

I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal

Posted by boruch - 22 Jan 2009 18:30

Day 3 and posting. Thank you all for a life-saving and life-giving forum. Thank you Guard for caring and being there for all of us.

This will not be a journal about struggling daily with tempting situations and near misses. This will be a journal of a different type of struggle entirely. A struggle to steadfastly refuse to get caught up in the cat and mouse game of revolving door cycles of urges and relapses and to keep absolutely, totally and single-mindedly focused on the big picture --- developing day, by day, with Hashem's help, the inspiration, enthusiasm, strength, energy and determination to ultimately emerge completely victorious in a lifetime conquest of addiction beginning today --- with no relapses.

Hashem should help me in my quest to achieve from today a lifetime conquest of addiction and to inspire others to strive for what they had best only dared to dream of. To achieve what they were totally convinced was impossible. With your Will Hashem, we should in great numbers prove that what many and even most had believed was impossible and what some had believed was counter-productive is really very doable if we only learn how to turn directly to You for Guidance and how to implement your Will, one step at a time.

In days of Old when Jews like ourselves desperately needed Guidance from Hashem they would approach the local novi or prophet who would show them how to use their personalities, gifts and talents to follow Hashem's Will and Plan. Today, sadly we have no nevi-im, prophets and so we cannot get access to such ready-made and customized Divine Prescriptions.

However we still have a Torah and if we know how with Hashem's help we look directly and genuinely to the Torah for guidance we can go much further than we ever dreamed was possible.

And so as just one piece of a holistic approach to beating addiction for life with Hashem's help on this thread I will struggle to focus on a 12 week recovery program (almost ninety days) based entirely and directly on studying Torah sources as they were always studied and interpreted in our classical seforim.

The starting point has to be the most striking description of extreme addiction that we find in Chazal (to my knowledge at least). The source is the Gemara in Avodo Zoro 17a dealing with Elazar ben Durdia, who, the Gemoro tells us, was so addicted that there was no prostitute anywhere with whom he had not sinned at least once.

The title of my journal is a direct quote of the dramatic declaration of Elazar ben Durdia, as recorded by the Gemoro, that after a life of total and absolute failure to curb his worst instincts he finally confronted his sexual addiction. He cried out with tremendous intensity, "I can rely only upon myself" (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a). The Gemoro records that amid the ensuing events a voice from Heaven announced that Elazar had in that moment earned himself a prominent place in the World to Come. Rebbe (R' Yehuda Hanasi) adds that not only has Elazar ben Durdia earned himself a prominent place in the World to Come, additionally he is now referred to as **Rebbe** Elazar ben Durdia because he serves as a role model in the fight against addiction.

So, inspired the example of **Rebbe** Elazar ben Durdia and enlightened by the insight revealed by the Holy Tanna, Rav Yehuda Hanassi, Week 1 of my 12 week recovery program looks like this:

12 - WEEKS TO RECOVERY

WEEK #1 -- Personal Responsibility --- I take 100% ownership of my addiction.

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by the.guard - 22 Jan 2009 18:38

A great warrior has joined forces with kedusha. If you keep the resolve, you have it in you to become a real general in this army!

P.S. I have a feeling that a lot of your inspiring material will end up on our daily Chizuk e-mails :D

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by boruch - 22 Jan 2009 19:08

[guardureyes wrote on 22 Jan 2009 18:38:](#)

A great warrior has joined forces with kedusha. If you keep the resolve, you have it in you to become a real general in this army!

P.S. I have a feeling that a lot of your inspiring material will end up on our daily Chizuk e-mails :D

Thank you, Guard, you are a very wise man.

"Between-the-line implications" aside, we are very much fighting on the same side --- the side of kedusha (albeit in different military services, to paraphrase the famous analogy of the Chofetz Chaim in reference to the different and diverse chalokim of klal Yisroel)

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by the.guard - 22 Jan 2009 19:25

What "Between-the-line implications"? Are we not allowed to have a "give and take" discussion?

And I don't consider us in different military services either.

Welcome to the force!

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by strugglingwoman - 23 Jan 2009 00:15

Inspirational words, indeed! A Torah approach to 12 steps and chizuk. Keep the sources coming!

