

Tryin'

Posted by cordnoy - 23 Jun 2013 09:41

Shalom

I am in my 40s married with children

Recently, I decided to get help on a serious level with my addiction .

My mind wanders and the tayva builds.

It would be easy to blame this on the lack of excitement in marriage intimacy, but I had done this at times before marriage, and at times, when marriage bedroom was good, I'd still fall. Perhaps it still is the reason, but marriage stuff is probably not gettin' better anytime soon.

I have more to write, but as this is my first post, id like to hear some suggestions first please.

Thank you so much

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'

Posted by cordnoy - 01 Oct 2014 17:34

the Torah forbids sharing one's sins when it has no constructive purpose. However, if the sins are being told over for the purpose of seeking guidance or in the context of working a spiritual program to sober up from addiction, this is permitted. Not only that, it seems to be the minhag Yisrael as well. If this idea was not true, it would not be permitted to discuss one's spiritual problems with a Rabbi, Mashgiach, or Chasidic Rebbe in order to seek guidance.

Rabbi Twerski is known to bring the source for this from Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk in his Tzetel Katan. Although I was originally bothered that Reb Elimelech seemed to be the only one who writes that this is permitted, I later understood that no one else wrote this is permitted simply because it is so obvious that it is unnecessary to speak out. Indeed, all the Rabbanim that reviewed this paper said this idea is obvious, and that it is clearly the custom of Klal Yisrael to understand the halacha in this way.

The letter of Rabbi Twerski on this topic can be found in sefer Yishmaru Da'as, vol. 2, p. 116; The Tzetel Katan itself is in the Tzetel Katan paragraph 13.

(Author's note: The Shlah Hakadosh (Sha'ar HaOseeyos, Chess, Chaver Tov 2 quoting Rabbeinu Yona in Igeress Hatshuva 97) brings from Rabbeinu Yona a general statement about the importance of having a friend in regards to doing teshuva, so that if one friend veered off the path of teshuva, he can share this and then the person he shared the information with can rebuke him and influence him to return to the path of teshuva.

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'

Posted by cordnoy - 02 Oct 2014 15:35

The language that the Shlah quotes from Rabbeinu Yona may only support that idea of sharing general information with one's friend, but not sharing specific sins. However, in the Yad Rama edition of the Shlah Hakadosh, they note (see footnote 89) that the text quoted by the Shlah of Rabbeinu Yona is different from the actual text that we have today. Take a look at the version that we have in our edition of Rabbeinu Yona, which says:

"The way a man should conduct himself in order to achieve fear of heaven is to find one or two good friends to be able to speak to them constantly in topics concerning yiras shamayim. If one of the friends sins or fails to perform one of the positive mitzvos, his friend can rebuke him, and they can rebuke one another on each sin that the other one did".

According to this text of Rabeinu Yona, it seems that it is permitted for friend "a" to share his specific sins with friend "b" so that friend "b" can rebuke the sinner, friend "a", specifically for that sin. Rabeinu Yona seems to imply that it is permitted to share one's specific sins with a trusted friend for the constructive purpose of doing teshuva; if friend "a" didn't share his specific sin with friend "b" then how would "b" ever know about it in order to rebuke "a"?

It is still possible to say that one cannot draw any proof from here either because of an alternative way of reading this text, which suggests that speaking with the friend in yiras shamayim is one idea while being rebuked is another. According to this reading, friend "b" is not rebuking "a" because "a" told anything to "b". Rather, it may simply have happened that "b" saw with his own eyes something that "a" did, and he rebuked him for this.

Nonetheless I think the original, more simple way to read the text of Rabbeinu Yona is also a possibility-according to this reading of the text, Rabeinu Yona is telling us that the two friends should talk in yiras shamayim constantly, which means to always check in with one another about sins and mitzvos, so that if one is slacking off, the other friend can rebuke him, vidok, vian kan makom liha'arich, eyin sham.) Similarly, it is possible to understand the Tzetel Katan in an alternative fashion-that Reb Elimelech is referring specifically to urges and bad thoughts that come to him naturally, but he is not referring to actual sins and thoughts that the man conjured or devised on his own-therefore, there is no absolute proof to say from here that according to Reb Elimelech, one can share his sins with a trusted friend for a constructive purpose, because in the actual text of the Tzetel Katan, the man there may have not done any sin at all-since the halacha is that it is not a sin to have sexual or evil thoughts-it is only a sin to prolong or create

such thoughts. Vidok gam bazeh, yaish liayin vian kan makom liha'arich.)

