

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

Posted by boruch - 22 Jan 2009 18:30

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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. Rebbi (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 boruch - 27 Mar 2009 12:27

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[guardureyes wrote on 27 Mar 2009 11:39:](#)

Mazal Tov Boruch! May you continue to be a source of pride and inspiration to Hashem and the GUE network!

Omein, (of course you mean pride to Hashem and inspiration to man) vechein yehi rotzon...

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by the.guard - 27 Mar 2009 13:21

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LOL ;D yes, that is what I meant!

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by the.guard - 28 Mar 2009 23:05

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Chart updated. 2 days until Level 6!

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by the.guard - 04 Apr 2009 21:32

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Chart updated to 75 days! Welcome to Level 6... *Ad me'ah Esrin Shana.*

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by boruch - 05 Apr 2009 10:20

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[guardureyes wrote on 04 Apr 2009 21:32:](#)

Chart updated to 75 days! Welcome to Level 6... *Ad me'ah Esrin Shana.*

Omein, I never imagined that I would be focusing so intensively on Step 12 before 90 days.

I usually post dramatically but the following post will be plain and simple.

Up until yesterday I had told my wife "?????" nothing of the true nature of my ex-addiction.

I had come up with a complicated cover-up-story in which the SA group meetings I was attending twice weekly an hour away (between travel and meeting time 3 hours total each meeting) were something like free group therapy for workaholism. The story was holding up. She was not suspicious at all and I was reluctant to disclose the truth about my ex-addiction for 2 reasons:

1) I did not want to hurt her.

2) As Rav Avigdor Miller Zt"l had said don't tell your spouse about indiscretions from your past.

However, by yesterday I saw that there was a very serious and growing problem. In the last two weeks I have been getting more and more involved in contributing ideas to an effort to B'Ezras Hashem Yisborach bring the AA/SA solution to many Frum Yidden who are currently unable to benefit. There are no words to describe the enthusiasm I have for this. This is of course B'Chasdei Hashem a wonderful thing. Except that my wife has not missed my enthusiasm, and it does not at all fit my cover story. My wife was not suspicious, but she has been totally unable to understand what has been happening to me lately.

Yesterday at the Shabbos seuda it struck me that the truth about my recovery, which I have kept secret from her, had unwittingly and increasingly become a block between us.

I decided right then and there that it seemed to me that Rav Avigdor Miller Zt"l had referred only to indiscretions from the past that had no significant impact on present behavior that could not be explained away innocently.

In my case, I had shared quite a bit with her. She knew I was going to some sort of groups. She knew that I had some form of sobriety that was at 75 days. She knew I was enthusiastic about the 12 Steps which I had shared with her, all under the guise of therapy for workaholism. However, among Frum Yidden workaholism is not the epidemic that r"l "Internet addiction" is, and since I had not disclosed my real addiction to her I had been unable to share with her the potential I saw to help so many suffering Yidden. And keeping this a secret was getting between us.

So, I told her during the Shabbos seuda that I had something to talk to her about. I spoke to her after the seuda for about 2 hours. She listened. She told me afterwards that she had just listened because she did not know what to say. But her attitude spoke louder than any words she could have said. She was very understanding and very supportive. She told me afterwards that she doesn't know if there is something wrong with her, but she is BeChasdei Hashem neither shocked, disturbed nor hurt. I told her it is because she learns musar seriously every day (without exception) that HaKodosh Boruch Hu gave her the kochos to take it all with such emuna and bitochon.

I don't deserve anything, but BeChasdei Hashem Yisborach, we are closer than we ever have been.

May Hashem bring all of us who are married, and those of us who are not yet married, closer to our spouses every day (for bochurim, this is a brocho of besho'o tovo umutzlachs), so that our marriages become, like sefer Shir Hashirim, a moshol of **total faithfulness and loyalty, in both deed and in *thought*, so that ultimately we can all be zocheh to become truly faithful and loyal, in both deed and in *thought*, to HaKodosh Boruch Hu.**

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 05 Apr 2009 11:05

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Kol Hakavod Boruch. I am truly inspired by you taking the necessary steps to what you feel is vital for your eternal growth.

May you and your wife continue to have many happy years together as the two of you grow in ruchniyus and come closer and closer to Hashem.

