

My personal war against the YH

Posted by adam2014 - 03 Nov 2023 11:59

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Hi all,

I have been lurking in the shadows of GYE for a number of years and just in the last month or so, came into the light and started posting. I see that my posts are all over the place and decided to start a new Topic about me and my struggles and not hijack other peoples threads.

My story is simple and unfortunately common. I am in my 50's and happily married with two amazing kids and I am addicted to P and M. Have been for decades and I see it getting worse. My sex life with my wife is almost non-existent at this point as my focus is on P and M. It is easily available, never says no, never judges my performance, and gives me the variety that a 30+ year marriage doesn't. I am also going down a slippery slope in regards to the types of porn I am watching, they are getting darker and darker and things that in the past would have disgusted me are now things that I seek out. That scares me!

I come from a non-orthodox home and do not live in an observant neighborhood. I live in a town that if I had to say is mostly Reform and Conservative Jews. I hate putting labels on Jews, because a Jew is a Jew and their level of observance does not mean they are Less-Jewish than anyone else. I just say this for context so you know where I am at.

I am hesitant to call myself a Baal Teshuva, but I have greatly increased my observance in the last 8 years after my first trip to Israel. I still have a long way to go (like everyone) but HaShem has blessed me in so many ways and if this struggle was taken away, I think that I could climb so much higher. Maybe this is the final Nisayon that is holding me back? I don't know... only HaShem knows.

I am working through the F2F program and chatting with a few of you guys online. I am still not ready to speak on the phone about it. Hashem Help Me as graciously sent me his number and told me to call him anytime. He will be my first call when I get the courage.

I want to limit the technology in my life and try to give myself a little advantage in this fight. I work in IT so I am surrounded by Smartphones and unfiltered computers all day. I am trying to get rid of my personal smartphone and use a dumb phone. I want to do it for a few reasons.

One, it is the first choice that I go to when I want to act out. Second, every time that I pull it out of my pocket it will be a reminder of the battle that I am in. I know that it is far from the only problem I am facing, but I think that both logistically and symbolically it will greatly enhance my chances.

At this point 7 days is my best, with normally 2 to 3 days seems to be the norm.

That is my story and would appreciate any thoughts, ideas, prayers, well wishes or any kind of inspiration you guys could give. This website seems to be full of amazing people and would like to get to know as many of you as possible.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by bright - 03 Mar 2024 06:07

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[adam2014 wrote on 01 Mar 2024 11:19:](#)

What a great conversation you guys are having. I am learning so much from reading your words. Let me throw out this simple but difficult question.

Let's say that HaShem's plan for me was to die in a car accident. Of course, there was nothing I could do to prepare for it other than wear my seatbelt, not play with my phone while driving, not speed, and do things like that. That is not something that I would pray for; it has never entered my mind. Would any amount of davening or devotion to HaShem prevent that from happening?

Is Hashem's plan for all of us unchangeable, or does HaShem make adjustments along the way based on outside circumstances? If I lived the most authentic, observant HaShem-focused life... Would he possibly change the decree of me dying in the crash, or would it happen regardless of how I lived my life?

I bring this up because I was telling someone about how thankful I was for the prayers for my friend and how it turned out well (so far); they chuckled and said, "Thank the doctors, not your friends."

With the risk of incurring their wrath, I would suggest you dont hang out with that someone...

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by adam2014 - 03 Mar 2024 11:44

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With the risk of incurring their wrath, I would suggest you don't hang out with that someone...

This is one of the bad things about living in a non-frum community. Most of the people that live around me are Jewish but don't even believe in God! My extended family are almost all atheists, even though they are Jewish. For them, it is a Social Status not a faith. I could go on and on about that.. LOL

I would be pretty lonely if I separated myself from every person who thinks that way. That is another test that HaShem has given me.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by bright - 05 Mar 2024 05:57

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I def hear that didnt realize that, sorry. So make sure to keep on posting when you hear those questions. Build yourself up. Maybe read reb avigdor millers book rejoice oh youth. It covers the basica in a prety clear way. There may be others that are better, thats just what i read.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by retrych - 05 Mar 2024 17:58

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If not, what are we asking for every yom kippur? Well, I guess kaparah is pretty important.

