

What's special about the Torah approach?

Posted by battleworn - 03 Jan 2010 17:45

I want to try to clarify some of the fundamental differences between the Torah approach and other approaches. I do not want to discuss any particular approach. In-fact I want to ask everyone to please not even mention other approaches on this board. I want to stick to the issue, which is, the Torah approach. I only want to try to add clarity to what the Torah approach is. The things I discuss may or may not be contrary to any particular approach.

We all know that our understanding is limited, and Hashem's is not. There are many things which may seem like contradictions to us but we trust Hashem that they are not. The classic example is *yediah* and *bechira*, or in the physical world: "Is light (energy) made up of particles or is it waves?" Just like in physics, experiments will show that they are both true even though it makes no sense at all to our tiny brains; so to in *Avodas Hashem* "Taamu Ure'u" when you try it it works.

On the other hand, it is of-course simpler to think simple. For example, if you want to strengthen your bitachon, it is simpler if you get the bechira out of the way. But Hashem expects us to strike a balance and have bitachon without getting bechira out of the way.

This type of balance is the key to most of the issues I want to discuss. I will only mention each one briefly and *bli neder* in the future I will try to elaborate be'H.

1) Religious reasons vs. self-interest.

Why do I want to stop? Is it for me or for Hashem?

According to the Torah there is no such question. Hashem commanded us to choose life so that we should live. We do it because He commanded us; He commanded us because it's our life. We are not doing Hashem a favor by doing a *mitzvah*, but we are making a "nachas ruach" - "sheomar v'naaseh retzono". We know that the reason He commanded us to do it is purely for our gain and not His. Every Jew has to know that this is a fact, regardless of how well he can understand it. (And there are many levels of understanding)

We don't need to separate our issue from the Torah in order to realize that our good is at stake,

because *aderaba* that's what the Torah is all about.

2) Will I be a goner if I mess up once?

This is a tough question. On the one hand it's so important to run from falling, like death itself. On the other hand, if one does *chas vesholom* fall, it's so important to be able to get right back up. People may feel that we need to choose one way, but according to Hashem's infinite wisdom you can learn to balance both. When a *nisoyon* comes up we need to look at it as nothing less than suicide. By the same token, we need to avoid *nisyonos* like the plague.

But if c/v we fall, we need to look at the moment after, like a new life - a new mission - a new *shlichus* from Hashem. We need to think "What does Hashem want from me NOW?"

3) Progressive recovery:

The Torah approach is to remove yourself farther and farther away from lust and sin; closer and closer to Hashem. You soon reach a state where "those things" don't talk to you at all. But that does not mean that you can be complacent. Again, balance is the key. Just like in a war, as you conquer ground and move the front lines farther and farther back, you still need to keep your guard up for a surprise attack; so to, as we get farther and farther from the *tumah* that we were previously addicted to, we still need to always be on guard for a sneak attack.

4) Bitachon vs. Histadlus:

Breaking free from the addiction is in many ways *lemaaleh miderech hateva*. We need a miracle and bitachon is the way to merit a miracle. Furthermore, the addiction thrives on anxiety [it thrives especially on the very anxiety that it causes] and bitachon is THE answer to anxiety. But according to the Torah, we can reach real, true bitachon, without lessening our *hishtadlus* at all. (This is a very important discussion; R' Tzadok says that the apparent contradiction is what caused the whole conflict between Yoseph Hatzadik and the Shevatim. I hope to discuss it more very soon)

5) Goals and Expectations:

Here again we need balance. The higher we set our goals, the farther we will get. On the other hand, high expectations are very dangerous. But the Torah way is to have NO expectations at all - ?????? ??? ??? I'm in Hashems arms - I trust Him totally. I don't demand anything from Him. I will except whatever happens - once it has happened. But I have no reason to lower my goals

or to stop davening for them. The higher my goals, the farther I'll get.

6) Ratzon vs. Bitul:

This is a really major one. It's quite obvious that we all have something big cooking inside of us. We can't just float through life; we were born with an extra dose of deep-seated ratzon - desire - quest - passion. It's also quite obvious that this powerful desire can be -and has been- hijacked by lust. Some people may feel that we need to lessen our desire and try to become like a jellyfish floating in the water *botul* to the waves that Hashem sends his way. I even heard someone refer to this desire as an essentially negative thing.

