

GYE's non-focus on teshuva(!)

Posted by Jj123 - 13 Aug 2020 18:20

"don't worry about teshuva yet"

This is something I see alot here, if not explicitly, strongly implied.

if I'm understanding correctly, the reason for this approach is that mixing in teshuva can make people feel alot worse when they fall, and more hopeless. Especially when lives are at stake, it's important to get things under control for their own sake, and not get overly myopic.

And i get it.

I think however, that this comes from a misunderstanding of teshuva. Teshuva process has four steps azivas hacheit, charata, viduy, and Kabbalah Al ha'asid.

As far as I know everyone agrees that, azivas hacheit, or not repeating the sin, comes before Kabbalah Al ha'asid, or accepting to not repeat the sin.

For some things, azivas hacheit is simple. Someone usually doesn't eat shaleshuedes on shabbos, so he decides to start. Someone forgets tefillin or tzitzis, once in a while, and he decides to be more consistent. He is ready for Kabbalah al ha'asid.

For things in life that are harder, that we most desperately need to fix, azivas hacheit is really, really hard. Someone who loses his temper easily, or struggles with relationship with parents/kibbud av va'em, or anything that requires changing ourseves and not just an action, is a long road that requires planning and small steps and truckloads of time and effort. Big picture. Practical steps. Goals along the way. Azivas hacheit for the real stuff can take months! Years!

And gye might be the first I've actually engaged in teshuva. Yes, from year to year ive tried small Kabbalos. I've said viduy and promised to fix the worst parts of me. But that was not real teshuva. Yes, there was charata, yes, there was viduy, and yes there was a kabbalah Al ha'asid. And I really meant it.

But there was no azivas hacheit. For some reason, I avoided it, and I think it's the easiest step to "forget". Because I can feel like i've done teshuva without it, and it's hard! Really hard!

But it's the core of teshuva.

So yes, it's dangerous to focus on viduy, charata, and Kabbalah Al ha'asid alone. I know from experience. It left me burnt out and hopeless and alot less motivated/likely to change than if I just left those alone. But thats not teshuva. It's a stupid recipe for disaster.

Let us all proudly partake in azivas hacheit, knowing that it takes time effort, planning and a whole lotta guts. Azivas hacheit is a process. And when we realize this we can proudly be knee deep in the teshuva process, in a place where we realize that setbacks and failures are part of the journey.

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Re: GYE's non-focus on teshuva(!)
Posted by Snowflake - 13 Aug 2020 18:37

Dov talks a lot about it. I think he makes a nafka mina between an addict and a non-addict. The way I understood it, it works really well for a non-addict. Just, confess, repent, try changing your filters, etc. But for the addict, very long story short, teshuva becomes some sort of "excuse" for acting out and the poor guy gets trapped in a vicious cycle. Sin->Feel horrible at himself->Promises to never do it again, says tachanun while punching his chest real hard->(does nothing practical to change things)->sin again->rinse repeat. Since he's always "trying" and being "sorry" for doing it, he just goes on with it and never actually stops. Teshuva becomes some sort of excuse for him to go on.

But I think I get what you mean, some REAL teshuva, the way it's supposed to be, then yeah perhaps. But I think, for an addict, it's best to think of it as a disease rather than a chet. It's too easy to get trapped into that perpetual cycle I just described. At least for me, it worked better by not focusing on the teshuva process itself, but rather, seeing it as a disease that needs to be treated on a daily basis so I can function better. It also goes back to perhaps a more basic level, even before chet, which I'd say is not being insane or sick. I don't think any sane person would like to do something insane day after day and lead a hellish life or wish he was sick (that's insane). So in one way, it's more basic than not sinning. It's about learning how to be sane and healthy. The way I like to think of it is, I'm not doing anyone any favours by being sober, not even to Hashem. Much like when I'm eating or drinking or sleeping I'm not doing these things for someone else. I'm the one who has the most to gain by being sober. Does that make sense?

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Re: GYE's non-focus on teshuva(!)
Posted by Jj123 - 13 Aug 2020 19:27

Thanks for the response.

A couple of points:

1) If someone is at the point where their lives is getting destroyed, and they keep acting in a destructive manner anyway, then yes, teshuva is kinda missing the point. If someone chas vishalom has a drinking problem and it's landed him the hospital, it would be ridiculous to tell him to do teshuva for "vinishmartem mi'od linafshosaychem" etc. We aren't aiming to be sane people just because there is an explicit passuk, and if not for it...

2) that cycle you speak of only exists because of a lack of understanding. For some people azivas hacheit can mean joining a 12-step group. Just like azivas hacheit for someone who isn't respectful to his his wife might entail marriage therapy.

3) It's dangerous to conflate aveiros that require one to be more midakdeik in certain areas of halacha with ones that require a person to change. The rambam talks about "mishaneh shimo" that a person becomes a different person than he was before the teshuva. That happens when there is real change happening. Lack of appreciation of this difference is what leads to the vicious cycle you mentioned, I think.

Although I've been struggling with this for some time now, I don't consider myself an addict. Perhaps i can't appreciate the way it destroys lives like you do.

Thanks for taking the time to answer

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Re: GYE's non-focus on teshuva(!)

Posted by wilnevergiveup - 13 Aug 2020 20:09

I think it's as simple as "you have to do what works". If *teshuva* (whatever that means to you) works then great.

