

Mixed feelings

Posted by Inspired - 19 Aug 2019 07:57

Hi everyone!

It's hard to believe, but after at least 10 years of struggling with porn and masturbation I have reached 47 days of being clean! It all started when I joined GYE 47 days ago... Thank you team!

To be honest, I don't find my struggle any easier. I find that I can more easily distract myself from lust more so than in the past, but I still feel weak like as if at any moment I could succumb to my temptation . The silver lining is that this feeling doesn't allow for complacency.

Nonetheless, the main thing I wanted to discuss with all of you and what I would love to hear feedback about is regarding what happened to me tonight. I was watching a movie tonight most probably rated PG13 for its violence and during the movie a completely inappropriate scene was played. On one hand, I feel guilty that I allowed myself to be put in that situation and from not refraining from such a movie when it will inevitably display something inappropriate. But from a different perspective, I really didn't suspect such a scene and I quickly averted my eyes.

This is one example of many similar situations where it's a combination of good and bad or of winning and failing.

Any thoughts??????!

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Re: Mixed feelings

Posted by Captain - 19 Aug 2019 19:11

Hi Inspired,

I understand your reservations about being excited about your amazing success. But to me, it's

clear that you scored an amazing victory! You should be extremely proud of yourself.

Regarding your concerns over whether you should have watched the movie or not, that's something you should think about later. First, you should celebrate your big win. Then later on worry about whether there's something you can improve.

I read in The Battle of the Generation

(<https://guardyoureyes.com/ebooks/item/the-battle-of-the-generation>) that a major trick of the yetzer hara is to stop you from getting excited over your big win, so next time you are challenged, you will feel that hanging on has no gain and you will be unmotivated. The author contends that one of the most important things for overcoming the Yetzer Hara is to celebrate our victories. And I think that's something we can all get behind.

Hatzlocha!

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Re: Mixed feelings

Posted by Issac - 20 Aug 2019 02:04

Hi Inspired,

Congratulations on all your hard work!

It sounds like you're debating if you should celebrate or point to this as an example of "needs improvement". On negative side you seem to also be pointing to the fact it's still hard as proof that you're not "there" yet.

Well, I think you should throw a mega party and celebrate to the moon because:

1) You looked away! Hello?!! That's HUGE. Iy"n by all of us the same.

2) You're looking at the battle = tough, when you should also look at you're results = YOU'RE

WINNING!

3) If you're out of breath pedaling, it means you're going uphill. It's not a bad part or a 'down' to get a little fatigue, it means you're doing great.

Keep on shteiging!

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Re: Mixed feelings

Posted by Inspired - 20 Aug 2019 10:03

Thank you so much for the positive feedback!

Do you have a suggestions for celebrating success? I need help in this area....

Thank you!!!

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Re: Mixed feelings

Posted by Inspired - 20 Aug 2019 10:05

Issac,

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Re: Mixed feelings

Posted by Captain - 20 Aug 2019 17:27

Try this! It's from one of my favorite chapters of The Battle of the Generation: (Sorry it's a little long for a post. I tried to cut out some of it to make it a little shorter. See the full chapter in the book.)

Chapter 25- Celebrating Our Victories

Overcoming desire is an astounding accomplishment. The *Sefer Menoras Hama'or* (1:2:3:4) relates that a person who is challenged with a strong craving for sin but controls himself receives the reward of performing a *mitzvah*. Not only that, he even merits having a miracle done for him! This is derived from the *Gemara* (*Kiddushin* 39b-40a):

Rav Tuvi the son of Rav asked Rava a contradiction: The *Mishnah* (ibid 39b) states that when a person does a *mitzvah*, they do good for him [from Heaven]. This implies that if he didn't do a *mitzvah*, they don't do so — meaning the only way to earn reward is to do a *mitzvah*. But a different *Mishnah* (*Makkos* 23b) teaches us that a person who holds himself back from sinning is rewarded as if he performed a *mitzvah*! [There seems to be a contradiction whether a person who refrains from sinning is rewarded!]

Rava answered, “[A person isn't rewarded for not sinning if he wasn't tested. But] if an opportunity to sin arose and he abstained, he is rewarded.”