The point is that all said and done, all the poskim and talmidei chachamim that I consulted with, as well as the basic understanding of the reason behind the Gemara in Brachos 33b, as well as the support from Sota 7b, as well as the custom of klal yisrael-all of this together permits step five beyond the shadow of any doubt.

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'

Posted by cordnoy - 02 Oct 2014 23:59

Now I will briefly expand on additional sources for this Halacha. In the very source in the Gemara where it teaches the law restricting people to share their sins with others, it provides a reason for this law-that by sharing our sins with other people, it appears as if the person telling the story is not embarrassed about what he did (source for this interpretation-Rashi, Sota 7b & Yoma 86b, also Tosfos Brachos 34b) and this is a desecration of Hashem's honor. Consider the fact that the Gemara in Sota 7b teaches that relating one's sins to another is permitted when there is a constructive purpose-the case of the Gemara there is relating one's sins to somebody in order to remove suspicious from other people, eyin sham.

It comes out from these two places that although it is forbidden on the one hand to share one's sins since it appears that he is careless about his sins, it is still nonetheless permitted to do so when there is a constructive purpose.

This helps us understand better the source in the Shulchan Aruch that forbids saying over one's sins in public. The Shulchan Aruch there has a case where a man is praying on Yom Kippur in shul, alongside everybody else. The Shulchan Aruch says that it is forbidden for this man to specify within the general confession of Yom Kippur all of his personal sins of that year, in a way that the other shul members can hear what his sins were. This is because of the original Gemara we quoted that says it is a desecration to God's name to tell other people one's sins.

This is forbidden because the man specifying his sins has no reason to do so out loud; because of this simple fact, it is forbidden. However, if there was a compelling reason why this had to be done, it would be permitted. A case where saying over one's sins to another is necessary is the case of an addicted Jew who joined a 12 step group and needs to do step 5 in order to recover from addiction. In this case, the intention is noble and it is certainly no less of a constructive purpose than the reason why sharing one's sins is permitted in the Gemara of Sota 7b. I reviewed this with 4 Rabbis and Poskei Halacha in Yerushalayim, where I live. They unanimously agreed that this halacha formulation is correct and obvious (see also the Mayim Chaim brought by Mekoros ViTziyunim in the Frankel edition of the Rambam, hilchos Teshuva 2, 5) who writes that revealing one's sins for a constructive purpose is permitted; see also Sheilos U'T'shuvos Noda BiYehuda Even Haeizer, 72 who writes "One time before Rosh Hashana...several people came before the Beis Din and specified the aveiros that they did that

year in order to confess their sins and to ask the Beis Din for guidance on how to do teshuva...".
Eyin sham, upashut, vian kan makom liha'arich.

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'
Posted by lavi - 03 Oct 2014 00:18

Eyin sham, upashut, vian kan makom liha'arich.

you were ma'arich, and i liked it alot.

and i think this point your bringing up is EXTREMELY relevant to all of us.

because while honestly is a midda, that a lot of us have to work hard to acquire, and emes is Hashem's signature, it still has times when it should be avoided, such as your example. it may seem glorious and noble to spill the beans and just say it exactly like it is, one has to be mindful of the way it is done, ie. not in a way that shows his carelessness, without a toeles.

thank you for the great post.

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'
Posted by cordnoy - 03 Oct 2014 13:32

Even when permitting step 5 in halacha, some Jewish AA critics make a fuss and claim "well, it has a Catholic taste to it so it is no good anyways, even though permitted by halacha!"

I know one Rabbi who replies to this with what he calls "the Judaism of the Shulchan Aruch", which means that we Orthodox Jews know whether something is Jewish or not by whether it is permitted or not by the halacha. If the Jewish people were to decide what is Jewish or not based on emotion, we'd end up no longer observant. It is halacha that guides the Jewish people towards the correct conduct; it is halacha that reveals to us God's will in this world,

despite the fact that we have no prophets anymore.

I personally like to reply to this with the Rambam (source-see Rambam in hilchos Teshuva 2, 5. Here, the Rambam writes “It is worthy of great praise regarding a Ba’al Teshuva when he confesses his sins in public that were done to his fellow man and to specify ‘I did this and this to Mr. so-and-so’...and anyone haughty that doesn’t confess these types of sins in public, his teshuva is not considered complete, because the pasuk says “the one who covers up his sins will not be successful”.

Even though the final practical halacha set out in Shulchan Aruch (Yom Kippur 607,2) holds that one should not share his sins to others, you see from the Rambam that confessing certain types of sins in certain settings is a Jewish idea. According to the above Rambam not only was this considered an acceptable Jewish practice, but he writes that without doing this step of teshuva, one’s teshuva is not complete!

