

Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by Dov - 08 Jun 2009 21:53

HeiligeH PinteleH Yid, Aaron4, Hoping, etc, etc.,

What I am about to share is for me, not necessarily for you. You may feel completely differently or flat-out disagree and **Kol Hakavod, precious brothers!**

This drash/mussar section of the thread is enlightening and really beautiful, as others have posted. **However, in the spirit of "veHachayos Ratzon Vashov"**, I need to take a deep breath and back up at times like this. I need to remember that (beautiful and true) Torah insights into what the YH is doing, what we are doing, how we do it, etc., never helped me get sober when I was acting out. They are just a luxury we can "afford" in sobriety. They still, are not my mainstay, just a chizzuk and part of my "pay'rosayhem ba'olam hazeh", perhaps...but...

Sof Davar, when a "nisayon" occurs for me, what saves me is **plain and poshut** the Ribono Shel Olam. Not **my** tefillah, nor my efforts against the YH. They may be hishtadlus, like going to work, battle, etc. All I know is that **I** let Him in, calling out to Him in my **worst** moment because **I** do not want to act out and (eventually) die. He does the rest.

In retrospect there is glory in recovery and I *can* appreciate the beauty of what has happened, yes. But in the moment (*and before it*) I can't afford to think of myself as doing any tikkunim, fulfilling a mitzvah/prophecy/whatever. The most frustrating days for my acting out used to be (bedavka) aseres yemei teshuvah, sefira (especially *yesod* days!). These things put the struggle on my plate. When I struggle within a **Torah** context it just proves too complicated for me and I struggle. When I struggle, I get in trouble. And "trouble" is *really* bad for my health.

I do not think of myself, in sobriety or in acting out, as reflecting anything good or bad about this generation or the Jewish people. I am a holy yid like you and any other yid, who is also just another addict in recovery. In that respect I am very much like the goy sitting next to me at the meeting, who may be my sponsor or sponsee.

Sorry if anyone finds this offending or upsetting. It is not the truth, just what works for me so far. It may change tomorrow! Still, today I need to be honest about what works and what doesn't, so far, for me. Much love and admiration for each of you - Dov

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 05 Jul 2009 16:08

Hey everyone, I asked Rabbi Twerski about our idea of a "Torah-Based 12 Step program" and you can see his answer [over here](#).

So where does that leave us now?

Boruch and/or Dov - would one/both of you be willing to offer what Rabbi Twerski suggests ("hashkafa meetings with a competent instructor at convenient intervals")?

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 05 Jul 2009 16:20

Here's the next question I sent Rabbi Twerski now:

Thank you very much for your reply. I put it up on our site here:

www.guardureyes.com/GUE/RTwerski/groupsforwho2.asp

I will also let the relevant parties involved in this discussion know what the Rav feels.

I will ask some of the "Talmidai Chachamim" on our network who are also in SA, if they want to offer this type of Hashkafa meeting in a phone conference (at convenient intervals) for other Yidden in SA. Or does the Rav perhaps have someone to suggest for this idea?

Also if I may ask, what kind of issues these "Hashkafa meetings" address (or should it just be a question and answer discussion, with someone competent)?

Perhaps a few of us on guardyoureyes should have a phone conference with the Rav to hear what kind of issues the Rav thinks might be important to clarify in such "Hashkafa meetings"?

Thank you so much for the invaluable guidance.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by the.guard - 05 Jul 2009 17:27

Rabbi Twerski Responds:

Questions and answers allow people to bring up their concerns and issues.

A small dose of Mesilas Yescharim may be good. I am now preparing 10 minute segments of Mesilas Yescharim.

Twerski

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by Dov - 05 Jul 2009 19:07

W/respect to Rav Twerski - It is **direct answers to specific program issues** that you are looking for, Guard, no?

Incidentally, I read "Self Improvement? I'm Jewish!" many years ago.

