

Addiction: Cancer of the Soul and Arrogance

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Rabbi Shalom Arush Shlita and Rabbi Lazer Brody Shlita often mention that the spiritual world mimics the physical world.

In today's world, we're told "eat your fruits and vegetables, exercise, avoid drugs and smoking, etc and you MOST LIKELY wont get cancer." This is true the majority of the time. Most people with lung cancer have it from either being smokers or near smokers, skin cancer hits most people who abused their time in the sun, other internal cancers are linked to not eating right, etc.

When people are diagnosed with cancer, how harsh or strong their treatment is, depends on how far progressed the cancer is. Early stages just require a little radiation and monitoring. Middle stages can require surgery and radiation. Advanced stages require radiation, chemo, and surgery. Many times people are healed in remission. Other times, unfortunately, even the harshest medicines can't always cure the cancer.

This entire scene is played out exactly in spiritual life as well. Learn your Torah, Do your mitzvot, avoid transgression, and your soul will be fine. But sometimes, we can't seem to get away from the physical transgressions in one form or another. For us here, this spiritual cancer manifests itself as a porn/lust/sexual addiction.

A very "early stage" addiction (to parallel cancer), can be treated with just more learning, better davening etc. (light medicine)

A "middle stage" addiction requires muusar, Teshuva, Rebbe Nachman, Mesilas Yesharim, on top of the Torah and learning. (stronger medicine)

"Advanced stage" full blow addiction, requires the 12 steps. (harshest/strongest medicine)

I call Torah learning light medicine because D'ra'cheha Darchei Noam"

Muusar Teshuva is harsher, it requires admitting weakness to Hashem. He's there, but its not in your face.

The 12 steps are the strongest. They require calling another human and admitting weakness.

Standing up in front of "perverts and sexual deviants" (to quote others) and admitting our obsessions.

So what is this spiritual defect causing this addiction? Its called arrogance. So depending on how strong your arrogance is, will determine which medicine works for you.

For the light arrogance, more torah learning and mitzvot can be enough of a cure.

Torah learning is supposed to humble you, show you how little you really know. Help you understand Hashem's greatness. Cowtow to the generations before you, admitting they knew more than you do. This works for light arrogance. But if you have middle or strong arrogance, it can have the opposite effect. Instead you think, "I'm such a Tzaddik, Im such a Talmid Chacham, i'm better than everyone else! I daven so much better than that guy, look at him talking the whole time, etc etc. And so the arrogance only worsens.

Next, a person tries middle treatment. They read all these books on mussar, they read Rebbe Nachman, Mesilas Yesharim, they make Teshuva. Does it work? If you have middle arrogance, it can work. You admit your mistakes and weaknesses to Hashem, you humble yourself to Him. You dont just read the mussar books, you actually ACT on them and try to emulate them to the best of your abilities. But if you have strong arrogance, they dont work. You read the books and think about how great you are for having read them but you dont really act on them. Or, you act on them but when you screw up even a little, you berate yourself for not holding up to a Tzaddik's level. (Why should you? We're not tzaddik's!) But such is the way of strong arrogance, expecting oneself to be a Tzaddik all the time.

Finally, you have the Full blown addict who has no choice but to try the 12 steps. This is very harsh, humbling medicine. To call someone and share your emotions, your obsessions and what you want to transgress is EXTREMELY HUMBLING. (True humility is admitting weakness) Going to live meetings and confessing what you've done to others, EXTREMELY HUMBLING! How can anyone's arrogance stand up to that? Who can convince themselves how great they are after taking such humbling actions? You're straight up telling others that you're wrong. But even the 12 steps aren't fool proof. They require your free choice. You have to make the call. You have to go to the meetings. You have to make the decision to live right. Free choice is the blessing G-d gave us to earn reward.

What was the purpose of my topic? To convince people to focus on the cause of their addiction, their own arrogance. The porn/lust/sexual addiction is just an effect. Take the fencing methods. Why are fences necessary? What do they actually accomplish? Why do so many addicts fail even after using fences?

The purpose of the fence is to demonstrate humility. When you make a fence, when you put up a web blocker, you are saying to Hashem, "I'm too weak to fight my desire, I need help." So Hashem helps you and nullifies your Yetzer temporarily (or in dov's words, "cures the disease" for a bit) What happens next is up to you. If you continue to grow in humility, great. But if not, as you see so often, what happens when someone puts up a blocker and feels relief from the addiction? They say, "Im so STRONG, I feel STRONGER, I can beat this thing!" In reality, you didn't beat anything. Hashem did. But now that your arrogance has convinced you how strong you are, Hashem has no choice but to give the Yetzer back some power. (Or in Dov's words, "let the disease remanifest.")

This is often the problem with so much of the Yetzer Hara talk. People talk strategy and ways to beat the Yetzer Hara but here's the thing: The Yetzer Hara is an angel! Us puny humans can't beat angels! Hashem can beat an angel. The entire purpose of any strategy or fence or tool for "beating the Yetzer" isn't about beating the Yetzer. Its about showing Hashem that we want to make the right choice and we can't do it alone. So He beats the Yetzer for us, after we show Him our own effort to do whats right. (Or in Dov's words, "I give the fight over to Him, and He cures my disease.")

So many of us dream to be able to walk down the street and not have the desire to ogle the woman in front of us or look at porn on the computer. But look at the Tzaddikim ad their success. All their stories point to humility and weakness as the key to their success. They avoided areas of scantily clothed women. some blocked out their eyeglasses. That one Talmudic sage blinded himself with hot nails! They knew they couldn't fight their Yezter. So they demonstrated to Hashem that they were weak, and He kept them free from harm.

The next time you have any urge related to this addiction, try this:

Say out loud to yourself and Hashem, "I must be speaking, acting, or thinking in an arrogant manner because if I wasn't being arrogant, I wouldn't have this addiction."

Now try to figure out how you were being arrogant: The best way is to ask Hashem for help out loud, but here are some real world clues and indicators:

1. Sadness = Arrogance = I dont like the way Hashem runs the world
2. Anger = Arrogance = I expect more of how Hashem runs the world
3. Worry/Fear/Anxiety = Arrogance = I'm forgetting Hashem runs the world and runs it best
4. Negative emotion relating to a failure = Arrogance = Hashem controls all outcomes, if you

failed, that was for the best too. To be sad about it constitutes a form of Arrogance

5. Coveting anything that isn't yours i.e.- ogling a woman, (even your wife if she's not in the mood), car, money, house, job = arrogance = I'm not happy with what Hashem has given me, I want that other thing too.

Dov is a wise man so to emulate him, allow me to finish with: My intentions for this post was only to help my fellow jews and addicts be as successful as possible and if I offended you in any way, please just pretend I dont exist.

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