Despite that the Rama in Shulchan Aruch decided for us to act otherwise in halacha, we cannot say about the view of the Rambam that it is a Christian practice because at the end of the day, one of the greatest rishonim in history held that this was the halacha, making it within the realm of “eilu vi’eilu diverei Elokim chaim” (these as well as these are the words of the living God); this is no different than Beis Shamai, who we do not follow as final halacha in most cases, but we do not regard his opinion as being Christian just because we follow Bais Hillel instead.

While finishing the writing of this paper, I came across a response from R’ Moshe Feinstein on our very topic (see Igros Moshe Orach Chaim 4, 118; quoted by sefer Mishpatei Hashalom p. 221 in footnote 34). There, R’ Moshe writes to a girl who was promiscuous and now wants to repent:

“You also need to know that when you repent, it should be silently so that other people do not hear what you did.....only when there is a constructive purpose is it okay to reveal your sin to somebody else so that they can tell you how to repent in Halacha or so that they can give you good advice about how to stay out of repeating the sin, and that’s why it was good that you wrote this letter to me since you wanted to know what to do to avoid sinning again in the future...but if there is no constructive purpose to revealing one’s sin, then it is forbidden, because only lowly people in other cultures do this since they believe that by telling their sins over to a religious figure, this alone will consider the sin “undone” and forgiven, and then it is as if the person is allowed to go back to sin again and again [as long as he keeps coming at intervals to get “forgiven” by the religious figure]. The way of our Torah is the opposite, to hide one’s sin unless there is a purpose to know how to repent or how to overcome the evil inclination in that area”.

We see clearly from this responsa of R' Moshe that:

- a) Telling over a sin for a constructive purpose to know how to repent or how to overcome the evil inclination in this area is permitted
- b) It is forbidden to share a sin with a person that, so-to-speak “undoes” and forgives the sin, encouraging and enabling the sinner to sin again and again and just come back for his regular “cleansing”.

Of course, Jews in 12 step programs do not share their sins with their sponsor in step five in order to be “cleansed” by them! They do this so that they can overcome their evil inclination and interrupt the harm they are doing to themselves and others as a result of their addiction.

Just remember one thing from all of this-that step five is fine in Halacha.

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'
Posted by kilochal - 05 Oct 2014 03:15

it is mefurash on the shulchan aruch hilchos yom kipur siman 607, where the gemara yoma is brought about not sharing sins, the shaarei teshuva on the page (not rabeinu yona) quotes a teshuvah panim meiros (2 178) on exactly this topic where he clearly is mattir for the purpose of helping one be able to do teshuva

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'

Posted by cordnoy - 20 Oct 2014 00:28

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

A closer look at 12 step literature here reveals that the intent of step six mirrors the component of teshuva called "azivas hacheit". Here, people in the 12 step program are asked to at least try to abandon their defective traits as best as they can by creating in themselves a will to stop behaving this way:

The founders of the 12 step program explain:

"The key words 'entirely ready' underlie the fact that we want to aim at the very best we know or can learn. How many of us have this degree of readiness? In an absolute sense practically nobody has it. The best we can do, with all the honesty we can summon, is to try to have it (Source-see "12 Steps and 12 Traditions", p. 65-66).

Simply said, step six asks the addicted Jew to create a feeling of never behaving in unspiritual ways again. In our Torah, this is called "azivas hacheit". The Rambam teaches that teshuva must be done on defective character traits just like actual sins themselves (see Hilchos Teshuva 7, 3). The Vilna Goan writes that if a person is not working on his character traits, he has no reason to live (see Even Shleimah 1, 2) and R' Chaim Vital writes that it is even more important to work on character traits than on the actual behavior of sin itself, since it is the character traits that influence behavior (see Sharei Kedusha 1, 2). Certainly, our Torah agrees with working on one's character traits, and this needs no source.

The component of step six that asks us to generate a will to abandon these bad traits also needs no source. I will bring sources about this anyhow, because I suspect this is a less known idea to many Jews, despite its great importance. This step mirrors the Torah concept of "ratzon" which is one of the highest Jewish ideas that our Torah has (see Sefer HaYashar of Rabbeinu Tam chapter 11 as explained by R' Volbe in Alei Shor p. 120). Certainly, Hashem asks of us to take action and move beyond ratzon, because doing physical actions in the physical world we live in is what draws Hashem downwards the most to dwell in this lowly world. Nonetheless, the single most powerful thing that draws the Jew from this impure world upwards to Hashem is ratzon, which is the desire to do Hashem's will and be near to him, and the desire to abandon all things that separates between himself and God. R' Volbe (see Alei Shor volume one p. 120) brings sources to demonstrate the power of ratzon from Makos 10b, Yoma 38b; both Gemaras discuss how it is ratzon that moves people either up or down in terms of spirituality.

