

the view from on top

Posted by Mr. Smith - 05 Nov 2009 15:16

Dear Chevre,

This might turn out to be a long post, so I want to put this out there before I begin: **look at the long Rashi on the bottom of Sanhedrin 31b**. This is the best Rashi I've seen in my life. I will B"H mention and translate it below. But I didn't want to leave that part out.

So, I've been fairly inactive lately as I have been doing some major, personal, internal, spiritual work. As you will recall (and if not, I shall remind you) from my last post, my wife and I found ourselves in a position of a very very long niddah period (with no birth to announce its coming). As of now we're holding at 5 weeks, but, if Hashem has any mercy on us, it will be over very shortly.

I have to concede to the Big Guy, though, it has been uplifting in a way (not that I'd have chosen it) (obviously). Which was of course His purpose, or part of it. I didn't think I was going to survive. There were days when I wanted to jump off a cliff. I was going out of my mind. I was terrified of what might happen if circumstances turned against me.

But ah, Hashem is kind. I davened very sincerely that He should *keep that girl away from me*. (I wouldn't even mention her name in my prayers, so as to think about it less.) Maybe you remember from my previous posts that there's this one girl nearby who really gets to me. I davened not to see her. I don't think I did, maybe not even in passing. I was terrified she'd show up at my door one day asking for a cup of sugar or something.

Enter Rashi. Mar Ukva (one of the earliest amoraim), says Rashi, was a baal teshuva. He relates: Mar Ukva had set his eyes upon a certain married woman. His heart filled with lust for her. He was so desirous of her that he actually fell ill. (Sound familiar, anyone?) Came a time when she was forced to borrow money from him. Out of her financial pressures, she consented to him. Mar Ukva then *conquered his desire and sent her away in peace*. Incredible! He regained his health, and from then on his face emitted a heavenly glow *comparable to that of Moses! UNBELIEVABLE!!!*

This story hit me like a ton of bricks. This is the very situation I have dreaded - that she should

show up at my door and need me for something. I believed if it happened I would screw up in a very bad way, or else have a nervous breakdown. And here G-d has shown me that it's not the case. These past few weeks have been tough. But I have been thinking about things I've learned on this site and elsewhere, things about me. And I've noticed gradual changes. I worked on turning my mind from any kinds of fantasies to just thoughts about my wife. (I consulted with my rav, asking him if that's maybe not so bad; to my great shock, he said this is a positive thing! He explained that it means I'm a sensitive and feeling person. A person *should* have desire for his wife!) As a cumulative result of it all, I've found that I am having less fantasies about non-wife people. And in fact, when I do, it's not hard at all for me to tap into a feeling of disgust about it the thought. After all, we all know that intimacy with one's wife is a spiritual endeavor (too), whereas intimacy (if it could be called that) with the girl down the street is just animalistic. So I've managed to bring that idea down from my head into my heart, just a little bit. It's a terrific feeling.

Another upshot of this is that it's been easier working on shmiras einayim. I really feel that it's a disrespect to my wife and that it's just gross. (I still haven't reached the level where I feel bad for the ogled victims. Well, there's always work to be done!) And I feel less of a desire to go grabbing people on the bus too. I don't imagine that there will never be any challenges, any steps back. But I really feel I've made progress. I've come to believe that I can live a normal life in a world where lust is everywhere. It's heartening. (Oh, and pornography doesn't even get off the ground with me right now. Early on I had some urges - now I can actually feel gross about it. What a change.)

And I think as the end of this nisayon approaches, G-d threw me a bone. He showed me this Rashi, encouraging me with the rewards of overcoming the yetzer. I could hardly have imagined a more relevant story to me than the one Rashi brings about Mar Ukva. I nearly cried in the beis midrash when I read it.

I spoke to my rav this week about kedusha in sexual relations. His words were also very encouraging. They were along the lines of how important it is not only to aim for spirituality and holiness in our sexual relationship, but also for real physical pleasure and taivah. If you're not doing it with taivah, he said, no good. (And I was surprised to find how much of the commonly-assumed halacha is more flexible than I thought when it comes to achieving this end.)

I think that's all I wanted to share. I hope this will encourage some of you too. I'm glad there are people with whom I can share this. Continued hatzlacha to all in your holy endeavors!

~Mr. Smith

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Re: the view from on top
Posted by Ineedhelp!! - 05 Nov 2009 15:26

Great job Mr. Smith keep the good work.

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Re: the view from on top
Posted by Dov - 05 Nov 2009 17:54

G-d bless you! My wish for you is that you take it step by step - for the things you must work on together **and** for the things you must each tackle seperately.

With lots of love and admiration,

Dov

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Re: the view from on top
Posted by yechidah - 05 Nov 2009 18:17

your rav is wise

and alot of couples suffer in many ways because they were not told what your rav told you

assuming good physical health,

if a husband truely appreciates his wife's spiritual qualities and her personality and loves her as a PERSON,then the physical desire for her is a good thing

some feel that this desire is wrong and disgusting.

terrible mistake.

your rav is right

a wife is completely different than any other female in the world

a feeling that is destructive when felt for someone else--is a great gift when felt towards one's own wife-who is a part of him.

when I first heard this concept from my madrich it did not register in the brain

are you serious?

never learned this in yeshiva

surprise surprise

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Re: the view from on top

Posted by the.guard - 05 Nov 2009 21:37

Beautiful, Mr. Smith! I think I'll put some of your thoughts into a daily chizuk e-mail one of these days!

Keep up the good work and keep sharing. May Hashem give you strength to give Him your heart!

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Re: the view from on top
Posted by kutan - 06 Nov 2009 17:36

Hi Mr. Smith,

Nice to make your acquaintance.