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by the.guard - 05 Apr 2009 12:12

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Wow Boruch. That's great! Your wife is your second half, so if she was not aware of your work in this area it would almost be like only half of you was involved. Now that she is on board - emotionally and spiritually, you can now be 100% involved in your recovery as well as helping hopefully many many more Yidden. That's double the Hatzlacha!

May Hashem be with you and may we all merit to become clean "pipes" for the light of Hashem to flow through us, and out to the entire world!

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by gettinghelp - 07 Apr 2009 17:45

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This hit soooo close to home.I discusswd with my Dr yesterday the topic of having full discloser with my wife.In know it would bring our relationship closer.We are quite close to beginn with,B"H.At this stage in my recovery I am not emotionally ready.

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by boruch - 17 Apr 2009 20:47

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Day 88 and counting... will BE"H post something for day 90

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by the.guard - 18 Apr 2009 19:41

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Chart updated! We're counting down to 90 with you...

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by boruch - 21 Apr 2009 04:53

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[guardureyes wrote on 18 Apr 2009 19:41:](#)

Chart updated! We're counting down to 90 with you...

BeChasdei Hashem Yisborach I reached 90 full days at the end of Sunday and I am B"H now on Tuesday morning at 91 full days.

On one of my posts I had once written that when I got a nisoyon I used to feel as if I was almost telling the Eibishter to get out of the way while I fought the fight.

Looking back on the last 90 days I now have a very different image.

I grew up in a home with TV, and I was addicted to TV from when I was a year old (my mother babysat me with TV) until I left for Beis Midrash and with no TV my addiction disappeared (but the damage was already done -- the years of TV addiction had greatly contributed to my main addiction). There's a frequently and variously replayed scene that comes back to me now of

how the driver of a car/pilot of a plane would get injured and the guy in the passenger seat would quickly move the driver/pilot away from the wheel and take over.

I think of how I first started on these forums, of how after a week of blasting the Steps I tried out an SA group. I think of how I initially went an hour away in fear of losing my anonymity, at the same time unaware that there were frum SA meetings locally. I think of how in the SA group I was going to, the Back-to-Basics meetings got me through my first run of the steps in 4 weeks instead of many years or very possibly never. I think of how the group I went to had many years of history and they did not feel in any way threatened by my very different approach. I think of how I told my wife about my addiction.

And then I think of the events of recent weeks. I think of the SA phone group that I tried and the SA email listserv with a view to exploring possibilities that may in the future be useful to others. I think of how I had decided several times to go to the local frum group but was each time dissuaded by a member of the local groups who was concerned for me and insisted that anonymity was a big concern for my family. I think of my call Erev Pesach to a Rov with a prominent yichus in a major Jewish population center who was at one time addicted and today, through SA has 16 years of sobriety and has helped thousands of Frum Yidden with addiction. I think of how the Rov "gave me over the head" for not going to the local groups. He was concerned that it was not good for my humility to be different than anyone else and that as an extra member I could be contributing to a group that helps Frum Yidden. In the end, on a second call this past erev Shabbos he told me that in my circumstances it was up to me where I go. I think of how slowly and surely I am finding this Rov to be my Rov for addiction shaylos. I understood from this Rov that I should really be going to the local meetings and so I got the number of another member of the local group to get a second opinion on the anonymity issue.

I think of how this past Sunday afternoon when I still had not reached the member for his opinion the strangest thing happened. I went to a frum chapter of another 12-step fellowship for a food compulsion and at the end of the meeting stayed to talk with 2 others. They had known each other for several months whereas this was my second meeting in this fellowship. We were discussing the steps when out of the blue one of the other 2 disclosed to us both for the first time that he had a sex addiction and was an SA member. I remained to talk with him alone and he confirmed that he was a member in the local SA group. I asked him whether there is any reason for concern in the local groups. He told me that there was a misunderstanding of the nature of the anonymity concern and I should not worry and I should definitely come to the local meetings. Later in the day I got through to the member I had originally tried to reach and he too encouraged me to come to the local meetings.

