

Same me, new life

Posted by mevakeshBT - 13 Sep 2014 10:24

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Shalom.

It's good to have joined the site and get a sense of the common struggle. I have been plagued with this addiction from as early as I can remember. I'm into the beginning of my first 90 days now. The challenge of guarding my eyes is the foremost obstacle from my yetzer hara. This is where the front line of the battle is for me. I'm looking forward to growing spiritually and sobriety will definitely help boost that. And growing spiritually will likewise help with my sobriety - it's a win-win, although it may not seem like it in the midst of the struggle. But with struggles is the opportunity for learning and wisdom. Here's to the journey!

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by mevakeshBT - 19 Sep 2014 03:04

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I felt like I was living when I looked at women. And that many scenarios could open up from that. Just fantasy. And when I realised this then often I felt the exact opposite.

MendelZ, you

Can you accept life as it is right now and yet wish for it to be different?

That was an incredibly intuitive question for you to ask, right on the money and it really hit me. I can't quite yet but I'm trying. I tell myself it depends if the future works out (which I think is just a way to avoid accepting the now).

I'm very interested, is it actually a common experience to feel a void?? I have had this feeling since youth but I've covered it up with lust. Are you trying to tell me that it's quite normal? Does filling it up with meaningful things really work, won't it still be there underneath the surface??

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Re: Same me, new life

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Posted by skeptical - 19 Sep 2014 03:22

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Being happy and content with everything Hashem gives us, takes away stress, anxiety, sadness, and many other negative feelings.

Those are some of the underlying issues.

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by AlexEliezer - 19 Sep 2014 18:13

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[mevakeshBT wrote:](#)

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Many addicts early in recovery report a void. I got sober much later in life, when I had a really good life going. Just this addiction was dragged along because it doesn't go away by itself even if I have a great life.

Back in my childhood when it started it was filling a huge void. But a life of active addiction can create or perpetuate its own void by pushing away the truly good things in life. That's the addict's personality. It's different for each of us, but the common thread is it pushes away what's REALLY good.

That's the void.

Fill it with good stuff.

Having said that, I think as a dyed-in-the-wool addict, I'll always feel a little void. But I think that's just my addict missing my sweet drug. And I'm saying no today.

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by Dov - 21 Sep 2014 07:49

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[mevakeshBT wrote:](#)

Shalom.

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Good Morning and welcome to the chevra here, mevakeshBT!

I think it's pretty well-recognized that the desire for erotic pleasure and sex with self (masturbation) is quite normal - Jewish morality books have lots of material about the issue since time immemorial with advice, etc, so obviously it has always been a problem and is quite natural for most guys. That has little to do with addicts, for whom Teshuvah *does not work* - whether their addiction is to lust, heroin, or alcohol, etc.

So what do you mean when you write "I have been suffering from this addiction since as far back as I can remember"? Do you see the masturbating teenager you were as having been an addict even from the first time that you experimented with masturbation? Or from the second time? Bearing in mind that we know that a sinner is not necessarily a sick person, as I mentioned above, and simply needs Teshuvah. From when do you think you see yourself as a really sick person who doesn't need teshuvah and mussar but something very different

(recovery)?

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by lavi - 21 Sep 2014 09:24

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[gibbor120 wrote:](#)

Ceasefire! I think we all agree that objectively, certain things are "low" or animalistic. Certain arayos are called "toeva". Chazal even had harsh words for someone who eats while walking in the street. Giving in to our base desires is definitely not a refined way to act.

I think Cornoy's point is that thinking in that way doesn't necessarily help us, and isn't how WE honestly look at it. We (with our warped minds) think it is beautiful.

If a person finds that thinking about gazing at women etc. as low or beneath him helps, kol hakavod. Whatever works for you. For many of us it just makes us feel like dirt, and leads to depression, which leads to acting out...

It says "lo sasuru.... asher atem zonim..." Our natural state is "zonim". It takes work to elevate ourselves. I think an elevated person would see it as disgusting. I have even read many stories here where the poster said that the first time he saw porn, it was disgusting to him.

Try and tell a smoker that smoking is disgusting. You are not likely to get very far with that approach. Many years of smoking have made it, not only enjoyable, but absolutely neccessary, almost as neccessary as the air he breathes. For most of us, thinking that gazing etc. is disgusting just doesn't help (true as it may be).

thank-you gibbor for your post. i appreciate you putting exactly my thoughts on the matter. it is always good to be aware of what is reality(torah) and what is our perceived feelings on the matter.

and like you said the torahs definition of toiyvah includes basically ALL arayos through a hekesh[inc niddah]....But the question is what to mention where and to whom.

that being said chazal say, that man finds arayos desirable, "nefesh shel odom machmadon" , so he has to be on the alert because he is attracted.

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by cordnoy - 21 Sep 2014 10:39

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The Torah also refers to the maachalos asuros as toeivah, so obviously our definition and our feelin's on it are not the same.

