

Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used

Posted by yehuda2341 - 15 Sep 2022 19:35

Hi,

My name is Yehuda, and I might be able to help you.

You see, I also went through the struggle, the years-long fight against the Yetzer Hara and its nisyonos.

While working through that struggle I came across and worked on a number of ideas. These ideas were game-changers for me - powerful tools that I used, with HaShem's help, to turn the fight around and eventually move past it.

These ideas aren't mussar - I'm in no place to give you mussar, and I doubt you need it. They aren't either inspiration, encouragement or chizzuk. Those are great, but not my department. My ideas are just facts, perspectives. A deeper, clearer, truer understanding of how we work, how the Yetzer Hara operates, and what it means to be in- and to overcome- a nisayon.

Why does that help? For me, fighting the Yetzer Hara was like learning how to drive on the highway. I had no idea what was happening, why it was happening, or what I was supposed to do about it. And there were big consequences for a wrong turn. The ideas that I worked on became my 'Owner's Manual'; the what's-what and how-to for my nisyonos.

Confusion doesn't breed success, clarity does. These ideas gave me the clarity that I needed to:

- 1) see where and how the Yetzer Hara was distorting my perspective,
- 2) see what it means to have a nisayon, and
- 3) know what I could do about it, how to fight it.

And that saved my life.

I'd like to pass these ideas forward - to me they seem too good, too powerful, to keep to myself. I know this approach might not work for everyone, but it just might work for you. As it did, and still does, work for me.

I'd be very glad and grateful to hear your ideas and any feedback you have, on these ideas or beyond. I can be contacted at yehuda2341@gmail.com, or by phone 443 406 8543 (please leave a message).

Hatzlacha,

Yehuda

Note: Nearly all of the ideas that I hope to present are sourced in Chazal and/or Sifrei Mussar. In this format I don't bring these sources. Instead I try to bring them out through our experiences- to help you see it in yourself and your life, so you can feel it instead of just hearing it. If you are interested in the textual sources please let me know, it's all there and I'll be very happy to share.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by yehuda2341 - 25 Nov 2022 15:23

Idea #8- The Buck stops Here

Building on the last idea here. We said that the battleground with the Yetzer Hara, the prize for victory, is the right to decide what to do. The Yetzer Hara pushes you to decide to indulge in the taavah. You push yourself to decide to not indulge. The outcome of that battle is your decision, either to give in or to resist.

So here's the age-old question: Is it always possible to win, to decide to resist the Yetzer Hara?

---I know that much has been said on this, and I can't agree with everyone. What follows is my take- what makes sense to me, what I've seen and experienced.---

Yes.

It has to be. Because the Yetzer Hara is only fighting to make *you* decide. The Yetzer Hara is not in charge of decisions. No physical or emotional drive is in charge of making decisions. You are in charge of making decisions.

Any voluntary action is under the control of your decision-making. Your arm will never lift itself up if you don't want it to. Your legs will never walk if you don't decide to go.

The Yetzer Hara can't move your hands, legs, eyes, or anything. If you move, *you* moved. *You* clicked the button, *you* turned your head, *you* spoke those words. The Yetzer Hara doesn't have fingers. You do. You did it.

Because he told you to do it. And he didn't just tell you, he pushed and pushed until you couldn't take it anymore. It was torturous.

That's true. It's hard. It can be very, very, very hard to resist. But at the end of the day, not

resisting means deciding to follow through and carrying that out.

A great mashal is torture. If a soldier is captured and tortured for information. The torturer is certainly at fault for putting on that pressure. But he can't make you say the words. He can't go in your head and make that decision for you. He can just pressure you to *decide* to spill the beans. But when that soldier gives the information, that's him doing it. And he could have decided not to. No one but him can make that final decision. The buck stops here, at the desk of the conscious mind.

We're being tortured- to various degrees- by the taavah, the Yetzer Hara. He'll up the pressure, make it painful to resist. And, of course, the harder it is the less we are to blame. Someone who caves to torture is not a rasha at all. But it is ultimately our decision.

What's the difference? It's night and day.

If you think it's impossible to resist, then it *is* impossible. Because you won't try. Why waste effort doing something impossible?

