

NOT YOUR FAULT--HELP!

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 19 Dec 2009 18:10

I was trying to explain to my wife recently this idea that, "it's not your fault." After a fall, you can think that maybe you didn't have free will. I explained how it is a really helpful idea and how it keeps a person from wallowing in guilt afterwards.

I didn't do such a good job explaining. She thought it sounded, at best like a cop-out. And, at worst--very dangerous, especially if this should enter somebody's mind l'chatchilah.

Can anyone clarify?

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Re: NOT YOUR FAULT--HELP!

Posted by the.guard - 19 Dec 2009 21:30

Read #6 of the Attitude Handbook to her, slowly, and discuss it with her.

The last sentence of #6 probably holds the key to the clarification that she seeks.

*"But when we talk about the **present moment**, we can never know how much free will we have and we **must always** try our very best."*

See also: www.guardureyes.com/GUE/FAQ/FAQ20.asp

And here: www.guardureyes.com/GUE/FAQ/FAQ38.asp

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Re: NOT YOUR FAULT--HELP!

Posted by imtrying25 - 19 Dec 2009 21:37

Try this mashel. See if it works.

Wifes walking home holding a brand new crystal she just recieved as a gift from a really close
...then she falls ... on her way down the crysatl cracks into a
million pieces.

so now we have two routes. 1- sit and cry for a half hour how your so careless you should of
looked where you were going should of taken a taxi. Ruin the beautiful shabbos you were
planning. The next two weeks everytime someone calls let them hear in your voice that
something is really bothering you. lose patience with the kids. Scream and yell when a calm
word would of been more effective OR 2- you could say to your self how it wasnt your fault. Bad
things happen to everyone. Today just aint my day. This is the way hashem wanted it to be. Kol
mah de'uvid rachmana letav ovid. Etc etc.

friend. While walking she slips

Hope that helped a little EYEster.

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Re: NOT YOUR FAULT--HELP!

Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 20 Dec 2009 21:53

Hi eye. I have read your posts and see you are a great warrior. Before I begin, I need to
introduce myself. My name is Yaakov. I used to be an addict, but B"H, I have been healed
from the addiction. I was addicted for close to 20 years and for 15 years I attempted to break
this terrible addiction but I never had the strength nor courage to do so until I came to this
wonderful site and was able to get my addiction out in the open and realize that I am normal.
B"H, it is now 10 months of absolute freedom.

I know I will get criticized, so I will take a deep breath. Thank G-d for me, that Guard likes me.
This is not meant to be chutzpah, but I am really l'shem shamayim about this. But I really feel
strongly about what I am about to write. I have thought about this topic for a very long time now,
and I still do not have complete clarity on how to convey it.

Now, I would like to address your issue. I wish I would be able to clarify this issue you brought to the forefront, but unfortunately, I have to agree with your wife on this one. Most controversial issues on this site I remain silent, but this one I am very passionate about and I feel very strongly that this particular attitude is not only a cop-out and dangerous (which I wholeheartedly agree with and will discuss soon) but is immature. A true man is one who can admit his mistakes and ask forgiveness. This is not a sign of weakness but rather strength. We live in a generation where we wish not take any blame for ourselves. We always blame ALL of our problems on the next person or "our disease". I believe this attitude is one of the biggest hindrances to any self growth and it holds us back not only of our addiction but all of our character flaws. And if I may add, I have seen fellow addicts stumble over and over again because this attitude permeates in their subconscious. They are simply not ready to take responsibility for their actions. In my own personal life, I played the "blame game" for so many years. When I was young, it was brother's fault. Then it was my friend's fault. Then it was my teacher's fault. Then it was the SAT's fault. Then it was chemistry's fault. Then it was english comp's fault. And then it was psychology's fault. Then it was boss's fault. Then it was wife's fault. Then it was my ADHD's fault. Then it was therapists fault. And finally I was running out of people to blame it on. Then it was "I was born that way". But as I matured, I realized where the responsibility rests and I have the keys to change.

First allow me to address the sources on bechira and then we will revisit the issue of "taking the edge off guilt".