As Captian said, some decrees may be more set in stone than others, but we have teaching and stories that things such as davening and chessed can overturn those decrees. We even see with MOshe, Hashem told him to stop davening to enter the land or Israel, because if he did the decree against it would be torn up, and it was vital he not be allowed to go in.

On the other hand, people arent always answered, sometimes things just need to happen. I don't know.

As for Hashem changing his plan, I dont know how it works, because He also knew you would daven or give tzedaka so maybe it was the plan? There are people who understand these things, I'm not yet one of them.

As for your question that you would never have davened not to have the crash, if you daven for your wellbeing and your future I assume ti would be included?

As for your friends comments, by that logic, forget the doctors and thank the treatments, all the doctors did was give them to her, the treatments did all the work...

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by yitzchokm - 05 Mar 2024 18:36

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Chazal say that Hashem made the Matriarchs childless because he desired their prayers. Sometimes there are decrees so that we pray and connect to Hashem. After doing so He answers our prayers. At other times bad things were decreed on us before we were born because of our Mazal but Tosafos writes that our Mazal can be changed through prayer. I don't know the mechanism of why that works. The question is that if it was decreed according to the Mazal then it must have been the best thing for us so why should that change through prayer? A third reason why bad things happen are because of punishment but that can be overturned

through Teshuva and prayer that our Teshuva be accepted. A fourth reason for prayer is because Hashem has mercy on us and answers our prayers even when we aren't worthy. This is the meaning of the word ?????? in Moshe Rabbienu's prayer. He was asking that Hashem grant him a present even though he wasn't worthy of receiving it. There are possibly other reasons for prayer.

Prayers aren't always answered but we do surgeries too even when the success rate isn't 100%. We do the surgeries and pray because there is a possibility that they will change the circumstances.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by BennyH - 05 Mar 2024 19:10

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Comparing prayer to pancreatic surgery is actually exactly how I feel. Thank you.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by bright - 06 Mar 2024 06:26

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If I may ask. Is there something about davening that really irks you? I can tell you that I have similar questions, doubts and general blahness in other areas that really bother me. Ive discovered that it basically stems from the way I relate to those issues because of my past traumas , skewed chinuch, or black and white thinking etc. Dont know if thats relevant to you, but maybe... In general, though these are good solid questions, most people can live with not knowing the answers perfectly fine, just as we dont understand fundamental concepts such as yediah bechira, or tzimtzum, despite those being integral to understanding what's going on in yiddishkeit. We naturally function very well with having those questions on the back burner.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by BennyH - 06 Mar 2024 21:22

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[bright wrote on 06 Mar 2024 06:26:](#)

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I'm assuming your addressing this to me, so let me try to answer.

The difference between not knowing the answers about tefillah and other questions are obvious, I think.

For example, ????? ??????. I *know* I have ????? because Hashem said ????? ??????. The fact that I don't understand how that works with ????? '?' doesn't bother me in the slightest because I know that I have a tiny peanut brain and this is a deep philosophical concept, that might not even be penetrable by a human mind because we're constrained by concepts such as time and space. So I can happily move along with my life.

Same goes for ?????, which is an even more abstract problem. I *know* Hashem created the world for a reason, I don't have to understand *how* He did that for me to happily move along with my life. The topic literally does not interest me.

However, I think tefillah is totally different. Inherently, it's an ????? ??????. It requires emotional energy. It requires being vulnerable. It requires opening oneself up to potential rejection (by asking for something you want, for example - see more below). It's deeply personal.

So if you're at a dead end at understanding how the mechanism of ???? actually works, it becomes very hard to muster that emotional energy and personal vulnerability. You can't *engage in a relationship* when you're completely in the dark about whether there is a relationship here at all.

Over the last few days, I've been thinking about my difficulties with tefillah (therapy helped trigger some of these ruminations), and I came up with two reasons why I find it so hard these days:

### **1. Tefillah is a conversation, and conversations are hard when you're depressed**

I find conversations in general completely draining these days, and I avoid them, unless they are enjoyable to me, or unless they are initiated by the other party, such as my chavrusa or a friend. In the beginning I might be dragging along but at some point during the conversation I'll become involved and animated.

I avoid going to shul, I avoid going to social events, and I avoid making phone calls that I should be making, like to my parents or siblings. Just moving my lips, and mustering up words to belch out and to formulate thoughts is so hard.

So similarly, I find having a conversation with Hashem extremely draining so I avoid it.

