

Welcome New Members—A great book on Shmiras Enayim
Posted by Captain - 03 Jan 2020 17:54

I wanted to tell you about a great book for winning this fight. It's called The Battle of the Generation: Winning the Battle Against Desire in the 21st Century. This amazing book will change your entire outlook, so you will no longer view yourself as a broken soul struggling. Instead you will be excited to fight — and you will win! This book is so clear and to the point, with amazing techniques that will help you get back your life! It has helped many people.

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With the author's permission, here is an excerpt (part of Chapter 1):

There is a little secret the *yetzer hara* doesn't want you to know. It's the secret that spells his doom. And it's the secret that will change your destiny.

Our generation faces challenges never encountered before by mankind. Society teaches that there is nothing wrong with immorality, and it portrays the most despicable acts as glamorous. We are taught that chasing desire is cool, and that those who don't are missing out on life. Sin is readily available, and there is little to hold us back.

Society also trains us to think we are incapable of controlling ourselves. We see everyone around us giving in to crazy temptations, and we think it is impossible to win. We might even hear people openly express how impossible a fight it is, which discourages us from even trying. With all that's going on, our generation seems to be at a huge disadvantage. It seems that we were born in perhaps the worst situation in our nation's history, at least from a spiritual perspective.

But that's only if you ignore the *yetzer hara's* secret.

Before he became king, Dovid Hamelech married Shaul Hamelech's daughter Michal, a very beautiful woman. Shortly after their marriage, Shaul turned against Dovid, forcing him to flee. The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 19b) relates that Shaul ruled that the method by which Dovid had married Michal was *halachically* invalid, and therefore, they were not married. Shaul then had

her married to a man named Palti. Realizing that Shaul was wrong and that Michal was married to Dovid, Palti held himself back from sinning — even though he and Michal lived in the same house for five years. The *Gemara* states that Palti's demonstration of self-control was far superior to Yosef's when he faced the challenge of the wife of Potifar. Clearly, this was an extremely challenging situation for Palti. Nevertheless, Palti employed superhuman self-control and held himself back.

After five years, Dovid became king and sent for Michal to be brought back to him. Palti traveled with her as she returned and was crying. The *Gemara* explains that Palti was crying over the *mitzvah* that was leaving him.

This *Gemara* is perplexing. Why was Palti sad that Michal was going back to Dovid? As a person who valued his service of Hashem, he should have been relieved that his challenge was finally over! Why was he upset about losing his ability to sin?

In Shmuz 145: "Stages of Change: Taking Action" (www.TheShmuz.com), Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier answers that we learn a powerful lesson from Palti's attitude in his battle against desire. Rather than growing frustrated about the desires that threatened to disturb his spiritual aspirations, Palti was excited to face this challenge. Palti did not view his situation as an annoying obstacle impeding his spiritual growth. He realized that it was an opportunity for him to serve Hashem in an unprecedented manner. He understood that with this test, Hashem was giving him a phenomenal opportunity to accomplish and reach greatness. This perspective led him to win perhaps the most difficult battle against desire in history.

In *Pirkei Avos* (5:23), Ben Hei Hei teaches us that Heavenly reward is meted out in accordance with how much a person exerts himself. Our Sages teach us that this is a major principle in the calculation of reward and greatness. How hard a person works to accomplish something is one of the primary determining factors in how great the accomplishment is. When a person faces overwhelming challenges and overcomes them, he performs acts that are truly great.

Overcoming difficulty is so basic to true accomplishment that it is the reason Hashem places man into a life so full of challenges (*Mesillas Yesharim*, Chapter 1). Hashem wants to provide man with the opportunity to win his battles and truly accomplish. Challenges are only there to make us great!

Our successes are impressive only because the *yetzer hara* challenges us from every direction, trying to confuse and derail us. When we hang in there and try to succeed despite how much we want to give in, we are performing monumental acts of greatness. Succeeding despite the difficulty is the point of life! The harder it is, the greater it makes us.

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Re: Welcome New Members—A great book on Shmiras Enayim

Posted by DavidT - 07 Jan 2020 18:19

I liked the book's introduction:

Most books start with an introduction or even a few chapters stating why their topic is so important. This book doesn't need any of that. You already know that it's important, so let's get right to it.

Guilt-Trip Free Guarantee

You won't find any guilt trips here. I'm not above you and I'm not against you. And there's no need for it anyway. You want to succeed, and I will help you strengthen that drive. You won't feel manipulated. You will want to smash the yetzer hara. Think of me as your ally in your quest to reach the greatness that is your destiny.

It's Normal to Desire

Hashem created desire. Not you. He gave it to us as a test, a charge to win our battles and reach greatness. Pretty much any desire you experience is normal. Everyone gets it and must fight through it.

Never blame yourself for your impulses. All that matters is what you do with them.

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Re: Welcome New Members—A great book on Shmiras Enayim

Posted by N8 - 07 Jan 2020 21:01

This is a very good resource, a few other good books are Zois Brisi and iObserve.

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Re: Welcome New Members—A great book on Shmiras Enayim

Posted by Captain - 19 Jan 2020 00:48

If anyone finds anything inspiring from this book, please share it with everyone here so we can all gain from it.

I found this very inspiring and wanted to share it:

(From Chapter 11)

There is another lesson we can learn from this story. When Elazar ben Durdia tried to do *teshuva*, he first reached out to the elements of nature, requesting they do *teshuva* on his behalf. What was he doing? Did he really think the mountains and stars could repent for him?

