

Restarting the journey, after a plateau

Posted by Looking_to_improve - 13 Aug 2020 22:00

New phone, new thread, new me?

I fell today.

But for the first time in a while, it hurt. I feel it has penetrated into me and made me feel regretful.

I'm not sure what hurts more, the fall itself or the fact I can't remember the last time I felt bad like this (and that's not because a lack of falling). Strangely I fell proud that I'm internally understanding the weight of my actions (and therefore falls) for the first time in a while. For far too long I felt that when I fell, it was like breaking a diet, "oops, let's try not do that again", but not much of an internal realisation of what I've been doing. No genuine sense of regret or that I had made a bad mistake. Overall I don't think I'm in a negative place, I just want to utilise my current feelings and use it to spring back up to greater heights.

Currently this is where I think I'm at:

I think I've been falling between every 2 days and every 2 weeks, probably with this frequency since Corona and even before probably up to Jan, off the top of my head. Unfortunately I don't think I've been putting in much effort, realistically I think I've just been waiting between urges and then falling, I don't think I've done much prevention on my part.

Just got a new phone and used the opportunity to fix up my filter a bit. **For anyone reading don't delay fixing your filter, I've found it has made a huge difference.** Not to be naive but pretty sure it's mostly working correctly now, no loopholes. (I did spend quite a while today trying to find one before I fell:grimacing:) Although my goal of 90 days should not be dependent on a good filter, even though I plan on having one nonetheless.

Earlier in the year I was struggling with porn but I think that was a temporary stage, long term it was less of an issue to me than masturbation, which I've struggled with for more than the past year.

I've been re-listening to a chabura by a Rebbe on the topic and I briefly bought up that I'm struggling to him, and I plan to speak to him more about it. This week I've been putting in the effort to try not fall and think about hirhurim, whereas in the past sometimes it was a matter and of just waiting until a good time to fall, not having any real method of prevention nor of fighting the yetzer hora. Already in the past few days I have had multiple times where I could have fallen but did not, and didn't follow my urges blindly. Obviously I need to be more preventative, but I still think this is a big step up from basically just hoping never to have an urge, because that's isn't the aim, rather it is our reaction to our urges. I think with this previous mindset of mine it

was going to be near on impossible to get to 90, now I'm starting to feel more confidence that it is achievable, even if I haven't been more than 2 weeks clean in a while.

I also plan to listen to the fight by the shmuz (was there website down for anyone else recently?)

I also want to be more active in the forums, both here and in other threads. I often lurk around, but I think I should really join in a bit more.

That's it from me for now, that's a bit of a megilla to read. Drop in to say hi, I wanna hear from you guys how you are all doing in your battles, it really helps knowing that we are all fighting this war together

Looking_to_improve

Warning: Spoiler!

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau

Posted by Looking_to_improve - 01 Sep 2020 22:00

Again I just wrote a whole long answer, and it got lost when I sent it.

Ill have to respond tomorrow, will be a busy day but will try squeeze it in, it's too late now to rewrite it.

Quite frustrating, as I fell tonight and had a long answer written out, oh well...

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau

Posted by Grant400 - 01 Sep 2020 23:05

[Looking_to_improve wrote on 01 Sep 2020 22:00:](#)

Again I just wrote a whole long answer, and it got lost when I sent it.

Ill have to respond tomorrow, will be a busy day but will try squeeze it in, it's too late now to rewrite it.

Quite frustrating, as I fell tonight and had a long answer written out, oh well...

Yes, extremely frustrating when that happens. After it happened to me one time too many I started to write the longer responses first in the notepad on my phone and then copied and pasted. This way it won't get lost even if something happens.

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau

Posted by Looking_to_improve - 03 Sep 2020 11:28

(I've tried to answer grants questions in the order he wrote them)

For the last week before my fall I've been struggling a lot, not been controlling my thoughts well, and also I've been looking at some inappropriate pictures, it's not porn but obviously not kosher. Probably similar to what you might see in the street. I wasn't motsei zera until 2 days ago, but I wasn't really staying clean, I was slipping a lot. I was letting my mind wonder into these topics a lot.