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by Binyomin5766 - 23 Jan 2009 01:54

Wow, this makes me want to learn that Gemara now. Of course, I need to learn how to learn Gemara, but that is beside the point. That sounds really applicable.

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by boruch - 23 Jan 2009 13:32

[guardureyes wrote on 22 Jan 2009 19:25:](#)

What "Between-the-line implications"? Are we not allowed to have a "give and take" discussion?

Relax Guard, no worries. The "Between-the-line implications" are mine and not yours.

You will notice BE"H in the next 12 weeks, every week in my 12 weeks to Recovery will be created by taking a step which is the polar opposite of each of the 12 steps (with the sole exception being step 3 which will be the same).

Obviously, as many including yourself have pointed out, both Yiddishkeit and life are full of opposites and so they are opposites but not contradictions. Nevertheless the "Between-the-line implication" I am referring to is that my working on the opposites of the 12 steps would at first blush seem to be very provocative and at the very least fundamentally different in approach. Which, of course is the reason why we have so much "give and take" discussion. Which I enjoy and appreciate immensely. And my point was and is that in your initial response to my first post on this journal you were very wise to affirm my path, despite our differences, without getting involved in discussion of whether you agreed with it, which of course we do fully elsewhere in these forums and you are most welcome to do here too, because as Shlomo Hamelech said there is a time and place for everything.

[guardureyes wrote on 22 Jan 2009 19:25:](#)

And I don't consider us in different military services either.

Welcome to the force!

Either way it is an honor and privilege to serve alongside you Guard!!!

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by Ano Nymous - 23 Jan 2009 13:41

Boruch your determination is to be commended. I'm sure that your firm resolve to quit will become a reality. Just a couple months ago I thought I could never get to where I am now. I've found that the feelings of "I can't" are just an illusion created by the Yetzer to keep people from an earnest attempt to quit. I had those feelings at the outset, and I just ignored them. I wish you all the success in the world. Every person who joins this forum and fights makes it easier for me to win when I am tempted. Thank you!

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by boruch - 23 Jan 2009 14:15

Day 4 and posting. Thank you all for a life-saving and life-giving forum. Thank you Guard for caring and being there for all of us.

12 - WEEKS TO RECOVERY

WEEK #1 -- Personal Responsibility --- I take 100% ownership of my addiction.

So I am ready to take full 100% ownership of my addiction. What next? Many argue that short of rock-bottom and 12 steps there is nothing. I fundamentally disagree and this log and BE"H the log of many others to come will finally put a lie to those empty claims.

The Chofetz Chaim was said to have said that he, the Chofetz Chaim, was a mechaber seforim, an author of books, while the Alter of Slobodka, founder of the Slobodka school of Mussar and the Slobodka Yeshiva was a mechaber of "mentschen", a creator of "men".

The Talmidim of the Alter, who learned in the Slobodka Yeshiva known as the "mother of Yeshivos", among them, HoRav Isser Zalman Meltzer, HoRav Eliezer Yehuda Finkel (son of the Alter and Rosh Yeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva), HoRav Yitzchok Isaac Scherr (son-in-law of the Alter and Rosh Yeshiva of Slobodka Yeshiva), HoRav Aharon Kotler, HoRav Yaakov Kamenetsky, HoRav Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman, HoRav Elazar Menachem Schach and many other Gedolei Roshei Yeshiva between them claim a majority share in Wordwide (Eretz Yisroel, US, Europe and everywhere else) Harbotzas HaTorah post World War II. His Talmidim were Gedolim in Torah and Gedolim in Mussar. In fact the Slobodka school of Mussar is the only one of the three prominent schools of mussar to have produced Gedolim in Mussar who were at the same time, the most prominent Geonim in Torah of their generation.

What was the Alter's secret? Most who know something of the Slobodka school of Mussar will say that it was his focus on Gadlus Ho'odom -- the great Holiness and potential within man. To a certain extent there is a lot of truth in that. In fact, as far as his focus, while he is best known

for his focus on Gadlus Ho'odom, he used to focus on three things, Gadlus Ho'odom -- the great Holiness and potential within man, Omek HaDin -- the profundity of HaKodush Boruch Hu's expectations and judgement on man and Olom Chessed Yiboneh -- the need to build the World through Kindness. But that too is not in my opinion the key secret of his success.

The Alter is quoted in Marbitzei Torah Umussar as saying that his goal in making Talmidim is that they should be "Smart and Good".