It's my understanding, that according to Hashem's Torah, there could be nothing further from the truth. In-fact it is spiritual suicide to ruin this desire. Hashem gave each of us a Neshomoh with a strong yearning, because that's what life is all about. ????? ?????????? ??? ?? We were put on this world to bring this desire to fruition. In fact this desire is our true essence. It's a great tragedy if one c'v loses it.

The Torah approach is also *bitul*. Bitul to Ratzon Hashem as spelled out in the Torah and bitul to whatever Hashem has sent my way including this HUGE challenge known as lust addiction. It includes accepting that Hashem knows what's best for me and it includes thanking Him for whatever He has given me. But Hashem's Torah says that this is no contradiction at all to a powerful all-encompassing thirst for Hashem - this is what Tehilim is all about.

And of-course it works. Not only do they not diminish each other, but they actually strengthen each other.

7) Realizing how weak you can be and how low you have fallen vs. Recognizing your potential and the power of your Neshomoh:

Balance again. The Torah teaches us that we have a very high *Neshomoh* and tremendous potential. Furthermore, our Neshomoh is our true essence. BUT we also have a *guf* that is very animalistic. And that *guf* can take over. It can become "Baal Habayis". We need to know this, so that with Hashem's help we can set things straight. If you don't know your potential, you can't realize it.

8) Growing from the struggle:

People may feel that thinking about growth is counter-productive. But the Torah view is that the addiction is an indication of what happens when you let the y'h and your *guf* pull you away from Hashem. The solution is of-course to make an about face and work on getting closer to Hashem through His Torah. We must learn the lesson that -as the Torah says, "that" way is the way to death and you desperately want the other way.

9) Torah and Mitzvohs vs: *Emuna, Bitachon, Dveikus* and *Bitul* :

A very large part of the world claims that Mitzvoh's are a distraction from these things. But Hashem says that it's quite the opposite. Of-course we often don't see that the Torah and Mitzvohs are getting us there. When that happens, the Torah way is to find out where we went wrong. This is discussed a bit in the "Torah Tavlin" thread.

10) Improving self-control vs. Leaving it up to Hashem:(Very similar to #4 but here I'm talking more about the general attitude as opposed to dealing with a nissoyon)

Some people may feel that self-control has proven to be ineffective and therefore they must leave it up to Hashem. According to Hashem's infinite wisdom that reasoning is a terrible mistake. If you come to the realization that you have been missing *Siyata DiShmaya*, you would want to do whatever you can to merit *Siyata DiShmaya* and investing maximum effort does exactly that!

The problem is that one may feel that self-control, implies that I don't need Hashem, or at least that I am not completely dependent on Him. This is good reasoning for one who hasn't recieved the Torah on Har Sinai. But we know that it just doesn't work like that. The Gemoroh says that if Hashem wouldn't save us from the y'h we would be gone-finished. In fact all our Tefilos about this imply that it is totally in the Hands of Hashem. We don't say "Help us return" we say "Return us" Everyone is totally dependent on Hashem - addict or not.

But our job is still to try to control ourselves. The work is our job, Hashem gives us success. Like the Gemoroh says about Torah "One without the other is not enough" We need maximum effort with davening to Hashem. The tanya in perek 13 and R' Tzadok in *Machshivos Charutz* explain [It's also clear from the [i]Kedushas Levi [i] in *Vayichi* (thank you bardichev)] that the *Siyata Dishmaya* comes from within - through our *Neshomoh*. Self-control is **always** from Hashem, through the *Neshomoh* and *seichel* that are controlling the *guf*. (Bli neder I will explain it better in the future iy'H)

11) Self expression, self-fulfilment and self-improvement vs. Selflessness and "Lishmah":

Some people may feel that you can keep the whole Torah and be a *Tzadik* by concentrating on self improvement; but if you need a special "super-*siyata DiShmaya*" then Torah is not enough and you need to stop living for yourself.

First let me say that I hope noone around here feels this way, because it is k'fira. We know that Hashem came to us on *Har-Sinai* and gave us The Torah. The Torah is not a collection of *Mitzvohs*, rather it is THE book of Hashem's wisdom - it is the blueprint of the world. There can not possibly be a better way to live than the Torah way.