It had great info, and the issue that stayed w/me the most was where the Rebbe wrote about the inevitable sacrifice *some* frum yidden may have to make of their anonymity in the course of the struggle to make 12-step recovery more acceptable and therefore available to more yidden. The sensitive issue of shidduchim was discussed nicely.

One thing I need to share with you, though, is that as I grew in SA recovery, I remember getting the distinct feeling that the rebbes explanation of the steps - particularly in his other books - was a bit watered-down. I particularly get this feeling when comparing it to the feelings I get when reading AA.

One more thing to get off my chest, particularly to Boruch and any other SA folks: I do not regularly read "SA" (the white book), as I find Alcoholics Anonymous much more useful, direct, and moving. No criticism of anyone, just the way it is for me...thanks.

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps

Posted by the.guard - 05 Jul 2009 19:48

W/respect to Rav Twerski - It is direct answers to **specific program issues** that you are looking for, Guard, no?

I'm not sure WHAT I'm looking for exactly. I've never been in an SA group so I don't know what issues we need to address. I think you or Boruch should know ;D

I remember getting the distinct feeling that the rebbes explanation of the steps - particularly in his other books - was a bit watered-down.

Hmm... This could be a result of "*Gadol Shimusho Yoser Milimudo*". Rabbi Twerski is a brilliant psychologist and has dealt with AA and 12-Step groups for many, many years. BUT, he himself was not an addict. So.... I guess it makes sense somewhat, that he may not have been able to capture in words the "life-saving" quality of the Steps. But this is a big Chiddush to me, I must say.

I find Alcoholics Anonymous much more useful, direct, and moving.

Makes sense... Duvid Chaim's group is going through the AA Big Book for that very reason!

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by Yosef - 05 Jul 2009 21:02

Hello Everyone,

My name is Yosef. I have started to follow your conversations here, and have finally been moved to respond. I would like to address some of the recent comments regarding Rabbi Twerski. I feel comfort in knowing that Rav Twerski has put his Hoskomo on this site. When I see his picture prominently displayed I must admit it gives me a good feeling (as though the loving eyes of the Chofetz Chaim are protectively looking after me). However, I have also read many of the Rav's comments and answers to your questions, and, I can only speak from my own experience when I say that I really don't feel that the Rav comes close to understanding MY ADDICTION the way many of you would. Now there may be many among you who feel differently about the Rav. Isn't that inevitable and the way it should be!. I'm just speaking about MY OWN individual experience - not yours or anyone elses. If I were to follow what seems TO ME to be Rabbi Twerski's glib advise,- it just doesn't hit the mark. It's not that he is saying anything that I strongly disagree with - he just doesn't speak to THIS NESHOMAH. This is not meant to be in anyway disrespectful of the Rav. No one can deny that he is a great scholar, a specialist in the addiction field and a fellow Yid who really cares. But Boruch Hashem I don't need to feel understood by EVERYONE anymore - including the good Rabbi. For those of you who feel that he understands you - please don't be upset - I am merely expressing my own very subjective feelings about the Rav's writings on sex addiction. I cannot express how important I think it is for me to trust my own feelings about what works for me, and I will try to not to be judgemental about whatever works for you. When it comes to this disease there are no easy cookie-cutter prescriptions or standardized tikkunim to follow. There is no one approach that will work for all of us. It also does not have to make any logical sense that I am somehow comforted by the picture of Rabbi Twerski - though I make no apologies for my lack of logic. If our Faith depended on logic then we would really be in trouble. Whatever feelings of "loving protection" Hashem gives me I see his intelligent and Holy face do not have to have any connection with how I perceive his thoughts about my disease.

For me THE KEY TO RECOVERY IS SIMPLE HONEST CONNECTION WITH REGULAR PEOPLE LIKE ME.