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'

Posted by cordnoy - 21 Oct 2014 22:35

On the words of step six “entirely ready”, you may enjoy seeing how closely they parallel the words of the Chazon Ish, also brought by R’ Volbe above. The Chazon Ish (sefer Emunah U’Bitachon 4, 1) writes “the greatest trait is to develop an absolute determination to put moral feelings above that of desire, and that it is from this starting point and ratzon that a Jew can fight against all the bad traits together”.

To quote R’ Volbe (see Alei Shor p. 121) “this is our entire job-to constantly strengthen our ratzon to become pure”.

The Shlah Hakadosh writes (source-see Shaar HaOseeyos Reish, Ratzon 19) “he who has this great trait, the lofty quality of ratzon, he will be connected to Hashem who sits in the loftiest place of places”.

Rebbe Nachman has several teachings about the importance of expressing one’s desire or ratzon to change. He writes “the main way to strengthen one’s nefesh is to express his desires to get closer to Hashem and reach a level higher than the level he is currently holding by... by expressing this ratzon, he builds a nefesh of Kedusha” (source-see Likutei Eitzos, Ratzon 1 and Likutei Moharan 31; see his beautiful language inside). In another place R’ Nachman writes “as a general rule you need to know that the longing and desire to improve in holiness is extremely precious, and that it is through that that one’s nefesh is strengthened” (source-Likutei Eitzos, Ratzon 4).

Finally, R’ Nachman (source-see Likutei Moharan 66, paragraph 4) says that the more a person has a desire and will to perform a certain task in Avodas Hashem, the more he will be able to accomplish what he desires, and if he has absolute determination to do the mitzvah then it is possible to reach a situation that nothing will stand in his way.

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'
Posted by cordnoy - 23 Oct 2014 17:38

NEWSFLASH!!!!

There is a God in this world, and He watches and monitors our every move - every once in a while, He will demonstrate to you that He is there - it is our job not to miss that moment (and believe me, I have blown that plenty!); I witnessed that at 11:22 last night. All I can say is "Thank God!"

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'
Posted by dms1234 - 23 Oct 2014 20:41

OH MY GOD! THERE IS A GOD?????

whoooooaaah man!

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'
Posted by cordnoy - 23 Oct 2014 23:00

A dear friend called me and reminded me of this post:

[cordnoy wrote:](#)

I will take the hint and work on my ego.

I (perhaps due to my ego) have a difficult time bein' impressed by 'bashert' stories that crop up here on this site, but the followin' happened to me today.

As I wrote and reached out to others, I did somethin' stupid yesterday mornin' which led to a dangerous time yesterday. There was danger lurkin' at every corner (perhaps literally as well, for my eyes were not guarded at all either). Today, just as I was about to step into danger once again, and I mean smack in middle of a message I was writin' (the only one I was writin' the entire day), my wife called that she was comin' in five minutes for a quick lunch. That 'messed' up my intentions and led to a positive harmonious marital experience (and, no, I do not mean that).

I therefore say to myself: "So there!!!"

b'hatzlachah

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'
Posted by kilochalu - 24 Oct 2014 04:17

[dms1234 wrote:](#)

OH MY GOD! THERE IS A GOD?????

whoooooaaah man!

maybe that is obvious to you

but Reb Cordnoy added

"and He watches and monitors our every move"

and realizing that, my friend, is our life's work

see the gra in the first siman first sif in shulchan aruch where the rama says that is the maalos hatzadikim and the gra adds that this is **kol** maalos hatzadikim

and he brings from this weeks parsha ayin sham

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'
Posted by Bigmoish - 26 Oct 2014 05:22

I've heard R' Dovid Orlofsky speak about a time when he worked for a kiruv organization that

"bent the rules" of yiddishkeit too much for his liking. He said to the higher-ups something like "I have something very important to tell you. There is a God."

It's a good line, but the truth is that sometimes even though we say we believe it, our actions indicate that this fact sometimes slips our minds.

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Re: Tryin' to 12 Steppin'
Posted by ineedchizuk - 26 Oct 2014 10:29

So...how does one develop ratzon not to lust?

Meaning, we're here, so that alone shows that we don't really want to.

But the avoda above appears, for the sake of this conversation, to be actively working on having a stronger and stronger ratzon (desire?) to not lust.

So, how does one generate will?

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