So what then is the Torah's view on the question of selflessness and self-actualization? The simple answer is -once again- that in The Creator's opinion they are one and the same - whether we understand it or not. Look at any real *Tzadik* and you will see that he excels in both. He is constantly striving to improve himSELF and at the same time he is totally selfless. R' Chaim Volozhiner would constantly remind his children that "???? ?? ????? ????? ?? ?????? ??????" - while at the same time his life was most definitely dedicated to SELF-improvement through Torah.

But I think it would be helpfull to try to understand how it works. We know that our Neshomoh is a "*Chelek Eloka Mimaal*", Hashem -*kaviyocho*- breathed it in to us.

THE NATURE OF THE NESHOMO IS TO EMULATE HASHEM [AS MUCH AS IT CAN] AND TO GRAVITATE TOWARDS HASHEM. Emulating Hashem includess being selfless. Being selfless is not a trick to get us somewhere rather it's the "Yoshor" way that Hashem created us. Gravitating towards Hashem is not a "Religious issue" but rather it's the "Yoshor" way that Hashem created us. Selfishness and all other bad midos come from the *guf*(=*nefesh hab'hami*). And when the *guf* takes control, all kinds of trouble happen.

Being selfish is -in essence, distorting the way that Hashem made you. The Jew's job is to set things straight. That is Hashem's idea of self-actualization and that is what the Torah is all about. {Once we set things straight we become a "*merkava*" for the *Shechina*, which means that we are the vessel[-the *guf*] for the *Shechina*. See Kedushas Levi Parshas Vayechi on "???? ?????? ??????"}

If you have something to add or a question to ask, please post!

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by the.guard - 05 Jan 2010 22:26

Bards, that was the most beautiful post I have ever read from you yet!!

I am starting to understand why Reb Dov considers you his Rebbe :D

I have turned myself from powerless and helpless to powerful.

I know you didn't mean it that way, but these words are a little misleading, Reb Yakov. Duvid
His entire Koach was from bitul... he always stresses
in tehilim things like "*ki ani ve'evyon ani*"... "*anochi tola'as velo ish*"... "*ki ata kochi, umagini,*
vi'keren yishi" etc...

The entire Koach that David had, that enabled him to overcome all his enemies - was the Koach
of Yehudah - which is the letters of the name of Hashem with a daled in middle. The Zohar says
that the daled stands for "*de'leis lei migarme'i klum*"...

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by bardichev - 05 Jan 2010 22:58

holiest battle

yankev schwarts

guard

I NEED NO INTRO YOU GUYS ALL KNOW ME

I JUST THOUGHT OF A SWEET MASHAL

I COME HOME

I SEE A TABLE

SET FOR SUPPER

AND THERE IS GOOD FOOD ON THE TABLE

BUT.. BUT.. ALL THE KIDS ARE EATING NOSH

(it happens some times in bays bards)

I YELL NOSH!!!

MY WIFE SAYS THE KIDS WERE CRYING

I YELL NOSH BY SUPPER??!!

SHE SAYS "THEY NEED TO CALM DOWN FIRST"

I HOLLER AT THE KIDS "I AM THE TATTY GIVE ME YOUR LOLLIES AND EAT YOUR SUPPER"

WHO IS RIGHT??

LET

ME

KNOW

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 05 Jan 2010 23:35

Guard,

I do not know what you are getting at. it is hard to misunderstand my words in context. Allow me to repeat from Rav Noach zt"l:

"Being created in the Image of Hashem is to have Free Will. That is what makes me a human being. Until I figure out how to use that power, I have not unlocked the key to my humanity"

Think this over. This is simple yet deep.

Also read my post above especially the line that reads:

"So when it comes to self control you need to work on two contradictory things..." Read the rest above. It does not seem like you read it.

Also, be sure to read Harav Battleworn's post:

"But our job is still to try to control ourselves. The work is our job, Hashem gives us success."

[Click this link](#) to see more about this yesod.

Becoming powerful is learning how to regain your bechira. I am not sure why Dovid Hamelech would deny his power of bechira. What do those pesukim have to do with self control and bechira. Is it based on some Chidah that I do not know about.

If you want a more comprehensive understanding of the idea of control see Rambam's shemone perakim chapter 8.

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?

Posted by battleworn - 06 Jan 2010 12:33

Dearest Bardichev and Trying, it pains me greatly, that this whole discussion started over here.