If you think that *sometimes* it's impossible, then you just handed the Yetzer Hara a powerful weapon. All he has to do now is get you to believe that this is the impossible kind, then you'll stop resisting. So you'll think about how hard it is (and it is very, very hard), and how many times you've tried, and even now you're trying but it won't go away. And you'll say, 'look it's impossible'. Then it's home free for the Yetzer Hara.

Sounds familiar?

Really, there's nothing more liberating than accepting that we have- ultimately- full control. **Everything I did, I could have stopped- so now everything I want to do I can do.** I'm not doomed to a life that I don't want to live. I'll write the script.

With "I can't" comes:

Depression-I'm stuck, I can't get out, what's the point?

Anger- Why did HaShem do this to me?

Denial-I'm an addict, it's who I am, doesn't bother me?

With "it's hard" comes:

Hope- I can overcome it.

Understanding/Acceptance- It's a nisayon, it will help me grow.

Motivation- There's something to work towards.

To deny our responsibility for our decisions in the past is (-this is my opinion-) a sugared poison.

It removes the immediate guilt (if we can fully believe it), but it leads us away from recovery.

I'm using strong language here, to match my feelings on the topic. This is really the cornerstone of my approach. It *a/ways* comes down to my decision, my choice. I know I can win, because there's no one who can make me lose. And If I know that I can win, I will.

So that's my best piece of advice: Never allow yourself to say or think that it's impossible. Don't even say 'nearly/practically/basically/effectively impossible'. Say it's hard. Very hard. Put on as many 'very's as you feel (or more colorful adjectives- enormously, torturously, oppressively etc.).

Because if it's very hard you can still do it. If it's practically impossible you can't.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by yehuda2341 - 02 Dec 2022 14:30

Idea #9- Who Am I?

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So which one is us, and which one is the outside force? Am I the one who wants the goodies, just I know I shouldn't? Or am I the one who wants what's right, just I get distracted by temptations? Who am I?

The answer is: neither.

You have desires, drives. They are part of you. Both of them. **You** are a person who wants things. Different things. Often (as above) contradictory things. But those wants don't define you.

You have feet and hands. The feet are not hands, and the hands are not feet. That's not going to cause any existential questions. A person has different parts, and they all make up the whole.

A person has different wants. We want to be good **and** we want the goodies. Those are both parts of our mindset. Both deeply felt emotions. But they're not **you**. Your hand isn't you, your foot isn't you, and your want isn't you.

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The only time we have a challenge, a struggle, a decision to make, is when we have two opposite wants. I want the taavah, but I also want to stay clean. So now I have to decide.

That's how human beings are designed- to want different things so that we can choose between them.

So let's not define ourselves by our desires. If we have a desire for taavah, that doesn't mean we *are* anything. We are not what we want, we are what we choose.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Hashem Help Me - 02 Dec 2022 14:45

So true, and so eloquently and intelligently verbalized.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Teshuvahguy - 02 Dec 2022 14:54

[yehuda2341 wrote on 02 Dec 2022 14:30:](#)

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Wow. Thank you so much for that amazing post. It resonated with me straight to the core. Have an amazing Shabbos.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used

Posted by Trouble - 02 Dec 2022 14:57

[yehuda2341 wrote on 02 Dec 2022 14:30:](#)

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thank you; well put.

except....

i don't think we are what we chose either; yesterday we chose badly; does that make us bad? today, we chose well, are we now well? are we good for one moment and bad for another? i believe that as you wrote above, all of are choices also make up the whole, as does everything, so our wants and our choices ultimately make up who we are. perhaps less weight to our wants, but they are part of the equation.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Vehkam - 02 Dec 2022 16:38

[Trouble wrote on 02 Dec 2022 14:57:](#)

[yehuda2341 wrote on 02 Dec 2022 14:30:](#)

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even if all your choices in the past were not good, you can be considered a tzadik gomur right now, if you choose to do the right thing from today and on going forward.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Human being - 02 Dec 2022 17:53

[yehuda2341 wrote on 02 Dec 2022 14:30:](#)

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Have you ever done IFS therapy? this post is so true. Good for you! thanks!

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used

Posted by yehuda2341 - 04 Dec 2022 16:26

[Trouble wrote on 02 Dec 2022 14:57:](#)

[yehuda2341 wrote on 02 Dec 2022 14:30:](#)

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Great point. On the deepest level we are a neshama which does not feel our physical desires and is not changed by the choices we make. So in that sense we are not what we choose, we simply 'are'. The larger 'us'- our body and personality that host the neshama- will include our various desires, as you point out.

