

The 18 Wheeler

Posted by azivashacheit101 - 07 May 2025 21:01

In this thread I will b"n post from "The 18 Wheeler" and some other relevant 12-Step literature.

I will also post some of my own 2 cents, things that work for me, and some of my very limited ESH (Experience, Strength and Hope).

I would love to hear feedback; all feedback and questions are welcome but please identify yourself first as either a member of SA (or other 12-Step group) or a non-member in order to put things into context.

The 18 Wheeler is found in the back of the SA white book and titled "How I Overcame Lust" it consists of 18 ways that the author (Roy K.) overcame his lust.

To be clear The 18 Wheeler is not SA but tools that go along with SA and come from concepts within the 12-Steps.

If you are someone who really needs SA then The 18-Wheeler will be very limited in how much it can help you.

SA is working the 12-Steps with a sponsor; when done properly and thoroughly it can take months and even years to complete.

The Steps are never really complete and recovering addicts live with Steps 1,3,10,11 and 12 for a lifetime.

SA also involves going to inperson meetings and participating in fellowship.

In person meetings are 1000 times more effective than posting on the GYE forum.

The purpose of this thread is 3 fold.

1) For those who need SA it is to familiarize them with SA concepts and into becoming more comfortable getting to their first meetings.

2) For those who do not need SA, many of the methods posted here can still be helpful getting out of our head and dealing with the lust issue.

3) For those already in SA this thread can serve as a spring board to discuss how we understand and apply SA principles.

All **bolded words** are from 12-Step literature and non-bolded writing are my own opinions and not necessarily consistent with SA principles.

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Re: The 18 Wheeler

Posted by azivashacheit101 - 16 Jun 2025 13:48

[iwillmanage wrote on 15 Jun 2025 21:16:](#)

I doubt Dov would give his haskomo to that, shame he isn't around these parts any more to respond. Either way I beg to differ. Powerless over lust means powerless over lust. Same goes with our lives. And there's absolutely nothing intellectual about it; if you're trying to understand the 'concept' or see if it fits with your hashkofo and worldview, you've taken it wrong. We're talking in the most practical way possible. We've been through all the philosophy and intellectual stuff more times than we can count, we're convinced that there's bechiro, if there's a nisoyon we must have the ability to overcome it etc etc, intellectually we're sure we weren't created doomed to sin, but none of that changed the facts an iota, this lust thing had beaten us. With all the tools and advice and therapy and GYE and thinking we had done and that we could dream of, practically we were hopelessly helpless when it came to lust. As long as we could manage our lives together with our lust, 'powerlessness' made no sense to us, after all it didn't seem 'intellectually correct'. But the minute the consequences started to overtake us, being intellectually correct wasn't going to help us. We simply didn't have the power to pull ourselves out of the pit. On the most simple and practical level, we had to admit we were powerless over lust and our lives had become unmanageable.

When I joined SA I was also bothered by your points on an intellectual level, but I had to put that aside, leave it as a question. The fact was I had a deep awareness that I couldn't manage this thing, I'd always end up going back out there. (You also start your post with this realization, but then get all caught up with the intellectual.) So I started doing what others had done and stop trying to manage it myself, give up the 'iwillmanage' attitude and instead turn it over to a Power that can manage my life and keep me sober. When I turn to Him with sincere humility, giving up my self-will and my desire to be the one in charge, turn to others with honesty, relinquishing my desire to give off a false self image, and look to be of service to others and stop living a selfish, self-absorbed, self-centred, self, self, self type of life, I find that I *do* have the power to stop. I don't think any of that's a cop out at all.

And who knows, maybe that's the answer to the 'intellectual problem'. Maybe I really do have the power, if I live life the way He meant me to, rooted in the reality of being a creation, and thereby a servant, of God, created to do my part whilst being fully conscious that I'm just a part of a vast interconnected existence of which I'm in no way the centre and which doesn't revolve around me. Today I understand that I'm powerless only in as much as I'm living a selfish life, disconnected from God and others, if I let all end in myself, if I take not in order to give.

It's also true that I may be powerless over lust, but I'm responsible for the first drink. Once sober, if I decide to take a drink of lust, that's on me. It's my responsibility to stay involved in sobriety and follow my sponsor's suggestions. It is my responsibility to cultivate and grow willingness. I can't cop out behind a smokescreen of powerlessness.

(Agav, I don't think it's possible to get a true idea of what the program is about from the experience of just one member, even someone with a sobriety as strong as Dov's. The best way to truly get it is to do it).