Most people are smart when it comes to business and academics. They are especially smart when it comes to trying to do things that are forbidden. Just look at how smart and cunning an addict becomes to satisfy his or her addiction. But when it comes to being good then they suddenly become extremely naive and they focus almost exclusively on being good without getting smart first. That's why so many fail. When Chazal say "Ain Habur Yerei Chet" -- the ignorant man cannot be a Yerei Shomayim, it is not just because he does not know which mitzvos to keep it is because he does not know how to be smart in the fight against the yetzer hora. That is exactly what Chazal say "Le'Olom Yehei Odom Arum BeYira" -- A person should be cunning in his quest for Yiras Shomayim. That is exactly what the Mesilas Yeshorim says in his introduction is the problem when Smart people do not realize that Yiras Shomayim demands not superficial and unintelligent piety but rather extreme application of all of one's mental abilities.

This is especially true with the fight against addiction. Most people initially try to fight addiction with brute force -- that is with the intelligence of a brute. They squander all of their efforts and strengths in the wrong areas. They don't fail because it can't be done they fail because it can't be done if you do it like a fool. And if you don't do it with a lot of cunning and guidance you will automatically do it like a fool.

So the problem is not at all as some would have us believe that people lack willpower. Jews are good people and have no shortage of willpower to do good. But they ignore at their own peril the prescription of the Alter of Slobodka and the prescription of Chazal. Before you are Good you first need to get Smart. The people who try and fight the battle with goodness alone have a desperate shortage of down-to-earth, practical, ready-for-implementation Torah guidance on how to get smart in the battle against addiction.

With Hashem's help we will take ownership of our addiction and right here and right now, get Smart and get Good in fighting our addiction.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!!!

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by Binyomin5766 - 23 Jan 2009 14:47

My two cents: I am a featherweight in discussions such as this, so please don't flame me too badly.

It is my thought that hitting "rock bottom" is actually not necessary to beginning the road to recovery. Part of the problem here is definitional. What exactly constitutes rock bottom? Is it the point beyond which we cannot sink any lower? But the only point beyond which we cannot sink any lower is death. So I rather doubt that any of us here has hit rock bottom.

So where does the recovery process begin? I think rather that the process of recovery begins with hitting the point of shock. What do I mean by this? At different points in our addiction degeneration there are "costs" we pay as a result of our activities: loss of sleep, health, money, job, family, etc. Each one of us here has had some event that has shocked us into awareness. It is the "What in the world am I doing?" moment. Hashem allows us to experience loss, sometimes significant loss, in order that we should wake up and do teshuva. There are many, we well know, who have not hit that point. We can only hope that the point of shock for others comes at a level of less serious consequences. [/2cents]

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by the.guard - 24 Jan 2009 17:09

In Firday's Chizuk e-mail we explained that "Hitting bottom" doesn't mean that you can't fall lower, rather it means - kind of like Ben said - that we can't be SOVEL it any more. The first step to leaving Mitzrayim is that Hashem takes us out of SIVLUS Mitzrayim. When we just can't take it any more, we are ready to leave Mitzrayim! That is what "hitting bottom" is all about (at least the way I see it. Elya, any thoughts?)

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by battleworn - 25 Jan 2009 13:56

Different people are different, so I'll speak for myself and people like myself (I would assume that most people that had a chinuch as solid as mine, would be like me in this respect). For me hitting rock bottom had nothing to do with it; the key was information (much of which, is scattered all around this forum).

Of course the average Goy, or unknowledgeable Yid, won't even try to really fight the addiction if he didn't hit rock-bottom. The first paragraph in the SA pamphlet (quoted in email 362) says exactly that. But I guess there are a lot of people that are willing to try very hard, but they are not ready to take certain steps, until they hit rock-bottom.

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by boruch - 25 Jan 2009 21:45

[Ben wrote on 23 Jan 2009 14:47:](#)

My two cents: I am a featherweight in discussions such as this, so please don't flame me too badly.

You are a smart man Ben, and since you are carrying a white flag, there will be no flames and that's a promise.

[Ben wrote on 23 Jan 2009 14:47:](#)

It is my thought that hitting "rock bottom" is actually not necessary to beginning the road to

recovery.

So far we are in agreement and doing well.

