine if I was able to live that way. the fact is that I've often found myself becoming averse to certain things if they feel too Jewish. if I take on too much jewish-wise I find that I start feeling like a martyr, which for me seems to always immediately precede a major fall.

a person is a human being first, and on top of that can be a good Jew. the fact is that the AA literature was written by goyim who somehow managed to stay sober and live with G-d in their lives. the fact that I can also learn Torah and do mitzvos is an extra gift that Hashem has given me. but I can't afford to let the cherry on top ruin the cake.

it seemed to me at the time that my wife felt the same way, even if she wouldn't necessarily have phrased it that way.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Pidaini - 30 Mar 2014 16:09

I think it would be fair to say that "everything is about Hashem", that way it really does put us on the same plane as everything, because everything is created for a purpose, even non-jews, they have a tafkid here as well.

After we start from that point then we can see what advantages we have with having yiddishkeit, but if we start with yiddishkeit then we are missing the core of it all!! and *that* is chassidus for

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dr.Watson - 30 Mar 2014 17:20

For me, feeling like a martyr is one of the most damaging feelings I can have. I sometimes choose to not do a mitzva that I could do because I was feeling like a martyr and if I put myself out do do that mitzvah as well I wouldn't be able to handle the feeling and I would inevitably fall.

It could well be that Hashem will punish me greatly for not doing those mitzvos. If that's what He decides then I accept His decision. I can't help thinking that I'm still better off that way than if I do the mitzva at the expense of my sobriety.

If I am indeed punished for it, it would be because I was not on the level of being able to do the mitzva and not think greatly about myself over it.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dov - 31 Mar 2014 23:18

[skeptical wrote:](#)

Something is hidden for guests. Please log in or register to see it.

Everything is about Yiddishkeit. It's why we were put in this world. There are halachos concerning every little detail in our lives, including going to the bathroom. Why make separations?

The problem with trying desperately not to allow this struggle to be separated from Yiddishkeit, is simple.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by skeptical - 03 Apr 2014 04:13

I'm hesitant to write because I feel that this will spiral into pages and pages of debate.

But, here goes anyway.

I was brought up learning that everything we do - eating, sleeping, taking care of our health, etc. - can and should be done in the service of Hashem. The fact that that these are normal human functions that everyone, Jew and non-Jew, does, doesn't matter. When we do these things with the correct intentions - to serve Hashem - we are strengthening our relationship with Him and changing the world in the process.

I don't give a second thought as to what level I'm on. I don't feel the need to be the holiest of holies. I don't feel like a martyr when I do the right thing, and I try to just move on when I don't. I am aware of my shortcomings, I know that I'm not a tzaddik, and I'm fine with that. Though I am aware of the concept of reward and punishment, it's Hashem's business, not mine, so I don't really focus on it.

I just need to do what I need to do, and do them for the right reasons - because that's what Hashem wants of me.

Yiddishkeit is not the problem for the person who **does** feel like a martyr or does mitzvos in order to be holy and to feel good, it's the ego and self-absorbedness that is the problem. It's like doing things "for your wife" with the sole intention of feeling like a great guy for your thoughtfulness and effort - It's missing the whole point. We do things for our wives, because being in a relationship is about giving.

The "simple struggle" **is** about Yiddishkeit. If we would recognize how Hashem is the One running the show, we wouldn't be so stressed and frustrated. If we would recognize how much Hashem is giving us every second of every day, we wouldn't feel like martyrs. We feel like martyrs when we feel like we're giving so much, and not getting back enough in return. In reality, it's the total opposite! Hashem is giving us infinitely beyond what we deserve. We should be appreciative, and feel loved.

We just need to "let go and" trust in Him.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dov - 03 Apr 2014 08:38

You bavorned a lot of things there, but assumed a great deal more. I will not debate, but just share my experience and that of others like me on these truly beautiful ideals you mentioned.

I was brought up learning that everything we do - eating, sleeping, taking care of our health, etc. - can and should be done in the service of Hashem.