Most of us are deeply involved in the *azivas hachet* part. I think most of us honestly want to stop just cant. If the traditional *teshuva* process leads you repeatedly on a vicious cycle then you obviously need to try something else.

See R' Yona Sharei Teshuva (??? ?????, ??? ?, ????) where he explains that for the occasional sin a person should first have *charatah* and then *azivas hacheit*. However someone for whom the sin was *nasah lo keheter* (became like a permitted act in his mind) he should start with *azivas hacheit*.

How do you understand stopping without actually stopping? if whatever you do to stop doesn't work then that's not called *azivas hacheit*. You have to stop for *azivas hacheit* not not pretend to start the *teshuva* process but not actually make any progress.

I've been doing "*azivas hacheit*" for years but wasn't actually doing anything.

What *azivas hacheit* really means is taking the steps that you need to take, using the tools that work for you that will actually help you stop. For most of us in the *nasah lo keheter* boat the first step, *azivas hacheit* is only accomplished once we have taken the proper steps to stop.

When people here say "don't worry about teshuva" they don't mean "don't stop". What they mean (or at least should mean) is don't worry about the other components of *teshuvah* mainly *charatah* until you have this under control, this is exactly in line with R' Yonah.

Take the steps to stop and don't worry about when and how G-D will forgive you or when your sins will be atoned, first you've got to figure out how to stop.

I hope this is understandable.

All the best,

Wilnevergiveup

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Re: GYE's non-focus on teshuva(!)
Posted by Snowflake - 14 Aug 2020 13:51

@jj123

I think we both agree but we're just talking about semantics. For me though, it was really destroying my life in many ways. I still do not know if I'm an addict or not in the strict sense, but some of the 12 steps really helped me. Particularly knowing that I'm powerless over lust and had to be very aggressive by cutting it out of my life. For me though, it was really not about being more medakdek in teshuva, it really entailed making a complete change in the way I live my life.

@wilnevergiveup

Totally agree with you. I think most of us (I speak for myself at least), would just focus on the charata part, but not be very practical about how to stop.

My point is, many people, myself included would use teshuva as an excuse or even the "charata". "But I feel so terrible about it, yada, yada" then on the next day go back to it. So either way, what works for you. If being more medakdek on what teshuva really means or 12 steps or taphsic. I just feel people sometimes aren't very practical. I'm all in favour of being more pragmatic even if it means foregoing the charata process. BTW if you think about it, perhaps true charata is being more pragmatic. Saying you hate yourself for doing it perhaps is not even true charata.

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Re: GYE's non-focus on teshuva(!)
Posted by Jj123 - 14 Aug 2020 17:18

Thanks y'all for fleshing things out regarding addicted people.

Regarding teshuva misconceptions and teshuva as a focus for non-addicts, would y'all agree with this?:

Trying to "check the box" for teshuva is totally missing the point. Trying to get rid of the personal guilt through teshuva is missing the point. Trying to only avoid onesh is missing the point.

Teshuva isn't a band-aid, it's a open heart surgery.

And until we get that, it's dangerous to use the word teshuva anywhere near anything that requires it. Because it'll cheapen and sabotage the process.

So perhaps it is better even for people more on the not-addicted side of the spectrum that teshuva isn't mentioned.

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Re: GYE's non-focus on teshuva(!)
Posted by Aaron1 - 14 Aug 2020 19:17

Wow! Great points being made.

I definitely agree that sometimes our over-association of *teshuva* with *yirat ha'onesh* leaves us in murky waters. That being said, I find a lot of the handbooks, booklets, and PDFs circulating on the site do give a balanced *hashkafa*.

Regardless, in my opinion, *teshuva* is inherently built into the GYE/12-step program(s). It's feasible that someone might think to themselves, "I refuse to eat lobster any more, but, man, those were the days!" or "Nah, that hechsher wasn't that bad." In case 1, there is some level of *charata* missing, and in case 2, there is some level of *vidui* missing. However, I don't think it's reasonable to worry that someone who joins GYE and performs *azivas hacheit* missed *vidui* and *charata*. From what I can tell, formerly-struggling non-addicts** don't reminisce or rationalize their previous behavior, and former addicts** certainly don't [****Apologies-** I don't know if those are the proper terms to use].

I think putting all our eggs in the basket of *azivas hacheit* is the way to go.

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Re: GYE's non-focus on teshuva(!)
Posted by Shmuel - 14 Aug 2020 20:41

[Jj123 wrote on 14 Aug 2020 17:18:](#)

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Teshuva isn't a band-aid, it's a open heart surgery.
I agree that we are agreeing

And until we get that, it's dangerous to use the word teshuva anywhere near anything that requires it. Because it'll cheapen and sabotage the process.

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This post answers your first post!

these are exactly the reasons (i think) that the WORD "teshuva" isnt used or is discouraged. Its ends up being a distraction. However, ACTUAL teshuva is exactly whats is being done here all the time! The "don't focus on teshuva" that you referred to is regarding the terminology! The methods are here just called other things.

Favt is many here having "doing teshuva"for years and gurnisht...

Levhaim

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Re: GYE's non-focus on teshuva(!)
Posted by Snowflake - 09 Sep 2020 18:19

Sums up exactly what I think.

What we do at GYE is true teshuva, but perhaps our misconceptions of what teshuva is could be a hurdle in recovery, in my opinion.

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