I've been struggling since around my bar mitzvah with masturbation, bad thoughts and inappropriate content. (I'm 19 now, not sure if I've mentioned it) I struggled with porn around a year to half a year ago, but I don't think it's such an issue now, although I still get desires to watch it. I've only really tried to improve in the last year or 2, and I think I've become very habitual in how I act, often before bed I let my thoughts run wild like I was doing for the last week before I fell. I think I've started to improve and make it less habitual, but I'm still used to giving in sometimes when I desire. I don't think I've been more than 3-4 weeks clean since I've been keeping track, and I want to break through this barrier. But I think the last month I've been progressing, even if it's not reflected in the length of my streaks.

I'm in yeshiva now, quite secluded, and pretty much no external triggers. I can see some stuff on my phone, but I feel at some point I have to be able to control myself, I can't board up adverts I see in real life, I will have to be able to control myself in those scenarios. Obviously you can say this to the point where you feel you don't want a filter, but I feel that where I'm holding that my mindset needs to be changing, not my filter. It might be my Yetzer hora speaking, but I do feel that there becomes a limit to what I can try change before I change myself, and I need to be changing my mindset and reactions now.

I'm not really sure where I'm lacking inspiration, maybe you can elaborate on the question. I feel I know internally the gravity of this problem and that I need to deal with it, but it isn't reflected in how I act, there's a disconnect between the two.

Thank you for keeping in touch, it really helps me having to keep myself accountable to you all!

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau
Posted by Grant400 - 03 Sep 2020 16:07

[Looking to improve wrote on 03 Sep 2020 11:28:](#)

(I've tried to answer grants questions in the order he wrote them)

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Thank you for keeping in touch, it really helps me having to keep myself accountable to you all!

Hey there!

I'd like to respond to your two last points.

1) The fact that you can access inappropriate content on your phone and you don't believe in removing it because you must learn how to live with basic every day triggers.

My friend, the less a person eats the less weight he gains. Yes there are inescapable situations where you will be exposed to something, but every one less is one less.

Also, for now you must completely remove everything possible that promotes lust. After a while where you are clean you will find your perspective changing (more on this in #2) where it won't be something you can't have but rather something you may crave but absolutely don't want. At that point you **may** be able to have access to basic inappropriate content and have a reasonable (maybe) excuse. (It's still not a lovely idea)

2) You understand the gravity of the sin, but it doesn't correspond to your behavior.

We all know it's bad, we all know it effects us negatively, we all understand that it doesn't make us happier or actually give us real pleasure. But it's not enough many times. What a person must do is not view it as something he loves and craves but must forever withhold indulgence. For how long can a person hold their breath? Try to change your understanding to one of appreciation and respect for your values. To an abhorrence of lust and all it stands for. When confronted with a trigger or urge in the mixture should also be a want to be good, and a love for being clean, not just a moral and intellectual understanding that its wrong.

How to accomplish that? It's not easy but it comes over a period of time when a person is removed from it all, like with strong filters and the like. It revives a person's innate sensitivity and respect for morals. Also, try to listen to shiurim and read articles and the forums here.

Grant

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau
Posted by Looking_to_improve - 03 Sep 2020 21:14

Thank you Grant!

I think point number 2 is a very important one, it's like the Mishna in pirkei avos

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We have to make our will like Hashem's, we can't **do** what Hashem wants, but have a different inner **will and desire**, we have to make Hashem's will our own, and then we won't have such a disconnect between what we want and the right thing. Because the right thing will be that which we desire. Changing this inner will be tough, but it will have huge impact on our future.

I'll try to sort out my filter fully. Thank you for giving me a clear perspective on it

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau
Posted by Looking_to_improve - 06 Sep 2020 22:31

Spoke to a Rebbe today about my struggle. He's given a chabura on this topic before, so he was mostly repeating some of the ideas he's said already, just applying it to my case. I'm glad I reached out and I guess I'll probably touch base again with him soon.

He recommended for now that I focus mainly on situations when I feel a desire for a while. Not that my aim is to fall, but a larger percentage should rather be situation where I fell quickly after a desire, because there it will be harder to stop and control for now. I mentioned that I felt I wanted to stop both, but I think he was recommending that I don't try jump too far ahead in one go and end up back where I started.