Very nice. I agree 100%. And I agreed 100% for all the years that I was very busy trying not to masturbate my brains out, eventually moving on to sex phone calls, strip clubs, massage parlors, and more. Marriage made me worse, not better - though I felt just as you describe. I even *taught* what you are writing to new ba'alei teshuvah with all my heart. And I may have looked and felt just like you do right now. But it was clearly not working, and it slowly spiraled from the occasional habit, into the frequent struggle. Years *later*, in recovery, I saw that I was far more absorbed in lust as the currency for my spiritual value. Even my *Teshuvah* was distorted. I sincerely saw myself as being locked in a struggle for my very life - for I saw exactly what you describe here...and I never saw that the real problem that was *far more serious* than all these discussions of kedusha or all-encompassing-yiddishkeit, was that I was living a double life! I was a fake. My own *wife* did not know the truth about me. She had to be hidden from the most of course! That is a sign of a very sick husband, right there. And certainly I had to maintain my 'goodness' to all around me, right? Sick.

I found a place in Sexaholics Anonymous, where I could **stop** talking about how yiddishkeit *is* really everything, or is *not* really everything, etc...a place where the Emess about Torah ***is far less important than the truth about my own behavior and desires.*** That place was the one spot from which i could crawl back onto my feet and begin living without shame. To begin to have a real relationship with Hashem that I could trust myself in, and it of course flowed onto my yiddishkeit, and my yiddishkeit flowed back onto it, as well. Yiddishkeit is no more 'everything' than life itself is 'everything' - and recovery got me *alive* again. It's Derech Eretz, not Torah that saves addicts. Our problem is not in Torah - or at least cannot be approached that way.

But here we are again, precisely because it seems that *you* are far more concerned with getting a person's attitude toward Torah set straight, even though you see that is not the cure. Yes, ***it should be*** - but *should's* do not save anybody. For people say the things they want to believe and follow the party line. But I have no interest in debating the principles you are concerned about. I believe that doing so is the bane of most frum Jews who are still busy masturbating themselves to pieces - or *fighting* masturbation while distracting themselves from real life...both practically the same sickness.

So...

If we would recognize how Hashem is the One running the show, we wouldn't be so stressed and frustrated.

Very nice. But *do* we? Apparently not very often. Actually very rarely, if ever, does anyone recognize this.

Hashem is giving us infinitely beyond what we deserve.

Do many of us really *believe* that? I do not think so. And in my experience so far, frum guys have typically believed this *far less often* than *non*-frum guys I have met with our problems! And I have met hundreds, so far. It seems to me that the fact that the Torah says we *should*, and that we have always been *taught* that (as you mention you have), is actually irrelevant to the factual, practical discussion of addiction and recovery that we are trying to have, here.

We should be appreciative, and feel loved.

Yes, but the fact is that most of us who have these problems (and even many of us who do not), *do not* truly appreciate and do not truly feel loved. Not even close.

We just need to "let go and" trust in Him.

We do? OK. Now what?

The Ba'al Shem Tov and other tzaddikim told us that if a person really wants to come to true love of Hashem but is having a hard time of it...he should work on truly loving his fellow Jew. Now, loving the guy sitting next to me in shul better, or my son or daughter better, or my wife better - that sounds to me a very poor substitute for Love of Hashem. Is the Besh"t throwing the doggies a bone? (woof!) No, he is not. He really means it. And it works that way because it takes a lot of *humility* to recognize and *accept* that what we really need is far lower on the grandiose totem pole of religious perfection than what we think we need. That is what he is telling us. To me he is saying, "Quit sticking your head in the clouds. Wake up and see things as they actually are - accept it and work with it, not in spite of it." He is telling us that a relationship with G-d is very, very far from us...but can be reached simply through loving His people. And love is action, not a feeling. And If we take real action, then love of Hashem will be given to us as a gift. Veiter humility for us there...for we do not 'get' or 'build' a madreigo, really. They are gifts. Yoga'ati *umotzosi*.