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by Dov - 21 Sep 2014 11:15

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[lavi wrote:](#)

[gibbor120 wrote:](#)

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by Dov - 21 Sep 2014 11:21

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Well said, Lavi.

But I'd like to be direct here, and ask whether you think the Torah (what you refer to as '*reality*') is actually more relevant to whether you or I end up porning and masturbating than our *feelings* are? In other words, what role did the Torah's 'reality' play in the last time you used porn and masturbated yourself, specifically?

That might shed some light what we will all agree is a dark and confusing matter.

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by mevakeshBT - 22 Sep 2014 14:29

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Dov

So what do you mean when you write "I have been suffering from this addiction since as far back as I can remember"? Do you see the masturbating teenager you were as having been an addict even from the first time that you experimented with masturbation? Or from the second time? Bearing in mind that we know that a sinner is not necessarily a sick person, as I mentioned above, and simply needs Teshuvah. From when do you think you see yourself as a really sick person who doesn't need teshuvah and mussar but something very different (recovery)?

Well due to an incident that happened to me as a child my sexuality was activated early, at least that's what a counsellor said and it makes the most sense. I had a compulsive need for activities that carried a sexual charge to get from one day to the next. That was how I coped. And this was before I had knowledge that it was wrong. So I was hooked long before I realised what was going on, shame had something to do with this.

I've always needed Teshuva and Mussar but wasn't brought up religiously and only recently came to value them. I tried several times to get help when I was young but failed.

For me now, Teshuva and Mussar are my foundation to keep straight.

Thanks for your questions, did I answer them? Feel free to ask any you like or comment.

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by lavi - 22 Sep 2014 20:45

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[Dov wrote:](#)

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hi dov, thanks for your interest.

about your question.

lets first agree that alot of people would like to keep religion totally out, so i'm reluctant to bring it up (again!!!)

so i would like to add the following disclaimer:

this is about me personally and may not apply to others [ and it may annoy some ]

although nothing about the torah actually stopped me from acting out, i found it very useful to be aware of every single bingle chazal[that i know] that describe and specify the evil and results of lust. why?

because it was ringing in my head the whole time, and it made me real miserable, and together with the fact that i was sinking fast without control, i reached out, out of desperation, to get help.

in other words without all the chazals i might of been just fine, living in the crazy inhuman, dizzying world of chasing pleasure. no matter about life, family etc. i know its kinda selfish, but i'm being honest.

but chazal illuminate all about how you have a soul, and you are more than just your physical pleasure, and it is a reason to live and if you involve yourself with lust, you will lose something more precious than life itself, your real self.

so i am real happy that the torah made me feel miserable.

and to cordnoy.

look, you and i both know that there are more and biting chazals, about lust than nearly any other aveira. it is THE aveira. if you want me to specify let me know.

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by Dov - 23 Sep 2014 20:53

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[lavi wrote:](#)

[Dov wrote:](#)

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Understood, same here. So as much as you feel like gravitating to making all this a religious matter, in the end you admit that religion as you used it was and is *not* the answer - just the irritant that *brought* you to the answer.

But the real question is: And what happened after that? What now? *Was* there an 'after that', really?

I was miserable for years and years AFTER crying through sincere and deep-feeling yomimtovim, davenings, epocalyptic experiences in my life (births, deaths, marriage), etc...but years later I was still masturbating and using sweet porn...and suffering terribly. Some folks' tolerance of emotional suffering is quite amazing.

So: Are you clean now? Have you changed?

That's the only real point as far as i see, chaver.

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by Dov - 24 Sep 2014 02:08

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[mevakeshBT wrote:](#)

Dov

So what do you mean when you write "I have been suffering from this addiction since as far back as I can remember"? Do you see the masturbating teenager you were as having been an addict even from the first time that you experimented with masturbation? Or from the second time? Bearing in mind that we know that a sinner is not necessarily a sick person, as I mentioned above, and simply needs Teshuvah. From when do you think you see yourself as a

really sick person who doesn't need teshuvah and mussar but something very different (recovery)?

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I've always needed Teshuva and Mussar but wasn't brought up religiously and only recently came to value them. I tried several times to get help when I was young but failed.

For me now, Teshuva and Mussar are my foundation to keep straight.

Thanks for your questions, did I answer them? Feel free to ask any you like or comment.

If teshuvah and Mussar (working harder to make more moral choices) is keeping you straight, then I'd suggest you do not have an addiction at all. Why do you say "I've had this addiction since as long as I can remember," if it was really just a poor moral choice you were making all along and now that you know better, you are basically gonna be OK?

This is not an attack and not rhetorical, but a simple, honest question I am asking you. Please note that not all who enjoy alcohol are alcoholics, of course. It's not messing with their lives....maybe with a day here or a day there, but not with their lives. Those who **are** addicted to alcohol and choose the 'addiction model' (as I do), are truly sick people even though they may also be making immoral choices - that means that at it's core their issue is not a moral failing, but a mental and spiritual illness. So the solution is not gonna be a religious one, nor a moral one.