I am in close contact with a 12-Step old-timer who has 40 years of sobriety (not Harvey) and has a very different derech than Dov. I have discussed many of Dov's points with him and showed him things written by Dov and he strongly (but politely) disagrees. I also have listened to a great many of talks from SA old-timers (both frum and non-jewish) and they have all different ways of going about recovery. Some of them completely disagree on some very basic points within SA. There are many legitimate pathways within recovery and Dov's mehalech will work for some and will probably destroy others. Each person will end up following whatever path works for him as long as it's a legitimate one and with a sponsor.

There is nowhere in 12-step literature which tells us that we must become intellectual boors (I'm not saying Dov says to either I'm just trying to make a point). Some people may have to completely let go of their intellect in order to recover but that is determined on a case by case basis. It's turning into too much of a ramble. Maybe that's what happens when I try standing in for Dov.

That being said, part of the point of this thread is to get a variety of points of view within 12-Stepers and I definitely appreciate the feedback. Healthy disagreement is good, as people will take whatever ends up working for them. Please keep posting whenever you disagree with

anything posted here (which will probably be more & more often as we get further into this

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thread.)

Re: The 18 Wheeler

Posted by chosemyshem - 17 Jun 2025 03:04

[iwillmanage wrote on 15 Jun 2025 21:16:](#)

[chosemyshem wrote on 12 Jun 2025 15:02:](#)

[azivashacheit101 wrote on 12 Jun 2025 14:11:](#)

Here is the fourth of the **18 Wheeler**:

4. Admit powerlessness. At the very beginning, all I could do when the compulsion struck was cry out, "I'm powerless; please help me!" Sometimes a hundred times a day. Powerlessness was the most beautiful word in the world to me then as I was coming to experience the First Step at depth. It still is. Later I would discover that I was really powerless over *me*.

The more I had fought lust before, the more it fought back; all my willpower seemed to empower lust rather than hold it in check. Reading Step One in the *Twelve and Two/ve* helped me see that my powerlessness was the "firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built" (p. 21) I finally stopped trying to stop. Only by admitting lust's power over me to others in the fellowship could I receive power over my lust.

Interested in hearing where this goes.

As an outsider to SA, I always thought the powerlessness thing made sense. Clearly, I have zero self control. My struggles with porn have taught me that well.

And so but while I acknowledged that emotionally, it wasn't something I could accept intellectually. And it struck me that my emotional acknowledgment that I cannot control myself didn't seem very healthy.

The way I've come to understand this, entirely through Dov's lectures, writings, and phone conference, is that it's ridiculous to say we are completely powerless over ourselves. That's a cop-out. He explained we are powerless over life. Life is always going to have it's things that rub us the wrong way. As addicts, our response is lust, but it's not lust we are powerless over, it's life.

And this of course makes perfect sense, since it's a tenet of our faith that G-d is in absolute control of our lives and everything that happens to us is precisely calculated and for the good. So the solution is to learn how to surrender your life to G-d's will - as made manifest by, well, your life. To stop being fearful and resentful, and to accept G-d's will with joy (to do his will as our own is not a christian idea, it's a mishna).

We also cannot control lust. That is to say, we cannot use it in measured amounts. We can't watch five minutes of porn and then walk away and forget about it like others can do. But the ikkar is the powerlessness over life?, not lust.

Does that make sense? Isn't that radically different than saying we are powerless over ourselves/lust?

I doubt Dov would give his haskomo to that, shame he isn't around these parts any more to respond. Either way I beg to differ. Powerless over lust means powerless over lust. Same goes with our lives. And there's absolutely nothing intellectual about it; if you're trying to understand the 'concept' or see if it fits with your hashkofo and worldview, you've taken it wrong. We're talking in the most practical way possible. We've been through all the philosophy and intellectual stuff more times than we can count, we're convinced that there's bechiro, if there's a nisoyon we must have the ability to overcome it etc etc, intellectually we're sure we weren't created doomed to sin, but none of that changed the facts an iota, this lust thing had beaten us. With all the tools and advice and therapy and GYE and thinking we had done and that we could dream of, practically we were hopelessly helpless when it came to lust. As long as we could manage our lives together with our lust, 'powerlessness' made no sense to us, after all it didn't seem

'intellectually correct'. But the minute the consequences started to overtake us, being intellectually correct wasn't going to help us. We simply didn't have the power to pull ourselves out of the pit. On the most simple and practical level, we had to admit we were powerless over lust and our lives had become unmanageable.

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(Agav, I don't think it's possible to get a true idea of what the program is about from the experience of just one member, even someone with a sobriety as strong as Dov's. The best way to truly get it is to do it).