I love your story, and all the messages it contains. There is a lot to learn from your story.

I'd just like to share that for a while (perhaps 2-3 months) after learning the yesodos here, I had the same attitude as you.... former triggers were silly and / or repulsive.

I remember mentioning it on the forum, and it raised some eyebrows (I think it was R' B.)

Anyway, happy to say I 'm back to normal.

Happy, because it makes life worth living.

Looking back, though, it was a nice 2-3 months of vacation. Hope maybe Hashem will send me another one from time to time.

kutan

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Re: the view from on top
Posted by Mr. Smith - 07 Nov 2009 16:25

Thanks for the chizuk, gentlemen.

G-d, of course, has a great sense of humor, which is obviously much deeper than we will ever understand.

The morning before mikvah night, mikvah got cancelled. That means an extra however long it takes for the bleeding to stop, plus 7 days. On top of the past 5 weeks.

We were devastated when this happened, and we're still trying to get our bearings. We are trying not to be miserable, and having not much success at this point. I feel like I've been carrying around a 16-ton weight all shabbos. Now I REALLY want to cry.

Sigh.

Smith

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Re: the view from on top

Posted by the.guard - 07 Nov 2009 17:02

Oy, I feel your pain so much. Your story inspired many people in Firday's Chizuk e-mail!

Just as you recognized that *"I have to concede to the Big Guy though, it has been uplifting in a way (not that I'd have chosen it, obviously), which was of course His purpose, or part of it."*, it seems the Big Guy wants you to really learn to "let go" of lust... You see, for us married people, it's hard to really let go of lust. Because even if we have niddah every 4 weeks for 2 weeks, we hold on to the lust and just "struggle" with it for two weeks of abstinence, since we know we'll have it again soon... But to really break an addiction, we talk about 90 days of abstinence... This is very hard for married people to do. Bochorim have this easier, in a sense. By them, 90 days is really 90 days. They are forced to just "let go" of lust. They are forced to surrender "the right" to lust, the right to indulge in anything sexual... And if they do this for 90 days, they really do succeed in breaking the addiction and making it much easier for the long term...

Hashem is seeing your fight. He is seeing your sincerity, your determination. And he wants you to really be able to break the neurological pathways of the addiction. And perhaps 5 weeks wasn't enough. $5 \times 7 =$ only 35 days. Now it will be about 50 days... Maybe that's what it will take for your mind to be able to let go and surrender the right to lust...

We must believe that everything is really a kindness... Perhaps had you known in the beginning that you would need to go for 50 days abstinent, you would have given up... So Hashem made you think it was almost over last week, and then added another 2 weeks...

As hard as it is (and G-d knows that we all know what you are feeling), promise yourself you'll be strong up to 90 days abstinent. This can change your life.

But don't tell yourself 90 days. Tell yourself that **just for today, you will be strong**. Tomorrow, maybe you'll give in. But today, you won't give in no matter what!

This is a time of great growth for you... I am confident that your face will have a shine to it after this test is over!

This is how the founder of SA described recovery in his marriage:

*"Healing in my marriage and in the family is one of the most blessed areas of this new life, even though things aren't always a bed of roses. I've found something better than lust - reality. But I have to be willing to give up any thought of changing partners, either actually or in fantasy, even if it means not having sex at all. Each time, I have to surrender my right to sex and depend on the grace of God. What else can you call it? **And there are times my wife and I have gone without sex for extended periods. But it's all right; sex is optional now. I have a choice. And mutually voluntary periods of abstinence for a year or so have proven to be the most constructive-and happy-times of our entire marriage.** For me the key was finally giving up all expectation of either sex or affection, and working on myself and my defective relations with others.*

It has been a totally new beginning for us. I'm just starting to get acquainted with my wife of seventeen years. I discover to my delight she's a person: unique, independent, an individual, a whole universe of personality I was blind to before. And the more I die to any thought of resorting to someone else and commit myself to this one union, the more pleasure and love and freedom I find.

I can't believe that the person I'm writing about today is the same one who used to think and do the things I've been describing. Actually, that other person was a slave; he was living in a world of fantasy and illusion, only for himself, and always alone. He had never matured through emotional adolescence and was spiritually dead. He could not cope either with his own emotions or with life in the big world out there, and was constantly running. Running to satisfy demands and lusts that could never be satisfied. Running from who he really was; running from others; running from life; running from God, the source of his life.

The running is over. I've found what I was really looking for.

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Re: the view from on top
Posted by Mr. Smith - 10 Nov 2009 06:55

Thanks. That is a very hard-hitting piece from the SA guy. Wow.

I haven't acted out yet during this break. I am confident that I won't. It's hard, but I believe it will be okay. I keep davening not to be further tested - this is hard enough as it is. And I keep davening for this to be over SOON!

Smith

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Re: the view from on top
Posted by the.guard - 10 Nov 2009 14:13

you are very inspiring!

Instead of davening for "this" to be over soon, daven that it should be over when **YOU ARE READY...** Oh, and *then* you can daven that Hashem help *YOU* become ready **SOON** :D

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Re: the view from on top

Posted by 7yipol - 10 Nov 2009 15:49

I dont know if I have ever posted on this thread, but I have been reading and am really inspired by the sincerity.

Mr Smith, your current nisayon is really a rough one, both for you and your wife.

Been there and know.

Use this opportunity to comiserate *together*, expressing your personal frustration because you care about her, and empathising with her probable frustration and even feelings of guilt (Shes a Jewish woman after all!).

May Hashem help you both learn whatever it is He wants you to, so you can move on to the nisyanos of the mutar days instead!

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