[Ben wrote on 23 Jan 2009 14:47:](#)

Part of the problem here is definitional. What exactly constitutes rock bottom? Is it the point beyond which we cannot sink any lower? But the only point beyond which we cannot sink any lower is death. So I rather doubt that any of us here has hit rock bottom.

So where does the recovery process begin? I think rather that the process of recovery begins with hitting the point of shock. What do I mean by this? At different points in our addiction degeneration there are "costs" we pay as a result of our activities: loss of sleep, health, money, job, family, etc. Each one of us here has had some event that has shocked us into awareness. It is the "What in the world am I doing?" moment. Hashem allows us to experience loss, sometimes significant loss, in order that we should wake up and do teshuva.

In my case it was certainly shock. After 38 years of addiction, it was not until last Monday that I realized that I really was addicted. Until then I made excuses, Yetzer Hora, stress, occasional lapses etc. When I discovered last Monday that I was indulging in forbidden activities and was unable to pull away despite very important scheduled commitments that I just let lapse I knew that I was addicted. At that point I knew that half-hearted measures would not work and I signed up right here and BE"H the rest will be history.

[Ben wrote on 23 Jan 2009 14:47:](#)

There are many, we well know, who have not hit that point. We can only hope that the point of shock for others comes at a level of less serious consequences. [/2cents]

No flames, a promise is a promise, so kid gloves only.

Shock is only one of multiple ways to Teshuva. Rabbeinu Yonah's Shaarei Teshuva devotes the entire 2nd Chapter to the various reasons why people do Teshuva. The first is of course hardships, which is the typical shock/rock-bottom scenario. Another motivation is age, as they get older, people become more concerned about their posterity. A third is inspiration drawn from a speaker. A fourth inspiration from study of Torah and Mussar writings. A fifth is during Aseres Yemei Teshuva. The final motivation on his list is as death's door draws near.

So my message is this. If you have not had a shock or rock-bottom scenario recently, don't despair (although some on here are rooting for you to despair). Move straight on to motivation number 4 and get inspired by the Torah and Musar posts right here and right now.

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by boruch - 25 Jan 2009 22:08

[guardureyes wrote on 24 Jan 2009 17:09:](#)

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Do you know what happens when an addict tolerates his addiction? He remains an addict. By definition then, if someone breaks his addiction it must have become intolerable.

So what does that tell us about just how intolerable does intolerable have to be and in which ways does it have to be intolerable? Nothing, actually. It just tells us that if someone breaks his addiction it must have become intolerable.

OK. let's try something new. How about we call the intolerable "rock-bottom"? There, that feels much more descriptive. After all, it is not just intolerable it has reached a presumed all-time low and a rocky one at that. So, how intolerable is "rock-bottom"? Unfortunately no answer there either. It just tells us that if someone breaks his addiction it must have become intolerable enough that he hit rock bottom.

But we knew that it was intolerable enough for him to break his addiction before we called it rock-bottom and now that we are calling it rock-bottom we don't know any more...

Oh, be quiet, stop asking so many awkward questions, if it *sounds* good and it *feels* good then it *must be* good, especially if I could find a possuk somewhere to quote, just a minute, where was that possuk?

Administrator: **Ve'hotzaisi Osam Mitachas SIVLUS mitzrayim.**

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal
Posted by the.guard - 25 Jan 2009 22:14

although some on here are rooting for you to despair

Baruch, could I ask a favor? Let me hold a "white flag" on behalf of all of us here on the forum and ask if you could please keep the kid gloves on when posting... I know you have "deep" reasons for challenging us here and again, but most of the people on this forum are Poshuteh Yidden who are broken hearted, simple minded and looking to do Teshuvah with sincerity. I'm just afraid that if you keep up this tone of rhetoric, you might end up hurting some people's feelings. So with all due respect, let's try and keep kid gloves on while posting on the forum if it's

Ok with you. I hope you understand.

Let me reaffirm though, that we are truly happy you joined the forum, and you have already shared many good posts with lots of good advice. And indeed, your IRON resolve and new Torahdik ideas are a breath of fresh air, and I'm sure you will be an inspiration to us all. Keep posting, but imagine you were talking to a broken hearted person who wants to hear Chizuk and

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encouragement, and not people who are looking to "prove" anything or have "debates"