Hmmmm.Verythoughtprovoking.

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Re: The 18 Wheeler

Posted by azivashacheit101 - 18 Jun 2025 15:48

From Step One in the **12&12**, remember this book was written about alcohol but we can just replace the word alcohol with lust.

STEP ONE

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol (lust)—that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one, of course. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit that, glass in hand, we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only an act of providence can remove it from us.

No other kind of bankruptcy is like this one. Alcohol, now become the rapacious creditor, bleeds us of all self-sufficiency and all will to resist its demands. Once this stark fact is accepted, our bankruptcy as going human concerns is complete.

But upon entering A.A. we soon take quite another view of this absolute humiliation. We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength. Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.

We know that little good can come to any alcoholic who joins A.A. unless he has first accepted his devastating weakness and all its consequences. Until he so humbles himself, his sobriety—if any—will be precarious. Of real happiness he will find none at all. Proved beyond doubt by an immense experience, this is one of the facts of A.A. life. The principle that we shall find no enduring strength until we first admit complete defeat is the main taproot from which our whole Society has sprung and flowered.

When first challenged to admit defeat, most of us revolted. We had approached A.A. expecting to be taught self-confidence. Then we had been told that so far as alcohol is

concerned, self-confidence was no good whatever; in fact, it was a total liability. Our sponsors declared that we were the victims of a mental obsession so subtly powerful that no amount of human willpower could break it. There was, they said, no such thing as the personal conquest of this compulsion by the unaided will. Relentlessly deepening our dilemma, our sponsors pointed out our increasing sensitivity to alcohol—an allergy, they called it. The tyrant alcohol wielded a double-edged sword over us: first we were smitten by an insane urge that condemned us to go on drinking, and then by an allergy of the body that insured we would ultimately destroy ourselves in the process. Few indeed were those who, so assailed, had ever won through in singlehanded combat. It was a statistical fact that alcoholics almost never recovered on their own resources. And this had been true, apparently, ever since man had first crushed grapes.

In A.A.'s pioneering time, none but the most desperate cases could swallow and digest this unpalatable truth. Even these “last-gaspers” often had difficulty in realizing how hopeless they actually were. But a few did, and when these laid hold of A.A. principles with all the fervor with which the drowning seize life preservers, they almost invariably got well. That is why the first edition of the book “Alcoholics Anonymous,” published when our membership was small, dealt with low-bottom cases only. Many less desperate alcoholics tried A.A., but did not succeed because they could not make the admission of hopelessness.

It is a tremendous satisfaction to record that in the following years this changed. Alcoholics who still had their health, their families, their jobs, and even two cars in the garage, began to recognize their alcoholism. As this trend grew, they were joined by young people who were scarcely more than potential alcoholics. They were spared that last ten or fifteen years of literal hell the rest of us had gone through. Since Step One requires an admission that our lives have become unmanageable, how could people such as these take this Step?

It was obviously necessary to raise the bottom the rest of us had hit to the point where it would hit them. By going back in our own drinking histories, we could show that years before we realized it we were out of control, that our drinking even then was no mere habit, that it was indeed the beginning of a fatal progression. To the doubters we could say, “Perhaps you're not an alcoholic after all. Why don't you try some more controlled drinking, bearing in mind meanwhile what we have told you about alcoholism?” This attitude brought immediate and practical results. It was then discovered that when one alcoholic had planted in the mind of another the true nature of his malady, that person could never be the same again. Following every spree, he would say to himself, “Maybe those A.A.'s were right . . .” After a few such experiences, often years before the onset of extreme difficulties, he would return to us convinced. He had hit bottom as truly as any of us. John Barleycorn himself had become our best advocate.

Why all this insistence that every A.A. must hit bottom first? The answer is that few people will sincerely try to practice the A.A. program unless they have hit bottom. For practicing A.A.'s remaining eleven Steps means the adoption of attitudes and actions that almost no alcoholic who is still drinking can dream of taking. Who wishes to be rigorously honest and tolerant? Who wants to confess his faults to another and make restitution for harm done? Who cares anything about a Higher Power, let alone meditation and prayer? Who wants to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry A.A.'s message to the next sufferer? No, the average alcoholic, self-centered in the extreme, doesn't care for this prospect—unless he has to do these things in order to stay alive himself.

Under the lash of alcoholism, we are driven to A.A., and there we discover the fatal nature of our situation. Then, and only then, do we become as open-minded to conviction and as willing to listen as the dying can be. We stand ready to do anything which will lift the merciless obsession from us.