What I suppose I meant by "we are what we choose", is from the perspective of defining our lives. What did we accomplish, who did we make ourselves into? My life is a collage of all of the choices that I have made. Whatever good choices I made are the accomplishments of my life, the bad choices (for which teshuva was not attained) are my failures. If I chose well today, I've added a positive element to my life that will never go away, and the same for the bad (again, without teshuva). 'My life' is all of that put together.

In that perspective, we can ignore the wants. My life is not defined by what I wanted, it's defined by what I did.

I hope that's more clear, thanks so much for your comment!

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by yehuda2341 - 04 Dec 2022 16:27

[Human being wrote on 02 Dec 2022 17:53:](#)

[yehuda2341 wrote on 02 Dec 2022 14:30:](#)

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Have you ever done IFS therapy? this post is so true. Good for you! thanks!

Thanks for your kind words! I'm not familiar with IFS therapy, except what I just read on wikipedia... The model seems a bit more complex than how I've pictured it (I just picture a central 'self' and label everything else as being various drives/desires). I'll have to look into that, thanks for pointing it out

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Grant400 - 04 Dec 2022 21:23

[yehuda2341 wrote on 20 Oct 2022 17:07:](#)

I will mention one thing, though, for those who experience these nisyonos. The overwhelming nisayon is definitely much harder, no question. But there is a silver lining. The drive, the pressure, of these nisyonos is **not** you. It's not coming from what you want, from what you think is worthwhile. It's outside of your heart and mind, it's all physical. That makes a big difference. As strong as it is, it goes away quickly, much more quickly than your heart-and-mind desires. If you can beat it- and you can beat it- it will go away faster than you would believe.

I see this idea that urges don't last longer than short bursts, 10 - 20 minutes etc. all over. Quoted by scientific research and evidence as well, like in the Flight to Freedom program.

The issue I have with this is that my personal experience is not like that. I can have extremely intense painful urges (pounding heart, tightened stomach, nausea etc.) for hours at a time without let up (like right now) and even when there is a slight pause after a few hours it's just to a drop lesser degree, but will return after 20 minutes in full force.

This means that all the distraction techniques etc. won't work under these circumstances and eventually I just collapse from the fatigue of such a long and enduring pain/burning desire.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Human being - 04 Dec 2022 22:31

[Grant400 wrote on 04 Dec 2022 21:23:](#)

[yehuda2341 wrote on 20 Oct 2022 17:07:](#)

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absolutely. me as well.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by yehuda2341 - 05 Dec 2022 13:55

[Grant400 wrote on 04 Dec 2022 21:23:](#)

[yehuda2341 wrote on 20 Oct 2022 17:07:](#)

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My experience- it does go away quickly, but not by itself. As you say,
distraction and passive resistance- though extremely difficult,
valuable, and praiseworthy- aren't enough to make it go away. I've had
times like that last for days at a time, and it does wear you down.
It's not self-limiting.

What I was referring to in that piece was more than just resisting. If
you can actually fight back and actively overpower the Yetzer Hara, at
that point it will totally disappear and leave behind an incredibly
positive feeling. Not an easy thing to do...I managed it during those
difficult nisyonos a handful of times (I think 4, over 2+ years), and
that was enough- b'ezras HaShem- to stop that type of nisayon from
recurring.

How to do that? I hope to write about that soon, so stay tuned!

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Hashemschild.1 - 05 Dec 2022 17:46

[yehuda2341 wrote on 05 Dec 2022 13:55:](#)

[Grant400 wrote on 04 Dec 2022 21:23:](#)

[yehuda2341 wrote on 20 Oct 2022 17:07:](#)

I will mention one thing, though, for those who experience these nisyonos. The overwhelming nisayon is definitely much harder, no question. But there is a silver lining. The drive, the pressure, of these nisyonos is **not** you. It's not coming from what you want, from what you think is worthwhile. It's outside of your heart and mind, it's all physical. That makes a big difference. As strong as it is, it goes away quickly, much more quickly than your heart-and-mind desires. If you can beat it- and you can beat it- it will go away faster than you would believe.

I see this idea that urges don't last longer than short bursts, 10 - 20 minutes etc. all over. Quoted by scientific research and evidence as well, like in the Flight to Freedom program.