We should all be Blessed,

Yosef

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by the.guard - 05 Jul 2009 21:16

Hey Yosef, sounds like we have another SA guy on the forum. Am I correct? Welcome aboard! You sound **very wise!** We need guys like you, and we appreciate your honest feedback. I guess the saying "it takes one to know one" is really true. Rabbi Twerski may be a brilliant tzadik and psychologist with a world renowned expertise in addiction, but a simple ADDICT probably understand another addict better!! Amazing! Thank goodness that it's SO HARD to find a Gadol who was an addict too ;D

But at the same time, there is no other Gadol that could come close to Rabbi Twerski's qualifications on "addiction" who could lend guidance to our network. Speaking of which, what do you think of Rabbi Twerski's answers on [this page](#)? Sure sounds like he knows what he's talking about, no?

P.S. Hey Boruch, you said you had some big Rav who was sober for over 20 years or

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Re: Torah AND the 12-Steps
Posted by boruch - 06 Jul 2009 05:48

[dov wrote on 05 Jul 2009 19:07:](#)

One more thing to get off my chest, particularly to Boruch and any other SA folks: I do not

regularly read "SA" (the white book), as I find Alcoholics Anonymous much more useful, direct, and moving. No criticism of anyone, just the way it is for me...thanks.

Rashi in Bereishis quotes a maamar Chazal. Rav Yitzchok the Tanna asked, the Torah should have begun with HaChodesh Hazeh lochem, why did it begin with Breishis? Since the nations of the World will come with a complaint that klal Yisroel stole Eretz Yisroel we begin the Torah with Bereshis to show "koach maasov higid le'amo" -- that they are entitled to Eretz Yisroel because Hashem created the World and divides it how and when He sees fit. Hashem gave His people the information they needed to fight the enemy.

In similar vein we could ask that the Big Book should have begun with the Twelve Steps, why did it begin with 59 pages about Alcoholism? Because alcoholics need to know more than just 12 Steps they need all the information they can get to deal with their enemy, alcohol.

When the Big Book authors wrote,

[quote="Alcohics Anonymous xiii, Foreword to First Edition]we are sure that our way of living has its advantages for all.[/quote]

The "way of living" was referring to the Steps which are valuable and useful to anyone. However, as far as the tools of the program, which includes the knowledge about the specific compulsion, an alcoholic cannot live by the Steps alone, he desperately needs the information on Alcoholism in the first 59 pages and elsewhere in the Book.

The same is true for other addictions. True recovery is impossible without specific knowledge about the addiction. Now some argue, as All Addicts Anonymous, does, as Dov does, and as Duvid Chaim does, that all that is needed for recovery is substitution of the words in the Big Book with the words of that specific addiction and no further tools are needed from any other recovery program.

Here is my simple illustration of what I believe is the fallacy in that argument.

Debtors Anonymous is a 12-Step fellowship that addresses compulsive debting, over-spending and under-earning. They have spectacular results. They also use the Big Book and substitute "compulsive debting" for the word "alcohol". BeChasdei Hashem I have experienced miracles in that program and DA members frequently refer to it as a program in which miracles are commonplace. From my own exposure in that program, to both the problem and the recovery, I am convinced beyond any personal doubt that it is impossible to get solvency solely by substituting the words "compulsive debting" for the word "alcohol". As much as the 12-Steps are the program, G-d does not give something for nothing and without learning and working the DA program tools I believe that it is absolutely impossible for a compulsive debtor to attain solvency. I am convinced beyond any doubt that those who claim otherwise were just heavy debtors and not addicts.

Similarly in my experience, although in SA, unlike DA, it may be possible to get some sobriety by only using the Big Book, in my own personal experience from my recovery and that of my own sponsees, substitution of the word "alcohol" for the word "lust", similar to DA, is a very poor replacement for the specific knowledge on lust addiction in the White Book. Additionally I have found the 18 tools in the Chapter "Overcoming Lust and Temptation" to be vital.

I have also seen that among everyone I have met personally from SA, those who have the best recoveries have all very much internalized the White Book and used it heavily.

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