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Re: The 18 Wheeler

Posted by azivashacheit101 - 25 Jun 2025 16:02

Comments on Step one in **The 12&12:**

1: **"We have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only an act of providence can remove it from us."**

Maybe I'm being over medayik, but notice how it doesn't say here that we need an act of providence to get us not to act out, but it says we need an act of providence to remove our **obsession** towards drinking (lusting). We will IY"H examine this more later, but this may be one of many mehalchim in dealing with the bechira question. Almost all old-timers agree that it is possible to white-knuckle it and not act out at least some of the time for at the very least some addicts. To argue on such a point would be stupid and against what is quite obviously demonstrated by the many addicts who get periods of sobriety by sheer force and will power.

One of the points of powerlessness (aside from we cannot control and enjoy which we will IY"H get to later) is that we have this insane obsession to lust and we are sick in the head. Even if we manage to stop by killing ourselves with self-determination, we will be far from healed, will never be happy, joyous, & free, and will almost for sure end up acting out again. We will still be obsessed with lust and walk on a constant tightrope of maybe turning back to our drug. We

would never learn how to deal with our emotions and spiritual emptiness and will end up living a painful and sick life. Rabbi Twerski ZTZ"L writes extensively about the concept of a "dry drunk", this is someone who is dry and stopped acting out, but has not worked a program and is therefore still sick and suffering.

2: "Only an act of providence can remove it from us."

There are different ways of viewing and understanding the concept of an act of providence removing our lust from us, and there are legitimate ways to view it no matter what our hashkafic beliefs are.

Before addressing that, It may be wise to mention the difference between the "Bill W. experience" and the spiritual experience mentioned in 'Appendix 2' of the Big Book. Bill W, co-founder of A.A. and author of The Big Book, recovered from alcoholism in what we may refer to as a "sudden spiritual experience". In his story, written as chapter 1 of the Big Book, Bill relates how a friend and former alcoholic visited him and related how he recovered by accepting and practicing a new spiritual way of life. He laid down what was an early version of the 12-Step Program in a conversation that lasted a few hours. Over the course of the conversation Bill was convinced and had a sudden complete change of attitude, outlook on life and personality. He instantly grabbed hold of this new way of life and didn't let go until the day he died, thereby having what we call a sudden spiritual experience. Many of the original AAs had similar recovery stories.

In the back of The Big Book, in Appendix 2, it describes how while this may be the pathway of some it is a far cry from everyone's experience. Many and maybe most addicts have a slow and gradual recovery and that's totally fine and legitimate. In fact I could be wrong, but it seems to me that in SA it is much less common to have a Bill W experience than it is in AA. Most SAers it seems, have a slow and gradual spiritual experience. The reasons for this are irrelevant, but I believe one reason is because for us it is much more difficult to get away from our drug than it is for alcoholics.

For us, each time we take a second look on the street or fantasize for even a few seconds too long, we are like the alcoholic who holds a bottle of booze in his hand and sniffs & inhales the aroma. He may not be drinking but it's damn hard to get sober that way. If we lust a bit more, we are like an alcoholic who swishes some bourbon around in his mouth and then spits it out. A bit more lust and we are just like the alcoholic drinking beer. We may not be formally acting out but the more actions of lust that we take the slower our recovery will be.

Now back to "**only an act of providence can remove it from us**", there are a few ways to understand this and some views will be more palatable to each individual addict than others. There is room for everyone in SA, take whatever works for you. I am posting the following opinions and experience of mine only for people who are bothered by this; if it doesn't bother you it's probably better to skip it.

1) G-d comes in with a purely unnatural miracle and removes the lust from us as soon as we turn to him.

2) When we turn to G-d, trust him and ask him for help he will come and expel the obsession from us-basic tefillah and bitachon like anything else.

3) The way Hashem is noheig with the world is that when we turn to him and give our lives over to his care he will come in save us from our lust.

4) The way Hashem created the world is that when we honestly turn to him and work on our defects of character, naturally the obsession for lust

leaves us. (We don't need a special hashgachah more than everyone else like in ways 1&3.)

5) There is another thought process, I don't want to post it lest it confuse people, but if you're bothered by this you can PM me.

The Big Book constantly seems to imply that view #1 is the inner workings of the 12-Steps. It's also a possibility to easily fit understanding #2 into the pashut reading of the book. Here's the problem, yiddishkiet never guarantees that Hashem will perform miracles for each of us or that he will answer our teffilos. Step 2 requires only to believe that Hashem *could* restore us to sanity so that's not an issue. The problem is in the beginning of chapter 5 it is clear that part of the program is to believe "That G-d could and **would** if he were sought."