In order for tefillah to be meaningful, you need to apply feeling and thought to the words, and I don't apply feelings and thoughts to anything these days, so what's left of tefillah is just the mumbling of the words, and mumbling thousands upon thousands of words every day without thought behind them is very hard on the mumble muscles.

### **2. I avoid rejection at all cost**

I have an issue with rejection. That applies to many areas in my life. I'd rather clam up and not ask for the thing I want if there is a reasonable chance that I will be rejected. I don't yet fully understand why that is, but I know that it's a fact.

So even if I know intellectually that *sometimes* Hashem answers ?????, when all the stars align (i.e., when it's part of His plan for you, when you're not undeserving because of past ?????, when you passed the test of asking hard enough, when you sufficiently submitted to the knowledge that He has the power over all, etc), there still is a massive possibility that he won't (i.e., in cases where all the stars *do not* align).

And since I have no earthly way of knowing whether I will be successful in my prayer today or not, I'm opening myself up for massive disappointment in being rejected. So I'd rather not ask.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by yitzchokm - 06 Mar 2024 21:37

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I have a similar problem due to bipolar disorder. The thing I found most useful was learning Tehillim Mikraos Gedolos with the meforshim, and the commentaries in the siddur Otzar Hatefillos. It doesn't help me enough with saying the words but at least it keeps me very connected with the content and concept of prayer. It also makes davening very meaningful for me on the scarce days that I have some Yishuv Hadaas.

I acknowledge that mumbling the words is much more meaningful to Hashem than learning about davening without davening but it is extremely painful for me to daven. I frequently get debilitating anxiety and depression from davening and it makes me feel worthless so more often than not I avoid the confrontation with davening altogether. I am aware that these emotions are irrational but knowing that doesn't get rid of them. I still daven when I am up to it, usually Mincha or Maariv, and I usually mumble the words. Sometimes I am capable of tuning into the meaning of the words of the first bracha of Shemoneh Esrei and sometimes I can daven slowly and clearly without thinking about the meaning of the words. Once in a while I feel better. I am able to daven Shacharis, tune into the meaning of the words and daven the whole davening. Usually this happens on a Shabbos.

It would have helped if I wasn't scorned by my wife and criticized by my father for not being capable of davening Shacharis properly or with minyan most of my life due to a sleep disorder, clinical depression or mania. At least I would have enjoyed davening at other times. Their behavior associated davening for me with all the negative moods I experience during davening. Being scorned and called slurs by my wife made me feel anxious, depressed and worthless every time I took out my Tefillin. Being criticized by my father tore open the old wounds. I still feel the same whenever I take out my Tefillin or whenever I open a siddur and my father is present in the house or can theoretically walk into the house at any moment, even if I know he won't. If they would have complimented me instead for every effort I made, or at least ignored my davening, and respected me for everything else I stand for in Yiddishkeit things would have been much better.

Naturally, I loved davening when my mood was balanced before they behaved the way they did. This is why I am truly inspired to learn about the meaning of the words of davening. I am deeply



connected to that emotionally and spiritually.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by bright - 07 Mar 2024 01:02

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[Bennyh wrote on 06 Mar 2024 21:22:](#)

[bright wrote on 06 Mar 2024 06:26:](#)

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If I am understanding you correctly, I totally get it and there are many similar thoughts that go through my head that makes davening difficult. For example at many times in my life I could not feel loved, so naturally a relationship with a loving GD was very difficult and all parts of that relationship, including prayer. That also brought up all sorts of questions similar to the ones you've been having. After many futile conversations with people much wiser than me about these questions, never satisfied. Years later I came to recognize was that there will not be any answer that will sooth my soul, because the questions are not based on an intellectual misunderstandings but emotional ones. Working on areas targeting these specific issues earned me more clarity and peace than any shtickel Torah. In summary, I really feel for you. I totally get that many parts of Yids daily life can seem unrelatable and downright unsympathetic on people who are working on emotional issues. Its frustrating and lonely. The good news is theres a whole website here of the most understanding people in the world.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by youknowwho - 07 Mar 2024 02:08

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[bright wrote:](#)

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What a beautiful reply to these meaningful questions...thank you bright!!

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by chaimoigen - 07 Mar 2024 07:19

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This is a powerful conversation, about an emotional topic. There's a lot of vulnerability here. Tefilla is something a person has to work out personally, lectures don't really help, which is mostly why I've kept quiet.