THE REASON I ASKED THAT OTHER APPROACHES NOT BE MENTIONED, IS THAT NEITHER I NOR GUARD NOR YOU ARE AN EXPERT ON THOSE APPROACHES. IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TILL I FOUND OUT WHAT I DO KNOW ABOUT SA, AND THERE IS STILL A LOT MORE THAT I DON'T KNOW.

WHEN ONE JOINS A GROUP, HE IS TRUSTING THE GROUP TO LEAD HIM IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. NOBODY CAN TELL YOU WHERE A PARTICULAR GROUP MIGHT TAKE YOU. NEITHER YOU NOR OUR ESTEEMED RABEINU GUARD HAS ANY WAY OF KNOWING HOW ANY PARTICULAR GROUP DEFINES POWERLESSNESS OR DISEASE OR ANYTHING ELSE.

THAT IS WHY I FELT THAT ALL I CAN DO IS TRY TO CLARIFY THE TORAH VIEW! Tzar li me'od

But being that my heart is cracking to pieces, I have to tell you, Trying, that a post less than a week ago from a dear friend of ours about how our thirsting for Hashem is a problem etc. is coming straight from the group that our friends therapist went to. A powerhouse of dveikus who has the potential to affect the world in a big way, is having his wings cut off by foreign hashkofos.

SO PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT IT DOESN'T HAPPEN TO YOU!

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by TrYiNg - 06 Jan 2010 15:57

I'm sooo sorry R' battleworn.

Nothing i said was meant to hurt anyone. In fact, i read through your torah approach, and it sounds great. I'm not even sure it really contradicts anything major in the 12 steps. Maybe I should read through some of the older threads.

Again, I'm sorry. I was a bit confused yesterday , as not thinking of it as a disease brought up all that guilt and ugly feelings again..I was just trying to clarify. I can delete it if you want..

oh, and I just realized that the chizuk email from guard was all on this and he says it better than

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?

Posted by battleworn - 06 Jan 2010 16:27

Trying, you didn't hurt anyone.

As far as the guilt and ugly feelings, I can't understand what that has to do with calling it a disease. You can still blame yourself for making yourself sick. And if you don't blame yourself, why should you feel guilty - even if it's not a disease. Furthermore if you are going to feel guilty and get down on yourself every time you make a mistake in your life, you will never get anywhere.

Blame is destructive whether you are blaming yourself or someone else. The only way, is to realize that Hashem runs the world and all that's left to me, is to do my job. The past is gone (except for teshuva which is the most amazing gift that Hashem has given us - we can actually change the past) and the situation that I find myself in right now was given to me by Hashem to do His Will in this specific situation.

Every second of your life Hashem puts you in to the exact situation that you need to be in, in order to accomplish what you need to accomplish. We have to change our whole perspective on life from "How good am I? - What do people think of me? - What do I have? What do I want? What do I not have? What was done to me? How do I compare? etc." To "WHAT DO I NEED TO **DO** NOW!?!"

If I'm missing something, please tell me.

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?

Posted by TrYiNg - 06 Jan 2010 16:36

brilliant . and so true.

About the blame, I need to know that my bechira is compromised to a certain point (even if that *is* my fault) cuz its too much to bear that heavy guilt every time I mess up. It only hinders my progress and makes me want to medicate myself even more..

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by battleworn - 06 Jan 2010 16:53

You know that a guy is mechuyav to put on Tefilin every day. What happens if he has the flu and it's hard for him to get up and put on Tefilin? Hopefully, he does it anyway. That is what me might call a standard nissoyon. Now what happens if he is really really sick and it's very very very hard for him to do it. That is a major nissoyon and I don't thing you would be disgusted if he didn't manage.

Now what happens if he thinks he really can't ,or, if he is actually to physically weak to move? Or what about if he thinks that Tefilin is derabanan and a sick person is patur?

It's quite obvious (and also mefurash in chazal) that Hashem judges according to the circumstances, and we should too. Or better yet we shouldn't judge at all, it's far to complicated. The only business that we have with the past, is to learn from our mistakes and to fix them.

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by TrYiNg - 06 Jan 2010 16:57

I get it. But that's what I'm thinking..Any difference to what I said? (If the guy's physically sick, then his bechira is compromised)

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by battleworn - 06 Jan 2010 17:41

Yes, sick or any other circumstances that make it especially difficult, nearly impossible or impossible. You know better than anyone else how weak you are at the time of a nissoyon. Someone else putting the label of "disease" doesn't change anything at all. They don't know if

you could have done better or not, only Hashem does.