Rashi explains: “The statement that ‘one who refrains from sinning is rewarded like one who does a *mitzvah*’ refers to a situation where he was able to sin and he overcame his impulses. **There is no *mitzvah* greater than this.**”

The *Gemara* continues with stories of people who overcame challenges and were granted miracles. . . .

We see that Hashem performs miracles to protect and benefit a person who overcomes challenges of immorality. Hashem does this because it takes great effort for a person to overcome his nature and thus it is considered a legendary act. Hashem treasures these victories so much that He makes miracles for those who accomplish them. If we take advantage of our opportunities to conquer our desires, we can accomplish great achievements! Let's remember the significance of what we are accomplishing and fire ourselves up to accomplish even more.

We must celebrate every victory we score against the *yetzer hara* in battles of desire. This brings home the message that we gain immensely by doing the right thing. It helps us appreciate what we are doing. Celebrating our accomplishments will make us eager to fight the *yetzer hara*. We will be so energized that we won't feel we missed out on anything by not indulging. We will feel ourselves gaining and growing — we will see that we are doing much better than we ever have! We will have something so exciting that we won't even *want* to give in to our desires.

When you stop the *yetzer hara* in his tracks, you must get excited. Think about how hard it was to win, and how great that makes your accomplishment. Recall the list of legendary *tzaddikim* who did similar acts. Think about how much Hashem cherishes such

accomplishments. Remember the true definition of greatness, and realize that these acts put you on your way there. Pump your fist with excitement over what you were able to accomplish.

Think about how fortunate you are. Instead of following a desire, which would have only brought you a brief enjoyment but left you with nothing, you have accomplished something you will be proud of **forever!** This is another step toward greatness! You are so lucky that Hashem challenged you to enable you to accomplish.

Remember that Hashem is proud of you. This is a special time to talk to Him. Tell Him, "I know You are so proud of what I just did. I know You consider it a significant accomplishment. You are so excited that I accomplished this with Your help, and that makes me very happy."

Pump yourself up, and your success will spill into your next battle. You are accomplishing what you were put here for! You are succeeding! You are on the road to greatness! Use the exhilaration to impress upon yourself that spiritual accomplishment is worth aspiring for.

Celebrating your victories is the most important thing you can do to develop a drive for success through self-control.

This message is stressed by *Chovos Halevavos* (5:5), which tells the reader:

Don't listen to [even the smallest of] the *yetzer hara's* wishes. Rather, hold highly in your eyes even the most minuscule victory and slightest increase of power over the *yetzer hara*. This will lead you to reach even greater success. The *yetzer hara* will be quick to obey you and he won't stand up to you if you stand up to him.

This is what happens when we fight back against the *yetzer hara* and celebrate every victory, no matter how small it seems. Celebrating our victories brings us to win our battles and rule over the *yetzer hara*.

Because rejoicing over your victories is so vital for success, the *yetzer hara* will try to ruin your excitement. Sometimes, he will try to convince you that if you are proud of what you have accomplished, that is arrogance — which it's not so long as you remember that Hashem gives you the strength to prevail. Other times, he will try to make you feel that self-control is nothing special because it is required. He will also try to draw your attention to something you could have handled better.

The *yetzer hara* will disguise his arguments, making them sound like your own voice. You will hear yourself think: "I can't get excited. That would be arrogance. And there is nothing to get excited about anyway because I had to do it. When I read about celebrating my victories, it wasn't talking about an insignificant victory like this. It would have been a disaster had I sinned in such a lowly manner. Anyway, how can I be excited? I messed up at that moment! I failed, and that's all that matters."

You must realize that though it sounds like your own voice, it's the *yetzer hara* speaking. You must defuse all his arguments and become energized by what you have accomplished. Remember, if the *yetzer hara* feels he must stop you from becoming excited, it must be a major weapon for defeating him. Thus, it is proper service of Hashem not to fall for his tricks. You must realize what you have just achieved so you will gain enthusiasm and feel

good about your decision.