Regarding the sources, I do not want to elaborate too much, but I would like to encourage you to read Rambam's "hilchos teshuva", chapter 5, where he address all the basic ideas about bechira. For a more philosophical discussion , see chovos halevovos, shaar avodas elokim, perek 8. The material is too lengthy to repeat here, but if you are sincere in your quest, you will look up the sources. In my weak-minded understanding, after reading the Rambam, there is little room for the above belief that you quoted. But he makes it clear that our mitzvos and aveiros are a result of our bechira (NO distinction between past and present, it does not even make sense). He explains that this is one of the tenets of Jewish faith, and only a person who believes in this can be lead to teshuvah. There could be other opinions, but I personally could not find any that make the assertion you quoted. (And yes, I read the FAQ. In fact I once corresponded with Guard in this issue. The first FAQ, does not quote sources. The second one is a totally different issue; that is the issue using Hashem to fight the yetzer hara. And yes, the 12 steps idea of bringing Hashem into battle is a Jewish one. Though, the Jewish emphasis is slightly different, not for now. The famous question how that fits in with bechira is addressed by many.) Again, if I am misunderstanding the Rambam or if there are other mainstream opinions out there, forgive my ignorance.

Now I will explain why this is detrimental. Unless we really believe we are in control of our actions, it will be very hard to break our addiction. Our addiction, by definition, is lack of control. The more we believe we are not in control, and cannot be in control, we are feeding our addiction more. (As an aside, when you do research on people who failed 12 steps, it is because this point. See Recovery Nation for a very clear explanation of this phenomenon. The purpose of declaring powerlessness is two fold. But not for now.)

In my personal journey, it was at the moment that I realized it was my fault, and more importantly, ADMITTED to myself that I am in control of decisions, I am at fault, I am to blame, and it is MY responsibility and I WANT to change, was I able to change. [It has been over ten months without nisyonos, B"H.] You would be surprised to realize that most people do not really believe in free choice. I am not talking about what people have been trained to say they believe. But what they believe in their hearts is another thing. Internally, we are scared to admit it, because the blame falls on us and then we have to change.

Children constantly say "It was not my fault". But a grown man says, "I made a mistake, can you please forgive me." And I truly great man takes responsibility of all his actions even the ones that were not really his fault. [This does not imply that you can beat the addiction all alone with just will power, but rather it will be your driving force to recovery. More about this later]

So where does this leave us? What could we do to take the edge of the guilt? The first thing to realize is to have proper perspective on guilt/shame/regret (whatever word you like). Guilt/shame (don't get caught up in semantics) is only healthy if it leads to change. However, it can also lead to depression. [See this article from Rabbi Twereki](#). He wrote another one about the difference between guilt and depression which I cannot seem to locate.

The problem is most people cannot handle guilt as it often leads to depression, as we look at ourselves as failures. So this lead us to the second principle to do take the edge off the guilt. We just don't think about it. Even for me, it can be too overwhelming when I think about the terrible things I did. The shame is too strong. So what the baalei mussar tell us is to just not think about the past. It is usually not productive. We can't live in the the past. This is perhaps

the yesod that Guard meant to quote. But this is not because we are not responsible for it, but just because it is not productive to think about it. It is like a person who got himself into terrible debt. His main focus is to continue living a happy life while at the same time try to figure out how to pay back his loans. He cannot dwell on the mistakes he made that lead him to this situation. Nor can he dwell on the fact that he has tons of debts on his shoulders. He needs to focus on paying back. But that does not mean he is not at fault.

I know a person who, due to his terrible addiction for wealth, got himself into major mess, where he ended up stealing from the people who are closest to him. The person's life is obviously a disaster. But he cannot focus on all the bad things he did because he will get no where. Right now he is focusing on building a somewhat kosher normal life for himself. Only after he rebuilds himself can he go back to his past as he realizes what damage he did and try his best to make amends. And the same it is for us p**n addicts. Our primary focus is what we can do now to make it better. On Yom Kippur, we will dwell on our past mistakes. And for those that can handle it after maintaining sobriety. But now, we will dwell on our future potential.