Rav Yonasan Eibeshutz (*Ya'aros Devash*, Volume 2, *Derush* 10) explains that Elazar ben Durdia was trying to blame his behavior on his surroundings. He tried to blame society for his wrongdoings. But eventually, he realized that if he wanted to change, everything depended on him alone. No one else could change him and make him repent. If he wanted anything to change, he had to take responsibility for his mistakes, and even more important, for what his future would be like. He had to cut past all his excuses and his identity as a lustful person. He had to resolve that *he* would change things and not let **anything** hold him back. That was the only way for him to successfully do *teshuva*.

This is a critical lesson for us. We all have various rationalizations for our behavior when we mess up. Anyone who doesn't have these rationalizations wouldn't be able to handle the guilt and self-criticism that come after sinning. And the truth is that these excuses might be built on some very good points. We really are living in a challenging generation, and we face tests from all sides. Our friends might be into the wrong things, we experience social pressures from those around us, and we encounter warped perspectives from society on what matters in life. Sin is far more accessible than it ever was, and its sales pitch is much more tempting and far-reaching than it was even one generation ago. People in past generations could never have even dreamed of the challenges we face. For good reason, we wonder what could possibly be expected of us. Our behavior is typical for anyone challenged so much. It takes much planning and effort to succeed.

But those rationalizations won't get us anywhere. If we continue to use them, we will stay the same for the rest of our lives, wishing we could do better and feeling bad for giving in. Does anyone enjoy feeling that he is a slave to his passions? Do you want to feel powerless and inferior for the rest of your life? Nobody does. We only settle for that because we lack a better alternative. Well, there is a better alternative — to **get up and fight!** We can tell

ourselves that we are sick of the guilt and that we hate feeling incapable of reaching greatness. We can leave our past behind and begin anew. We can free ourselves from the grip of desire and follow our dreams of greatness, just by making that decision to fight!

The key to quick, lasting change is the statement Elazar ben Durdia exclaimed: "It all depends on me!" He was telling himself, "I cannot rely on anyone else if I want things to be different! I must take care of it myself! I have to make it happen, and that is exactly what I will do!" Taking responsibility enabled him to make the most dramatic transformation in history, and that is how we can do the same and reach great heights, no matter how challenging our situation is.

We do not need to blame ourselves or beat ourselves up to make this turnaround happen. We need not revisit the past to decide to change. (Although wishing we had acted differently is part of the *teshuvah* process, we can leave it for later if it is too daunting to deal with right away.) All we need to do is think about our lives until we realize that we are not happy with the way things are and then say to ourselves, "**I** am going to make things different." Of course, we must rely on Hashem for His help because we cannot succeed without it, but then we must shed all our checkered history because all that is irrelevant now. Once we have decided to change and we know Hashem is helping us, we are capable of success!

Once we have decided to change, we no longer are our old selves who messed up so many times. We have left all that behind and have become new people. We are in control, and we are proud of who we now are! That is how we must identify ourselves from now on.

We must avoid making excuses or blaming our circumstances, which stops us from succeeding. But we must also forget about harshly judging ourselves, which would be wrong and irrelevant. Instead, we must focus on the exceptional person we want to be. We must have confidence that we will eventually reach the great heights we aspire to because we have taken responsibility for getting there! Since we have decided to change, nothing can hold us back. Nothing will be stronger than our determination to succeed and reach greatness!

The Chazon Ish (*Emunah U'Bitachon* 4:1) writes that although our Sages taught us about many different *middos* and how to perfect them, one *middah* matters more than any other: the trait of deciding to fight our negative impulses. No matter what *middos* a person struggles with, the most important factor is whether he allows them to run his life or fights back. That will determine whether he will overcome his bad traits and where he will end up as a person.

It is easy to follow our impulses, especially because they are so strong. Giving up takes the least effort, while fighting them requires an incredible amount of energy. Nevertheless, it is crucial that we take control of our actions. Although we might feel weighed down by strong desires and bad habits, we can conquer these impulses if we say to ourselves, "I don't want things to go this way. I want to be in control and live a thrilling and rewarding life! I want to feel good about myself, and I want to be happy with the path I chose. I won't let *any* desire control my life any longer, no matter how strong it is! **I will stand up and fight!**"

If you need to muster more strength to make the decision, remind yourself that you will experience so much pain if you don't change. Think about it until you feel you have no choice

but to change, even though changing will mean leaving some pleasures behind. You don't want things to remain the way they are! Think about all the pain those indulgences put you through and how unsatisfying it was. Realize that chasing after desire is just not worth it! Say to yourself that you are done with being a person you don't want to be, and that **you** are going to change things **no matter what!** Think long and hard about where your life is heading and where you want it to be until you feel determined never to return to your bad habits.

Once you decide to fight your desires, you will see that you have the strength to succeed. Of course, you will still face strong impulses that will make you feel that you want to indulge and that nothing else matters. Determination to change doesn't make your temptations go away; you will still be challenged. But if you are determined and use a step-by-step plan, you will succeed.

Nobody other than yourself will make you change. You might be able to blame your life's circumstances for your failures, and nobody will argue with you. If a couple of things in your life were different, of course you would be doing a much better job controlling yourself. But those things are not different, and they probably won't change anytime soon. If you want your life to improve so you can become the person you want to be, **you** must make things change. You must take control of your life instead of letting your desires and circumstances control you. Take responsibility for your mistakes without beating yourself up. Tell yourself that though it would have been difficult to control yourself those times you didn't, and though it will take significant effort for you to take charge, you will regain control starting now. By accepting responsibility to change, you are taking the first step toward the self-control and happiness you seek.

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