

A letter to my Rebbi

Posted by chosemyshem - 31 May 2024 14:44

Dear Rebbi,

I hope this letter finds you well. I apologize for sending a letter instead of telling you this in person, but it's still difficult for me to talk about these things. I'll get straight to the point.

You probably don't recall this incident way back when I was in Yeshiva. But one time I searched for pornographic content on the yeshiva's computers, and Rabbi X must've seen and told you. I remember that night at our seder you sat us down in a private corner of the beis medrash instead of our usual seat, and clearly wanted to talk to me about the incident. But you didn't.

I guess I just want to know why you didn't?

It's not that I'm second guessing your chinuch decisions. We both know that I've turned out pretty okay, and you take a very significant amount of the credit for that. But still, I want to know, why?

Maybe the question will make more sense if I explain why I'm asking. You see, the reason this incident came to mind was because a wise man told me to write out the entire history of my "acting out" to help me determine if I should join Sexaholics Anonymous. Despite my wonderful marriage, my serious commitment to sedarim, and my growth in avodas hashem, I somehow very often find myself spending hours watching pornography and masturbating. I don't know why and I just can't seem to stop. It's ruining my job, it's hurting my shalom bayis (although my wife does not know about this problem the effects are undeniable), and it's devouring my life.

I was never able to speak to anyone (even you!) about this. Not while I was a bochur and it was a "normal" problem, and certainly not after I was married and had no explanation as to why the problem was continuing. Not until I was driven to GYE and even that didn't help. Only then did I come to the extreme of talking to a real, albeit anonymous, person about my hidden shame.

That moment when you sat down with me in the corner of the bais medrash was the closest I

ever came to opening up about my problem. I remember the fear of being exposed and the shame that I felt. But I also remember the hope that finally, maybe finally, I'd be able to unload the burden.

Of course you didn't know my history of pornography abuse to know that it was more than a one-time "normal bochur tayveh." And how was anyone supposed to know that the problem would continue to haunt me so aggressively. It's even very likely that talking to me would have shamed me into withdrawing from our relationship and caused **vastly** more harm than good. But that one moment, more than any other in my ignominious career of acting out, brings to mind those famous words, "of all sad words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these: 'it might have been'."

I don't know if I'm writing this for an answer, or just to get this off my chest. And I'm certainly not writing it to change how you interact with other bochurim. Honestly, that was a pretty small molehill in the mountain of acting out. But I find it weighing on me. And so I wrote this letter. But I will not send it. Because you see Rebbi, even though you might be able to help me now like you might've been able to help me then, I'm still trapped behind the same wall of shame that I was trapped behind then.

Best,

Shem

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Re: A letter to my Rebbi

Posted by ??? ????? ????? ??? - 07 Jun 2024 00:48

[Muttel wrote on 06 Jun 2024 22:33:](#)

I'm a Rebbi and a talmid came to me yesterday asking for permission (bless him for doing that!) to watch movies this off shabbos. I immediately asked him if that comes along with masturbation. He owned up to watching porn since he's 12 and masturbating for years as well. I took the opposite approach of choosemyshem's Rebbi and had a long talk with him today - essentially giving him the talk I got from HHM (minus marriage related advice) along with the advice of many others here.

Way to go, Muttel! That's awesome.

At first I wasn't sure if I agreed with "immediately asked him if that comes along with masturbation." Movies does not necessarily mean masturbation. But after further reflection, I love it. The bochur is confiding in you and beginning a conversation about something that is outside the general norms of yeshiva behavior. So, why not go there? It's not like masturbation is an uncommon struggle. And what's the worst that will happen? "No, rebbi, b"h, I am careful about that and don't have any struggle with it."

I am confident that this talmid will feel comfortable reaching out to you again for further support around porn/masturbation issues and you will be that support and mentor that so many of us over here wished we had in our bochur days.

Love it, love it, love it!

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Re: A letter to my Rebbi

Posted by Muttel - 07 Jun 2024 01:50

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Thanks for the accolades! Just to put you at ease, he indicated that he'd had masturbating issues - for purposes of brevity I left out the devarim hanikarim..... bh he's accepted HHM's 30 day challenge!

feels weird running someone else's challenge when I haven't even hit 30 days yet...
whatever.....

Muttel

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Re: A letter to my Rebbi

Posted by chosemyshem - 07 Jun 2024 13:37

[Muttel wrote on 06 Jun 2024 22:33:](#)

@chosemyshem and everyone else here - something happened today that may make us feel

better. It may give us hope and allow us to pacify our inner child that has suffered far too long in one way or another.

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He was flabbergasted at the tools and the idea of living "trigger free". I'll keep everyone posted on his shteigen, but know that our falls can help others..... even the very young (19).....

have a great night!

Muttel

Reb Muttel this is true gadlus. You made my day!

May you be zocheh to continue your amazing journey.

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Re: A letter to my Rebbi

Posted by funbuchur - 09 Jun 2024 15:50

Amazing. I wish I had a teacher that helped me like this. Even when I told one of them my problems I was told it wasn't a big deal and just to ignore it. I think that's what they tell teachers to say which may be right or wrong I don't know. anyhow I always dreamed of having a rebbe acknowledge and help me with it.

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