There is a great sefer called "Vehaer Eneinu", about shemiras Eynayim. I read this every morning. It is a magnificent sefer, with tons of chizuk, advice and attitudes. In the back of the sefer, he includes a part of another sefer of his about simcha. Chapter 3 is devoted to this yesod. The idea of not allowing our aveiros wear us down. Also, read all of my dear friend bardichev's posts, who always make mention of this yesod

The third principle to realize to take the edge off the guilt is regarding addictions in general. We can debate from today till tomorrow how each one of us got ourselves into this mess in the first place. Was it our fault or was it not our fault. It makes no difference. One thing is clear; an addict's level of bechira is very low. What this means is that his pull for sin is great, and he does not know how to use his bechira faculties. This puts him at "low fault". A great read on this is Rav Dessler's kuntras habechira, vol I, page 111. I discussed on my succha thread some sources that make it clear once a person is an addict, his bechira is down, way down. He may not even be punished for the later sins. And for most people, it means, they don't know how to maintain self control. This is where therapy/12 steps and the like fit in. We learn how to regain our self control. Because, as an addict, we simply do not know how to do it. And I think this something we all on the forum can relate to. Yes, we had bechira. But the odds were against us, and we simply were not trained on how to use it. This should not open the doors for continued addiction, but it eases the pain a bit and it is very true.

There are some other principles to understand but I want to move on to a very powerful principle. This is the fourth principle to take the “edge off the guilt”. We must realize that as much as we made a mistakes in our lives, we can fix the mistakes of our lives. Making mistakes is part of life. We are human. But as long as you do not fix your mistakes, you are a failure. But if you fix your mistakes, you are a hero. G-d has given us a great gift called teshuvah where we are able to undo our mistakes and lift ourselves higher than we were before the aveira. It makes no sense. And that is why G-d had to make a new “creation” just for baalei teshuvah. As long we were able to lift ourselves up, as you and all the other great warriors on this forum do, we become heros. The seforim tell us that G-d gives these challenges to the special people, and by overcoming lust we are actually raising the world. A great read on this is in Arvei Nachal parshas Ki Seitse. Understanding the greatness of teshuvah can be so liberating and uplifting. People who do not take the time to remind themselves how great they are for having accomplished true teshuvah, may risk remaining morbid. It is ok to proud of yourself once in a while.

Final Remarks: As much as we recognize we made mistakes, we need to forgive as well. This means a wife needs to forgive her husband (after seeing that he is sincere and is recovered) and more importantly, the recovered addict needs to forgive himself. This closes the last wounds. As stated above, we are human, and as humans we make mistakes. However, when we admit our mistakes, commit to never do it again, and effect the change, we are deserving of forgiveness. This forgiveness gives us closure. We are ready to move on in life. A lot goes into forgiveness. But not for now. This is a very healthy approach.

I hope you benefited from this.

With immense love to another sincere Yid,

Yaakov

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Re: NOT YOUR FAULT--HELP!

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 21 Dec 2009 12:33

Wow! Thanks Yaakov. You really put a lot of time and thought into that reply. I really appreciate it.

I'm glad also that you mentioned kuntras habachira from Rav Dessler. If you didn't, I was going to ask about it. It seems to resolve this question a bit. We always have free will, but not necessarily a high level of it.

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Re: NOT YOUR FAULT--HELP!

Posted by sci1977 - 27 Dec 2009 03:17

Eye,

Does your wife read your posts? I found out that when she reads them it helps both her and I both.

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Re: NOT YOUR FAULT--HELP!

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 27 Dec 2009 17:45

[sci1977 wrote on 27 Dec 2009 03:17:](#)

Eye,

Does your wife read your posts? I found out that when she reads them it helps both her and I both.

The BIG ones, yeah. Besides, I keep her updated on what I've been doing.

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Re: NOT YOUR FAULT--HELP!

Posted by sci1977 - 27 Dec 2009 21:49

Thanks for answering, I was just curious.

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