I think of how yesterday, Monday morning, I celebrated my 90 days together with fellow frum Yidden in my first attendance at the local SA group. I think of the chain of circumstances



yesterday, Monday, following the meeting that swept me totally off my feet and lead me to finally surrender to Hashem, not only my will but myself... And I look back and realize that 90 days ago Hashem saw how physically, emotionally and spiritually wounded I was and so He pushed me out of the driver's seat and He took the wheel...

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 21 Apr 2009 15:04

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Mazel Tov!

Thank you for continuing to be an inspiration for all of us. May we all be zoche to continue growing together.

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by boruch - 24 Apr 2009 19:43

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[boruch wrote on 21 Apr 2009 04:53:](#)

BeChasdei Hashem Yisborach I reached 90 full days at the end of Sunday and I am B"H now on Tuesday morning at 91 full days.

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I think of how yesterday, Monday morning, I celebrated my 90 days together with fellow frum Yidden in my first attendance at the local SA group. I think of the chain of circumstances yesterday, Monday, following the meeting that swept me totally off my feet and lead me to finally surrender to Hashem, not only my will but myself...

Chasdei Hashem it is now 4 days and 3 local meetings since the above post and here are Hashem's gifts to me in these last three days all directly through my attendance at my local meeting and all following my complete surrender to Hashem.

1) My wife told me that she plans on going to her first local frum all-female 12-step group meeting for wives of sex addicts, which is a local chapter of S-Anon (the family group that parallels SA).

2) My wife and I are planning on attending a special retreat.

3) I realized today, that I could ordinarily have expected to have walked for the first time into a local frum SA meeting and be both fraught with anxiety for my own embarrassment and full of curiosity for who I would recognize there in the meeting. I realize today that what actually happened could not have been more different.

I realize today that when I walked in to the meeting for the first time, thanks ONLY TO HASHEM, I judged no-one, not myself and not anyone else, and in these last 4 days and 3 local meetings I realize that thanks ONLY TO HASHEM, I feel like I literally love every member of my frum group like a brother, peshutto kemashmo'o mamosh.

So I get a VERY BIG MAZAL TOV. Thanks ONLY TO HASHEM, I **literally feel** like my mother just came back home from the hospital with over 10 NEW BROTHERS.

4) I realize today, that first out of shame, and then out of fear, I had been very hesitant about going to my local Frum group.

**My own first-hand experience in the last 4 days has shown me that *my anonymity is safer in my own local SA GROUP than it is in the non-Jewish group that I have been attending and that currently I still attend, once a week, even though that group is in a different STATE an hour's drive from home.***

How do I know?

From my own experience. Now, I judge no-one and do not seek to get into any comparisons. So without any judging, rationalizations or excuses I will just look 100% at the facts.

Just one example. On several occasions, including one in these last 4 days, several non-Jewish members of the out-of-state SA group I attend, have innocently asked me whether I know, for example, let's say, Avrohom T. or Moshe P. from SA in this or that location, that they met at this or that SA event.

**In addition to first-name and first letter of last-name they have been quite ready to disclose complete descriptions of these people to me, they have been ready to disclose everything other than full last-name, just because I am an SA member, even though it is very possible, although almost certainly unbeknown to these non-Jewish members, that there is a significant possibility that because of the nature of our community I could figure out who the person is just from the description. I have no reason to believe that they are doing any different with me.**

**Now you may say who should be afraid of anonymity among SA members? There have unfortunately been many more examples of unintentional and yet very serious breaches of anonymity in the world of Recovery groups, some that happened to non-Jews and some that happened to Frum Jews that were started by such seemingly innocent disclosures between Recovery group members. Someone at my local Frum group told me that he almost lost his anonymity, davka from the non-Jewish group that he goes to and he told me that on the other hand, he never once had any issues as a result of our local frum group.**

**In our local Frum group, from bitter past experience of the fragility of anonymity within a very close-knit community, they have specific guidelines and they are extremely vigilant on areas and levels of anonymity in ways that I could never have even conceived of until this week.**

**Irony of ironies. I was afraid about my anonymity in my local group when my anonymity is safer in my own local SA GROUP than it is in the non-Jewish out-of-State SA GROUP that I have been attending**