The issue I have with this is that my personal experience is not like that. I can have extremely intense painful urges (pounding heart, tightened stomach, nausea etc.) for hours at a time without let up (like right now) and even when there is a slight pause after a few hours it's just to a drop lesser degree, but will return after 20 minutes in full force.

This means that all the distraction techniques etc. won't work under these circumstances and eventually I just collapse from the fatigue of such a long and enduring pain/burning desire.

My experience- it does go away quickly, but not by itself. As you say, distraction and passive resistance- though extremely difficult, valuable, and praiseworthy- aren't enough to make it go away. I've had times like that last for days at a time, and it does wear you down. It's not self-limiting.

What I was referring to in that piece was more than just resisting. If you can actually fight back and actively overpower the Yetzer Hara, at that point it will totally disappear and leave behind an incredibly positive feeling. Not an easy thing to do...I managed it during those difficult nisyonos a handful of times (I think 4, over 2+ years), and that was enough- b'ezras HaShem- to stop that type of nisayon from recurring.

How to do that? I hope to write about that soon, so stay tuned!

Don't forget we can't overcome this yetzer hara ourselves, He is much stronger than us humans! We need Hashems help to overcome it! There's a mamer chazal '???? ?' ?? '???? ??' ????, something like that.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used

Posted by yehuda2341 - 09 Dec 2022 14:13

Idea #10- Defining Choices

Some nisyonos are harder than others. There are some taavos that will knock us off our feet, it'll take everything we've got to resist. And there are some that aren't all that tempting to us, we could overcome them relatively easily.

We want our taavos, that's a given. But *how much* we want them makes a big difference. The more we want this object of attraction, the stronger the taava we will feel for it. The stronger the taava, the harder the nisayon will be.

We also want to stay clean, to live as we know is right. *How much* we want that makes a big difference. The more we want to avoid the taava, the stronger the will to resist. The stronger the will to resist, the easier it will be to overcome the nisayon.

A nisayon is when two of our wants go against each other, because then we have to decide which want to follow.

How difficult a nisayon is depends on the weight of those two 'wants'. If one 'want' is much bigger than the other, it will be easy, natural, to choose that one. If they are almost the same, the choice becomes more difficult.

So the strength of our wants determines how hard our nisayon will be. What makes a want as strong as it is?

Here's how I see it. If I want something, that means that I feel that it is worthwhile. If I want to experience taavos, that's because I feel that they are enjoyable, and I feel that getting a hold of enjoyable things is worthwhile. *know* that this isn't true, but I still *feel* that it is.] I have a sub-conscious opinion whether this is worthwhile.

And that sub-conscious opinion also includes *how* worthwhile it is- how enjoyable is it, how important is it to get that pleasure.

The more important I feel it is, the stronger the taava/pull I'll have for it when it comes up.

Everyone is born pre-programmed with a set of wants. There are many things that we naturally want, and everyone is different by their nature. Some have a strong natural draw to taavos, some have a much weaker draw. How we were raised and other experiences can also shape our sub-conscious opinions. Especially early experiences can create wants, or make them stronger or weaker.

Can we change all that? Can we change how we feel? Can we tell ourselves that taavos aren't as important as we feel they are? Or can we tell ourselves that staying clean is the ultimate good for us?

Not by just thinking about it. What we know, what we think, doesn't change what we feel. I can fully and honestly believe that taavos are worthless, but when one comes around I'll still want it. Because I still *feel* it's important.

What does change how we feel? Decisions.

I have a nisayon, a choice between taava and staying clean. Both wants are aroused, both pull me, try to show that they are the stronger, the more important want. If I choose to stay clean, I'm showing that that want is the winner. It's more important, more valuable, than the want for taava. It's not theoretical, I'm following through. I mean it.

That lesson sticks. When that happens, the want for staying clean gets stronger, and the want for taava gets weaker. Not by very much, no big changes overnight. But a little bit.

And then the next nisayon is easier- just a bit- because now the want for staying clean is that much bigger. And add more and more and more decisions like that, it gets easier and easier.

Or, of course, the other way. If I choose the taava, I'm showing that that is more important- taava is more valuable than staying clean. That lesson sticks too. And then the next nisayon is that much harder.

Every nisayon we have, the choice we make is not limited to what's in front of us now. We're programming our hearts, teaching ourselves what's important.

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