Conversely, minimizing or disregarding the greatness of these victories makes you lose your excitement for accomplishment. It causes you to feel flat. It might even make you feel miserable for missing out on what you wanted. That's why the *yetzer hara* devotes so much effort to stop you from feeling good about your successes.

Often, we don't realize that we are racking up priceless accomplishments at an astronomical rate. We focus on what we messed up rather than on what we got right. We even fault ourselves for our impulses, acting as if we created them. To change your perspective, do the following exercise for three weeks:

Take an index card or small piece of paper and keep it in your pocket. Tally on one line for each time you make any bit of internal push against your desires. This includes clearing your thoughts, not looking at what you shouldn't, or doing any action to beat your desires. Add a point for each time you push, even if it is in the same situation and even if you ended up giving in. For example, if you were challenged and wanted to look at or think about something and had to strengthen yourself three times within ten seconds not to give in, add three points. (For each fifth point, draw a horizontal line across the four vertical lines to make it easier to keep track of how many points you have.) At the end of the week, see how many points you earned. Then, start again on the next line. (It's easy and it works wonders! **Do it!**)

Recording a point for each bit of effort will help you *feel* that your initial impulses are not your fault (as we will discuss in Chapter 43). You will realize that these desires come from the *yetzer hara* and that your job is to deal with them properly. You will stop looking down on yourself for having these thoughts pop up, no matter how bad they are. Instead, you will realize the incredible opportunity they provide, and you will focus on gaining by controlling yourself.

This exercise will also help you focus on accomplishing instead of focusing on your imperfections. You will realize that the goal of life is not to be born perfect and stay that way. A piece of wood is perfect. It never sins and has no bad character traits, but that doesn't make it significant. Of course, you must be careful not to sin, but you cannot forget that **the point of life is to accomplish and to grow as a person**. Rather than focusing on not becoming damaged and viewing your battles against the *yetzer hara* as nuisances — what a depressing way to live! — you will feel enthusiastic about your battles.

Most important, this exercise forces you to notice how much you are accomplishing every day. Every small burst of effort is a major accomplishment. Each time we push against our desires is a profound *mitzvah* in itself. Our gains are impressive and abundant! This exercise will keep us focused on the major accomplishments we are racking up left and right. We will feel good about ourselves and be energized over our opportunity to accomplish.

"But is it true that every small effort is a separate accomplishment?" you might wonder. "And if I end up giving in, does it really matter how many times I tried to stop myself?"

In his introduction to *Sefer Shemiras Halashon*, the Chofetz Chaim relates that the Vilna Gaon would quote a *Midrash* that says, "For every second a person holds himself back from forbidden speech, he merits a pleasure that no creature or angel can fathom." The Chofetz

Chaim notes that the *Midrash* does not say every month, week, day, or even minute. It says every second!

That is the reward granted for withholding from doing any *aveirah* when challenged. Each instant is a separate *mitzvah*! Every second we control ourselves is so precious — even if we give in to the same desire moments later — because that second of effort is a victory in itself! It's an act of listening to Hashem. Now imagine what we will accomplish once we gain control over ourselves. We will rack up accomplishments at an astounding rate!

Now, we can appreciate the incredible gift that life is. We have the most amazing opportunity ever! We are so fortunate.

Celebrate *every* victory over the *yetzer hara*. Pump your fist over and over in excitement, and tell yourself, “I just accomplished an act of greatness that I will take pride in forever! I just grew as a person — I feel stronger already! I acted like the person I want to become.

“I know Hashem is beaming with pride (if it could be), and it makes me feel so good! Hashem is telling the angels to look at what His beloved son — me — just did! He is so excited about what I just accomplished! He's thrilled because He can reward me like He wants to!”

Celebrating our victories will give us the determination we need to stand up to the *yetzer hara* the next time he challenges us. We will have the strength to pump our fist once again and confidently declare, “**I am not giving in! I want to win, and I will!**” This determination will grant us the strength to overcome challenges that would otherwise be overwhelming.

Celebrating our victories is crucial for winning the intense battles of the 21st century. It will awaken our excitement to defeat the *yetzer hara* and accomplish incredible feats. This will give us the strength to reach unprecedented heights in the battle of the generation.

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