5) Since I am 6 years old I have been totally baffled at my cluelessness over the source of my many problems, of which I always thought that my addiction was the smallest. I realized since 6 years old that my life was becoming more and more unmanageable with every passing year and I had no more insight into the cause. Since my late teens I put up a brave front that usually fooled everyone, including and especially myself, that everything was fine. For the last 23 years in total desperation I looked for what the problem was and I never found it. I tried total immersion in mussar. It was a good idea but it did not work. I tried the best self-help books, both ancient and modern, Jewish and non-Jewish. I read books by psychologists and was no closer. I did daily detailed personal inventories, long before I knew anything about 12 steps. I was no wiser. I learned many many mussar seforim and was no wiser. I davened to Hashem for help and I was no wiser. I went for years to many therapists both for individual therapy and marital therapy and was no wiser. Fr the first time in my life in my late 30s I got myself a Rov and still I was no wiser.

Then I discovered only 9 months ago that I had ADHD and thought that was the source of all my problems. I am taking medication and doing therapy in conjunction and for a while I thought that was the source for all of my problems. Then my addiction returned and after a couple of months of seeming relief from my addiction my problems grew and grew and my addiction returned and quickly became for the first time the single greatest problem of my life on January 19th 2009.

Then, on January 20th shocked to discover that I could no longer deny my addiction I pledged on this forum to go sober for life without having the first concept of what that meant.

On January 27th 2009 I joined SA.

By April 20th 2009 of this year Boruch the "12 step expert" had reached 90 days of sobriety had hyper-focused on the 12 steps, had worked ALL 12 Steps to the best of his ability for 80-something days, I had done everything I knew including a full 4th Step inventory and I was still no wiser. I did not have a clue. Everyone I knew in SA, *whether they had worked the Steps more, worked the Steps less, or not worked the Steps at all*, knew better than I what their issues were. And up until and including my last post here I was more in the dark than anyone I knew. And then on Monday of this week having attended my local group for the first time I just surrendered myself totally and completely because I had done everything I could possibly even imagine because I knew that I was as hopelessly in the dark as ever and because I had never been more desperate. I did not ask Hashem for insight or understanding. I only asked Hashem to help me do what He wanted me to do.

Within 24 hours Hashem caused a great lifting of the thickest darkness. For the first time in my life I began to see with increasing clarity how everything I had done in my life was very different from what I had imagined it to be. I began to understand for the first time how all of my values and achievements were not at all what I thought they were. For the first time in my life the thickest walls of denial came crashing down.

I who thought I was a perfect gentleman, that's how I thought I behaved most of the time in the flesh (how wrong I was), I who almost never lost his cool, in the flesh, (how wrong I was), I who thought that I was so accepting of life (how wrong I was) was actually deep, deep down where I could never discover, no matter how many years I dug and no matter how hard and desperately I dug totally angry and resentful at both Mankind in general, my wife specifically (who I thought I loved 100%) and Hashem (who I was convinced I would never ever get angry at) and I never, ever knew it.

Others must have seen occasional glimpses, even in real-life (on this forum it was not so occasional and sometimes very obvious) but I was clueless.

Then when I joined my local frum all-male SA group and started acting no different than anyone else, and came to realize that I was more clueless than everyone else I knew, then and only then Hashem guided my wife to agree to try S-Anon, mountains of pain lifted, entire fortresses of denial came tumbling down and for the first time in my life I discovered the meaning of honesty.

Yes, literally, I was a "she'eino yodeia lisho" for all of my life. I did not even know how to ask how to get rid of my problems because I did not have any idea of what they were, much as I tried for 23 years to discover them.

Then after I gave up and Let Go and Let G-d, Hashem showed me that Honesty was the question, that denial was my problem and that [Acceptance is the answer to all my problems](#).

This deliberately semi-humorous [story](#) won't give you any method, but it is the most quoted of all alcoholic's personal stories and it could have been written about me, word for word.

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Re: I can rely only upon myself (Gem. Avodo Zoro 17a) -- boruch's journal  
Posted by the.guard - 25 Apr 2009 22:21

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Dear Boruch, we didn't make you the "GuardurEyes 12-Step expert" just because you are smart and understand the 12-Steps very well. The main reason we knighted you with this title is because you completely internalize and embody the ideas of the 12-Steps so magnificently!

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