As Chaza"I say, Derech Eretz kodma laTorah. There is nbeing OK as a man - and then comes being OK as a Jew.

Porn use is no different even though it is a sin besides being a drug. If it is not messing with your life in a real, practical sense but just making one feel really guilty...then we are not necessarily talking about an addict or an addiction...till they come to see that they really are living a double life and therefore are sickos. Like I am in my addiction.

That does not absolve them from any responsibility at all. Instead, it gives them permission to start to be honest and face the fact that they need Derech Eretz: lessons in becoming a real (honest) human being, rather than Torah.

This is especially powerful for the frum guy who has been masturbating and living a double life. He knows it is not working no matter how frum he is. He is sicker than any goy who is living honestly. Then it is time to move into recovery.

Hey - did this make any sense to you, man?

I am just asking you a question, not saying anything about you at all.

Regardless, have a great Rosh Hashonoh!!

- Dov

The guy who calls it an addiction when it is really just a poor moral choice is confusing the waters and will likely confuse people around him who *are* addicts, as well, no?

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Re: Same me, new life

Posted by cordnoy - 24 Sep 2014 03:17

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I have been postin' from rabbi Tanenbaum on the 12 steps on my Tryin' thread, but I see aan opportunity here for an interestin' tidbit and a relevant one:

On this very topic, let me tell you a short story that you won't hear anywhere else.

I wrote a letter to R' Chaim Kanievsky several years ago asking him "regarding a man who

cannot seem to stop drinking alcohol on his own-is this man a wicked person who is using his free will to act wicked or a sick person who simply has no free will?"

If you are familiar with letter-writing to R' Kanievsky, you will know that he never writes an answer that is more than about five words. These are the three words he used to reply to my question:

"Sheyeleich libeit mishugaim"

In English this is translated to mean "he [an alcoholic like the one I mentioned in my question] should go to a mental institution."

It is obvious that according to R' Kanievsky, the alcoholic who cannot stop on his own is robbed of his free will to stop drinking. Instead, he must use his free will seek a mental institution where he can receive treatment.

I wrote this letter to R' Kanievsky simply because the man arguing with me would only listen to him. However, even without R' Kanievsky's reply our Torah has many sources for this idea.

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Re: Same me, new life  
Posted by Dov - 28 Sep 2014 07:46

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You need no Torah sources at all. Not even for the guy who demands them. Why? Simple.

Because if he really is an addict, he will come crawling to recovery even if it is in a church building (as i did), even from goyim (as i did), and even if it is in his own community (as i did)...eventually.

Well, being a few years older than you I guess, I asked the **Steipeler** about my habit of masturbating...of course 30 years ago I termed it the way so many here, do: "I have a problem with machshovos ra'os and zera levatola" (in writing, of course...boy, even those words were impossible to say straight out to anyone real back then).

Did i tell him how often I was doing it? Nope.

Did I tell him the porn I was using and how much time and mesiras nefesh I was devoting to it? Nope.

Did I really tell him about *me*, then? Nope.

So he simply passed over those words in my note and said to me, "kulam yesh nisyonos," or something like that, basically the same reply he gave to the other concern I wrote him about in the same kvittle: "I am finding it hard to really progress in my learning."

If I had asked the *true* shayloah *the way you did*, the answer would have been altogether different. Additionally, my disease had not progressed to a thing that really seemed like an addiction to me at that time, anyhow.

So many times I speak to guys who tell me the advice they got for their problem from a rov or a therapist and after discussion, it turns out *they never told them the true story* in all the necessary details for a shayloah to have been truly *asked*. The shame was just overpowering. Nu. I understand that very well.

Till things got bad enough that even if I HAD told the Steipeler all the truth (if he would have been *alive* here still by then), all he would have been able to say was what his son wrote back to you.

But thank G-d, all the hashkaofoh discussions about free will, schar v'onesh, etc, get washed away eventually. The poor, sweet yid who calls me in tears and admits he gives a shiur to over a hundred people in lakewood, yerushalayim, BP, or skver - and just masturbated again to porn, or used phone sex again, or met with a woman or man again for a reason he can't even understand...all the 'religion issues' fall by the wayside (where they belong!). For if they were strangely irrelevant in the kilkul, why should they suddenly be so very vital in the tikun?! Simple: cuz they allow one to avoid facinf the truth that they are failures at this thing, know a lot and do nothing when it comes to this, and cannot help themselves, with all the Torah they know.

Been there, done that. And it is so sweet to read the hakdoma to Rav Schwartz's "**Da Es Atzm'cho**", where he writes that this entire book is not religious but spiritual/Derech Eretz not Torah. Program is the same, for folks who use all the mussar and chassidus they can get, and still come up 'tamei'. Maddening, I know. And scary.

When things get bad enough, all the Torah-dikeh requirements run off. I wonder where they go?

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Maybe to metzulos yam asher lo yozocher v'lo yipoked od"!