Also he said that I should aim to distract myself when I feel a desire, eg listen to shiur make a phone call, rather than start by facing my thoughts head on, that's a tactic but he made it sound like it's more plan b. He also mentioned that these things I distract myself with shouldn't only be done when I feel a desire and end up associating it with desire, but rather do them more often in general.

Our yeshiva policy this year is no browser or YouTube, last year I had both filtered, but this year I think they want us to waste less time. So I'm getting that changed and fixing the other issues I'm aware of. I hope I'll use my phone less and it will be less of a trigger. Sometimes I find appropriate content triggering so I think this change will help prevent this.

Hope you found this useful, I wrote down just as much for myself to concretise what we planned. Obviously depends on your level but hopefully this might Be useful for you too.

5 days in already, not sure where the time went. My thoughts haven't been so great, but I think it's a small improvement over last week, haven't had as many as last week.

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau
Posted by Looking_to_improve - 07 Sep 2020 17:13

Coming to you live from the gye app. No browser or YouTube on my phone. 1 day in and starting to realised how impulsively I use it to go and waste time and go on to worse things. I think it will help having more of a disconnect to my phone and also spending more time using it productively for shiurim etc.

Today's gone quite well, still settling into old habits and letting my mind wonder when I lie down to nap, but I think I'm somewhat improving at controlling myself at other times of day. It's hard to judge if that's it, or just less urges.

Tomorrow is a week clean, gonna aim for my old goal of 2 weeks for now

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau
Posted by Looking_to_improve - 08 Sep 2020 11:44

1 week in, not sure how it went by so quickly, but glad to have made it so far bH. Aiming for 2 weeks clean now.

I think my default when I get a bad thought is to distract myself. Sometimes at the moment, I get a thought, and while I'm thinking how to respond, I'm sometimes already thinking about something else, and only thinking about how I'm going to respond makes me think about the original thought.

I still need to work on clearing my mind when I lie down to sleep, I haven't done such a good job in this aspect of controlling myself

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau

Posted by Looking_to_improve - 09 Sep 2020 15:49

Another clean day bH. I think I'm feeling less urges because I don't have a browser and don't have much to do on my phone. I think the next week will become more difficult so have to look out myself a bit more than usual.

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau

Posted by Looking_to_improve - 09 Sep 2020 22:50

Been rereading my thread. It all flows into one big mush to be honest.

Here's where I'm at, at the moment:

I think I've been relapsing around every 4-7 days, and I think my most days clean was 14-15.

This was almost a year ago, from my first message on the forum, I could have written it yesterday...

?I feel like a person in the sea trying to get to the shore, but stuck where the waves are crashing. Every time he gets up, he sees the shore and thinks he's not far off, until wave crashes through his back, knocks the wind out of him, and under the water he goes. Struggling for air, he gets up, catches his breath, wipes the salt water out his eyes, looks towards the shore, just in time for the next wave to come crashing over him again, and suck him slightly further out.

I have salt water in my eyes now as a write this.

It's like a washing machine, all loud and powerful, shaking all around, but it's just spinning on the spot, the most it will move is a few centimetres, in an arbitrary direction. It's going nowhere quickly.

I understand that it's the yetzer hora trying to get me down, but from an objective standpoint it really looks like I've made close to no progress. I've been struggling in different forms in these areas since probably puberty, and I'm turning 20 next week, and all I have to answer for at least a year of trying to improve is that I haven't got worse. I must also be grateful for that, but what will this coming year be like? More of the same? I understand that not everyone will join gye and take off into space, but will it take 7 years of work to overcome the last 7? I don't want to drag down a wife into my problems in 7 years time. Obviously it will always be a struggle, even after 90 days it won't be easy and the problems don't disappear 24 hours after the 89th day, but when will that be an issue I have to contend with? At what point will I reach a level where I have a solid base? When will I get close to a third of 90 days? I'm feeling quite disheartened. After many of my failures I've tried listening to shiurim, I've spoke to a Rebbe, adjusted my filter, posted on the forum, yet seemingly the only stone left unturned is me. Perhaps these aren't long term solutions, but surely there should be some indication I'm going in the right direction. In other areas of life if you didn't progress for a year, wouldn't you say this isn't your thing, find something else suited to you? That's not an option here, but what can I change, if many things I change, which I would have thought are proper steps in the right direction, just become quick fixes which really aren't a fix at all?