There is a famous machlokes if we can have enough bitachon and therefore receive or cause to happen whatever we are having bitachon on. This is a machlokes which goes into the basic understanding of what exactly bitachon is and is way beyond the scope of this post. The point is even according to R' Yisroel Salanter and the Mussar movement that "if we have enough

bitachon it will happen", this would require extremely high levels of bitachon which none of us can ever dream of obtaining.

I personally struggled greatly with this question in my early days in program, on the one hand I see it working for millions of people across all 12-step programs on the other where is there a guarantee that Hashem will perform this miracle for us? Eventually I discussed this with a sober member who confirmed for me that understanding #4 is absolutely legitimate and therefore I should have no problems. (There is another huge question but I think it's better not to discuss it here anyone can PM me if they have any Qs). I believe in Hashem like anyone else therefore I can turn to him with mehalech #2 with tefillah and bitachon, but my assurance that it will happen that "G-d could and would if he were sought" comes from understanding #4 and the fact that it has clearly worked for millions of people.

I'm writing this to share my experience, because I struggled greatly with these questions in the beginning. Hearing from some old-timers that there is no need to deal with a few legitimate questions did not work for me. When I was able to discuss it with other old-timers and work out answers to my concerns, I had no more problem with these things. The reason why I needed answers, I was told by the first set of old-timers, was my sense of control and I just needed to let go. The problem was it simply wasn't true, my need for answers is because included in getting honest and sober was not replacing one lie of addiction with another lie of SA. Until I could work through a few simple questions I was still living a lie and could not recover. I was not getting honest with myself, but covering things up by working a program that I did not really believe in. Letting it go just meant "don't think about it" I was still living a lie.

The 12-Steps specifically are built not to be theology and works even if you "choose your own conception of G-d" if that's true it will for sure work with yiddishkiet. I do not have to change yiddishkiet and machshava to fit SA; SA fits into yiddishkiet. The Big Book spends a lot of time in the chapter "We Agnostics" explaining how 12-Steps can work for anyone with any belief system; that seems to tell me that it's absolutely legitimate to fit it into yiddishe machshavah which is our belief system. Why some frum SA old-timers fly off the rails when topics like this are brought to light is beyond me, although I have no doubt that their motives are pure. Luckily I have other 12-Step old timers who I can follow.

This is my experience and all I can share. I recognize that if certain old-timers would see this post, they would eat their hats, but I have other old-timers who I am following and that's what works for me. I'm sure there are 12-stepsers on this forum who will read this and venomously disagree; please post a response, a variety of viewpoints is good for everyone.

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Re: The 18 Wheeler

Posted by azivashacheit101 - 26 Jun 2025 11:59

Here is Step One as brought in The White Book:

Step One

"We admitted that we were powerless over lust-- that our lives had become unmanageable."

"I GIVE UP!" It may have come with a loud cry or in a moment of quiet resignation, but the time came when we knew the jig was up. We had been arrested-stopped in our tracks-but we had done it to ourselves. If surrender came only from without, it never "took." When we surrendered out of our own enlightened self-interest, it became the magic key that opened the prison door and set us free. Arrest and surrender in order to be set free-what a paradox! But it was our self-proclaimed freedom that had been killing us, and we began to see that without limits we would destroy ourselves. But we were powerless to limit ourselves, and the more we indulged, the more unmanageable our lives became. Each lustful act or fantasy became another powerful ray penetrating the nucleus of our psyches and loosening the forces that held us together. Thus, in time we came to the growing realization that we were losing control. It was to this truth that we surrendered-the truth about ourselves. "Something's WRONG with me, and I can't fix it!" Awareness of the unmanageability of our lives was not apparent to us at first. But as we recovered from shock and spiritual blindness, we began to see how we were unable to function without lust, negative attitudes, and dependencies holding our lives together. Reaching the point of utter despair did not always come right away; it came to some of us only after we had been in the fellowship for awhile. The full effect of Step One seems to come gradually or in stages, with the unfolding realization of our unsoundness. It is out of this inner honesty with ourselves that the feelings of hope and forgiveness flow. We were free to see and admit what we really were inside because we were finally free from having to act out what we were. How long and how cleverly we had defended our right to wrong ourselves and others, and how long we denied there was any wrong at all! But every wrong attitude and act stored up its own punishment against us from within, until finally, the cumulative weight of our wrongs brought us to our knees.

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Posted by azivashacheit101 - 26 Jun 2025 12:02

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