Nu. To me these are jewels and air itself. And the only way I could get it was *and is* by sitting in a church basement with shtreimel-jews and goyim alike, and being honest and truthful with them and myself **as a man**. Derech Eretz kodmah laTorah.

We do things for our wives, because being in a relationship is about giving.

Really? You mean we **should** do things...etc., because that's what we have been taught.

Again, I agree 100%. No debate on this true ideal. I just do not see how any of these ideals are relevant to the situation we actually find ourselves in.

I insist that the truth about *ourselves* is **far** more important than the truth about the Torah. Derech Eretz is first because it is more essential as a building block, and the case of a guy or gal who is doing thngs habitually against their own beliefs and wishes needs to start right there. Insistence on calling it Torah means to me that the person is just unwilling to admit that they have work to do before being able to call it 'Torah' - and they just find that insulting. It's just so much more respectable if the struggle we have can be seen under the rubric of 'avodas Hashem' directly and clearly, as 'Teshuvah', 'struggle against the YH', 'about emunah', etc. That is a subtle point, apparently, for I meet so few who understand it.

Debating about what is the right approach for a Jew to take toward all this recovery work, addiction, etc...(Is it 'outside' avodas Hashem, c"v?; Can *anything* be?) is just a big, poisonous distraction.

In my considered opinion as a recovering person today.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof

Posted by Dr.Watson - 03 Apr 2014 11:42

I do find that when I do mitzvos 'well' and feel very holy that I do feel a sense of entitlement that Hashem will now grant me all my wishes. when it doesn't happen I feel like martyr and feel resentful and I'm more likely to try to take whatever I can for myself as a substitute, in other words I act out.

i' m not saying that that's ok, or even that it's like that everyone, it just happens to be what is true of me as I am today, and I'd like to remain sober today despite my shortcomings.

with the programme, I now spend less of my davening asking and pleading for things I want and more time asking Hashem to help me accept life on His terms. more time, not all the time.

it is something of a pet peeve of mine that comes up in artscroll and hamodia stories all the time. it's the phrase "storm the gates of heaven". uch! it's taking the concept of a poor person meekly knocking on the rich man's door begging for money, and making it seem like the paupers breaking into the rich man's house and stealing his candlesticks. I feel uneasy about the phrase and the hashkofo behind it.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dov - 04 Apr 2014 09:29

Yes, and to me, it caters to the undercurrent that is unspoken: we need to fight for what G-d may grant us. And who's gates does one 'storm', anyhow? The enemy's, of course.

It implies in a subtle, strange way, that it is essentially *us against Him* in some way. We 'storm the gates of Heaven' as if we are the army battering against them to get what we want.

That seems ill, to me. Cute, kitsch, and cheerleaderly...but a little bit childish, no?

And there will always be the Cool-Aide guys who are all ready to rationalize that, "No, no. It's just that Hashem wants us to *approach* it that way as *if* we are 'fighting' him...so we are really

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by skeptical - 04 Apr 2014 18:21

I'm not one for cliches of any sort, but I don't think it's Hashem who is being stormed and we're not taking anything from Him that He doesn't want to give. There **is** the concept of adversaries above who fight the case against us, and decrees that are a result. When we "storm the gates of heaven," I think it means that we are letting our voices be heard and asking Hashem to consider the zechusim (merits) we or our forefathers may have.

Hashem wants to hear from us, just like parents like hearing from their kids - and unfortunately, sometimes it takes the kids being being broke to remember that their parents exist.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof

Posted by TehillimZugger - 04 Apr 2014 18:51

No comment, but I once wrote a long article on the concept of these organizations that daven for you, you can email me for it.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 04 Apr 2014 19:16

[Dov wrote:](#)

...And there will always be the Cool-Aide guys who are all ready to rationalize that, "No, no. It's

Here goes: See Pesachim 119a -

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R' Nachman says that from here we see that we should speak to Hashem with strong convincing tainos - that's what Hashem enjoys. As the gemara relates that when the sages yelled back at Hashem that He had no right to mix in their Talmudic arguments, Hashem chuckled and said, "My children won me over, natzchuni bonai."

Hatzlacha

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