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau

Posted by Grant400 - 09 Sep 2020 23:40

My friend, do not be discouraged! The fact that you didn't regress is in itself something valuable. Especially in this area if nothing is done to reign it in, it is guaranteed to become an out of control wild bronco.

Now, I'm just going to remind you of facts you already know. You speak about "fixes", there are no fixes. Neither quick nor slow. There is only you. At the end of the day with all our tricks, inspiration ideas, friends and forums, the only one thing can change you is yourself. We can use all of the aid and help we can get, we can be inspired and instructed, criticized and encouraged, but all of that is just help to oil our hinges. When it comes down to it you must be the one to close the door.

This realization you had can be upsetting, but you can respond in two ways. Either you can be discouraged and feel like you are fighting a lost battle, scaling an insurmountable barrier, or you can use this realization to fight harder. Look back over the past year and learn from when you

fell. Learn that you must fight harder than you initially thought.

You know you have the capability. Tell any goy that you only act out the amount you do and he won't believe you. The way you already remained in control is amazing and commendable. How many bochurim do you think there are, that wish they would have your self control and self awareness? Loads. Hundreds. Too many unfortunately.

You are right at the cusp of breaking your record. Strap your hiking boots back on, pick up your gear and continue your climb up the mountain. There's beauty and happiness waiting for you at the summit. I promise.

Your admiring friend,

Grant

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau
Posted by wilnevergiveup - 10 Sep 2020 05:25

[Looking to improve wrote on 09 Sep 2020 22:50:](#)

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First of all you are an inspiration to all of us.

It might be time to make a *cheshbon hanefesh*. What have you tried so far and how effective have they been. What have you not tried yet that you could. What would be difficult to implement but can be done if you really want to. What has been completely ineffective and just adds extra stress.

Go through the various things and see what can be tweaked, not a factory reset, just tweaked.

For example in my case I got a filter and felt really good about it but after a while I realized that it just wasn't enough so I removed my browser. Getting a filter was not too difficult, but removing the browser was.

On the same note I was making these *kabalos* that I kept on breaking, and I realized that with the guilt and anxiety it was causing me I was better off without it.

Just a thought, I might be off so think about it.

Now to get a little *Rebbi-ish*, there is no time better than *Elul* to do this, and whatever you do decide, make it strong as steel, and you will see *siyata dishmaya*. It says open an opening like the eye of a needle, and I will open up for you an opening like the *pesach shel ulam*. I once heard Rav Yaakov Hillel explain why a needle why not some other little thing. He explained that it could be small but the commitment has to be strong enough to pierce through steel like the eye of a needle.

All the best,

Wilnevergiveup

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau
Posted by Dave M - 10 Sep 2020 16:41

[Looking to improve wrote on 09 Sep 2020 22:50:](#)

I don't want to drag down a wife into my problems in 7 years time. Obviously it will always be a struggle, even after 90 days it won't be easy and the problems don't disappear 24 hours after the 89th day, but when will that be an issue I have to contend with? At what point will I reach a

level where I have a solid base? When will I get close to a third of 90 days? I'm feeling quite disheartened.In other areas of life if you didn't progress for a year, wouldn't you say this isn't your thing, find something else suited to you? That's not an option here, but what can I change, if many things I change, which I would have thought are proper steps in the right direction, just become quick fixes which really aren't a fix at all?

Very well written post. I only quoted the above though. You may feel you are not making progress, but you really are. Can you imagine how much worst you would be if you only starting dealing with these challenges after you go married? Getting married will not cure you of this. I promise. If anything, it will only exacerbate the problems. What you are doing now, is working out your spiritual muscles. I believe R' Shafier says in his shmuz "The Fight", that it is very unlikely that a bocher can successfully fully cure himself from lust-related behavior before he gets married. Feel good that you are working on this now. I'H, you will get married, and you will have gained from all your hard work, the tools necessary to beat this. Stay strong!

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Re: Restarting the journey, after a plateau
Posted by Looking_to_improve - 10 Sep 2020 17:02

Thank you everyone.

Feeling a bit weak today. Haven't been in such a great mood either. Feeling a bit of an urge but trying to ignore it, this is an opportunity to work on what my Rebbe said. I think if I make it to shabbos I should be good, but also have to be careful on motsei

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