

R'Gluck: SUSTAINING OUR GROWTH

Posted by returner613 - 07 Dec 2010 05:15

Rabbi Shmuel Gluck (from Areivim - Monsey) had a great article this past Shabbos titled "Sustaining Our Growth".

The subject matter deals with the proper attitude to have when starting/sustaining positive life changes. A very interesting take on how the Yetzer Hora deals with a person's growth initiatives in the "pre" vs. "in progress" stages - and the right attitude to have in order to sustain and overcome. While I don't think the article was aimed at GYE-issues in particular - I feel the topic is extremely relevant. Especially to someone new to GYE and/or 12-steps (such as myself) who is just getting used to the life changes involved in the journey to sobriety.

Am pasting the article below - you can also find it @

http://www.rabbihorowitz.com/PYes/ArticleDetails.cfm?Book_ID=1395&ThisGroup_ID=238&Type=Article

12/3/10

This letter continues my correspondence with a friend who recently moved to Eretz Yisroel to begin life over. (The last article "Welcome to Eretz Yisroel" is available upon request. [Email: rabbigluck@areivim.com])

SUSTAINING OUR GROWTH

It seems as if it's never a good time to speak about sustaining growth. If we're doing well, we believe that we'll continue to do well. If we aren't doing well, we're busy working on damage control. Right now you're doing well, better than you would've ever imagined. Understandably, you may not feel a need to speak about sustainability. Nevertheless, the following thoughts may come in handy for you to store and "pull out" in case of emergency.

Sustaining growth is not as natural as we would like to believe. Our belief that we can make a commitment and keep it without difficulty is a myth. The reason that it's not simple to sustain growth can be explained in the following manner:

The *Yetzer Horah* leaves us alone when we do poorly on our own. When we decide to improve, he begins to battle our thought process, hoping to convince us not to change. The *Yetzer Horah* attempts to make us give up, by persuading us that we're bad, won't succeed anyway, and/or that we really don't care about changing. There are many times that the *Yetzer Horah* succeeds, and we continue our life without following through with our proposed changes.

In those situations in which we act on our commitment to change, the *Yetzer Horah* often "stands by" watching us during the initial stages. He's waiting for us to "burn out". Burning out means that the excitement of changing wears off, leaving us with the burden created by the change. The burden may be the loss of friends, boredom, or the difficulties of being more Frum, things we may have fought in the past. Once the burden that follows change becomes overwhelming, the *Yetzer Horah* sees his chance to sidetrack us, throwing multiple obstacles at us.

What initially seemed to be "the new me" becomes questionable. Do we really like the "new me"? Is it worth it? Even if we feel it's worthwhile, can we sustain it? Should we give up? The self doubt is paralyzing. Life seemed to finally give us a break. We may have had a good week, month, or even several months. We finally felt like "we made it", but suddenly, life is complicated again.

As the saying goes, "To be warned is to be prepared". If this happens to you, don't become disillusioned, but shift into defense mode. If you allow yourself to become disillusioned you'll find yourself thinking that you can't succeed. If you go into defense mode, you'll appreciate that all change comes with difficulties and requires resilience. You should realize that you're right on schedule.

You'll also need to remind yourself that changing was your decision. You had specific reasons for wanting to change. You're an adult and not a teenager. Those reasons are your own, many of them personal. Remind yourself of what they were.

Another issue with sustainability is that when people make a commitment to change, they believe that, once successful, life will be perfect. They don't consciously think this, but hope that the change will be all encompassing, and that all their problems will seem negligible.

The reality is that our life is complex and made up of multiple areas. Changing one area can't solve more than a segment of our life. If the area of improvement centered on something really significant, such as self esteem or productivity, it may solve multiple problems, but it won't solve everything. You may have changed spiritually, or become more confident, but you may still have an issue getting along with everyone (In your case this is not a true example). In your case, a true example may be that, despite changing in so many ways, you still have to grapple with the direction that your future will take you.

Keep in mind that life is like a puzzle. After much work you may find a piece that connects to four other pieces. But a puzzle is greater than any one piece. Life is greater than any one solution. You may now be a successful person. Having success may mean that you expect simplicity in your life. However this misconception, that successful people "have it made", is now being shattered. Successful people still have their daily obstacles, and their life is far from simple. What you'll find is that life is always difficult, but if you rise to the challenge, it'll be rewarding enough to make it worthwhile.

Lastly, I would like to speak about what to do if you fall back into your old patterns. It happens, it's disappointing, but it's not a crisis, it's called life. The trick is to limit the duration of the fall, its intensity, and its quantity. If you have a bad incident and limit it in all three of these areas (even two out of three would be considered a success), then you were successful. You may even fall a second time. If you do make the same mistake again, it means that you haven't learned from your past experience. You can be disappointed in yourself, but should not be crushed. If the incident is unrelated to one from your past, step back, learn from this new experience, and keep strong.

I'm discussing the possibility of failure to highlight an important point. True change is achieved by a realistic view of human nature; the good, the bad and the ugly. Growing and succeeding doesn't shield us from mistakes. Growing accomplishes one thing: What you considered good (success) in your past, may now be bad and, hopefully, within a short time, will be considered ugly.

Now that I've mentioned many of the potential problems, allow me to conclude with some supportive words. You should take pride in yourself for these past few months. I'm not suggesting pride in the sense that you should rest on your laurels. Pride is a motivator. It allows you to see yourself as you are, not as you were. It also allows you to imagine what you can still become.

So take pride in today and look forward to tomorrow.

Shmuel Gluck

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