It's not an issue of disease or not, it's an issue of whether you could have done better or not. If someone (again a boy moshol) is used to spending his whole entire day on nothingness. He's been doing it for years. Is he expected to suddenly start learning Torah all his spare time and not waste a minute? Bitul Torah is a very serious sin. Is he sick? Not in the least, but he is weak in this area. And that must be taken in to account.

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by battleworn - 10 Jan 2010 12:53

I want to apologize for kvetching. What is done is done, now I want to sum up the discussion.

It seems that all those that posted on this thread agree to the following.

A) The work is up to me and then Hashem will give me success - I can't possibly do it without Him.

An addict is clearly not in the same situation as a non-addict, and he should not blame himself (or anyone else).

It's the responsibility of the addict to change the situation.

If you call (A) powerlessness, that's fine - as long as you know that the work is up to you.

disease, that's fine as long as you know that it's your responsibility to get yourself out of it. As mentioned before you can only do this with Hashem's help. The more you realize that you're dependant on Hashem, the more success you can expect Hashem to give you.

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by battleworn - 10 Jan 2010 16:37

I want to address two more issues.

1) Any approach that you take is going to have to involve a serious investment. (Including time, emotional energy etc.) The only way one would invest so heavily, is if he feels that his situation is desperate enough to warrant such an investment.

So one may feel, that speaking about the great nachas ru'ach that your efforts give Hashem etc., can be harmful to the addict - making him feel that it's okay that he's addicted and he doesn't need to do anything major about it.

Here again I feel very strongly that balance is in order. Every addict must know (most people that come here know this already) that if he doesn't take very serious action, the addiction is liable to totally destroy his life in this world and the next. Being so completely involved in taivoh, is by far the greatest threat to any Jew. Of-course we can go on about this all day and not get to the end of it.

But it's also very important to know that the situation that you find yourself in, is not c'v a mistake or a stroke of bad luck. You must know that Hashem put you there for a reason. Just like a commando soldier that is secretly working within enemy territory; although your situation is extremely dangerous, at the same time it helps to know that if Hashem sent you there, it means He believes in you! [The overwhelming majority of strugglers have a huge self-image problem and it is [b]crucial [/b] for them to know what Hashem **really** thinks of them.]

And if you care enough to DO something about it, then you ought to know what your efforts mean to Hashem. You must know that your situation is only as desperate as you let it be. Because if you take action, you will succeed.

And of-course you also need to know that if c'v you find yourself in a situation that is impossible for you, then every bif of effort and every bit of not falling (even if one fell partially) is a tremendous accomplishment. Not only does it give a great nachas ruach to Hashem, but it also

merits you more siyata diShmaya in the future and brings you a step closer to holiness.

2) Some people are under the impression that the Torah approach is that the battle must be fought with "white-knuckling". This is as far from the truth as you can get. We were always taught "bitachbula taaseh milchama" don't fight the y'h head on. That's why we must avoid temptation as much as we can.

Furthermore, when dealing with lust-addiction, it's blatantly obvious that you can't stop while being connected to taivoh - which is synonymous with being distant from Hashem. You need to make an about face and direct your life towards Hashem instead of away from Him.

Personally I'm sure that if one let's himself remain the same old baal-taivoh that he was and just tries to use brute-force to stop himself from sinning, **it won't work!** At least that was my experience.

But whatever situation you find yourself in, you always have to do what you can. That might mean turning your head away each time it turns itself towards pritzus even if you have to do it a thousand times in a row. It might mean stopping yourself even after you let loose. It might mean forcing yourself to think when your taivoh is not letting you.

It's important to know that every effort that you put in -whether it's white knuckling or otherwise- is a tremendous accomplishment and a tremendous investment.

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by the.guard - 11 Jan 2010 09:40

[battleworn wrote on 10 Jan 2010 12:53:](#)

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disease, that's fine as long as you know that it's your responsibility to get yourself out of it. As mentioned before you can only do this with Hashem's help. The more you realize that you're dependant on Hashem, the more success you can expect Hashem to give you.

Excellent Summary!

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Re: What's special about the Torah approach?
Posted by Ineedhelp!! - 11 Feb 2010 16:55

Where's Harav Hagaon Battleworn been? :-\ :-\ :-\ :-\ :-\

-Yiddle

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If you call (

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