I just want to share one realization that has been very meaningful for me. To me, this somewhat addresses your point about "begging", Benny, (though I don't agree with the exact way you characterize it). And maybe the part about "why daven if there's no reason to think that the answer will be yes" (and I don't exactly agree there too). This has worked for me. Maybe it will be helpful for you, or some of the good folks here.

I think There's a whole world of difference between expressing your **wants**, and coming to fulfill **a need**. Need is visceral.

When you come to someone with a **need**, you are at your most vulnerable, and the act itself of having such a conversation creates a relationship on a whole different level.

We come and stand before Hashem and whisper to him all of our **needs**. ???? ??????. It's an act that has us recognizing how much we really need, and upon Whom it is we need to come on to. When we ask, with humility, with praise and thanks for all He has done, and with the acute realization that we are naked and helpless but for him; this process creates a relationship and changes us. That's what it's supposed to be about.

The results, in terms of **fulfillment** are up to Him. The result of the **process** is up to me. I choose to daven because (when I am able to focus properly), I feel like a completely different person afterwards. Sometimes I feel like an infant resting on his mother's shoulder. Vulnerable, completely helpless, and totally at peace. Those are the good days.

(If you don't appreciate this, it's fine, but please don't knock it, because it's a very personal piece of my heart, and I don't think I've shared it before).

Just for the fun of it I will share the closing paragraph of one of my favorite poems, *Two Tramps Out Of The Mud* , by Robert Frost. It's not about Tefilla but it relates:

But yield who will to their separation,  
My object in living is to unite  
My avocation and my vocation  
As my two eyes make one in sight.  
Only where love and need are one,  
And the work is play for mortal stakes,  
Is the deed ever really done  
For heaven and the future's sakes.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by adam2014 - 07 Mar 2024 11:34

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Boker Tov... First off, THANK YOU all for these heartfelt replies and comments. I am definitely not alone in what I am going through. The feelings and wisdom that are coming through every word are palatable. This conversation strikes right at the nerve of my existence. My relationship with HaShem.

Reading about the struggles of those of you who chose to respond is beyond powerful. I applaud your courage to put these feelings into words. They are not just words; they are your soul on display for all of us to see, feel, and absorb into our own lives. I could find no greater joy than if my words triggered a conversation that ultimately helped someone!

I want to talk a little about something that happened to me the other day. I met with a Rabbi I had never met before. He was someone that a close friend recommended that I speak to. He was in Israel, so we did it over Zoom. This Rabbi listened to me "rant, bitch, complain" for about 15 minutes and then lowered his head and said..."WOW. You got a lot going on in there," pointing at his brain...

He then quoted Torah, Gemara, and other sources to explain what he had gleaned from my rambling words. It came down to a very simple and straightforward answer to a very complex question.

He told me that I needed to "Find Myself"—not change or fix myself. He said that I had to dig deep and find out who I truly was. He felt that I was just lost, looking for my way home. While I didn't talk about my struggles regarding P&M, what he was saying rang true on many levels.

I am a guy with total emunah in HaShem. I am a guy who bases his life on the 613 Mitzvot and struggles every day to do it a little better than yesterday. True Emunah doesn't need to know how or why, just to believe. I can feel this in all of you. We are all trying to find our way home.

Whether it is prayer, P&M, or any other struggle, we have to get back to our core and realize that we are not broken, defective, perverts, or degenerates. We are made in HaShem's image and we have just lost our way. I started davening again, I wrapped again, I dove deeply into every word, and read it like it was the first time reading it. It was a slow process; I didn't get to all of the prayers; I did finish my davening with a deep, difficult conversation with HaShem that ended it with tears running down my face and a promise to talk again very soon.

It is obvious that HaShem led me here, that more struggles are on my horizon, and even more obvious that HaShem is leading me and all of us home. Let us all get there as quickly as possible.

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Re: My personal war against the YH  
Posted by davidt - 07 Mar 2024 14:56

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[adam2014 wrote on 07 Mar 2024 11:34:](#)

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It is obvious that **HaShem led me here, that more struggles are on my horizon, and even more obvious that HaShem is leading me and all of us home**. Let us all get there as quickly as possible.

These words are extremely powerful!

Let's internalize them.

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