

Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 29 Oct 2021 04:06

Dear Chevra,

After a few months of visiting this website and quietly gaining chizuk by reading the incredible posts from this community I've decided to speak up and introduce myself. Over the past couple of years I've become religious starting from an almost entirely non-religious past. Hashem's Torah has transformed my life and imbued me with a new and deep sense of purpose, and it is my greatest desire to live each day with a sense of purpose, perfecting myself and living in connection with and recognition of Hashem. My path in Torah has led me to face the matter of shemiras habris, and in this I've encountered a great challenge. After many failed attempts at breaking free, late into this past Elul I found the resolve to pull myself out of the pit again. Since then BH I have been clean for a couple of months, but I still struggle greatly with temptation. The last time I fell I learned two things: I am not in control, and, more than anything, I want to live a life of kedusha. These two acknowledgements shocked me out of my sleep, but alarmingly I can feel over time that the clarity I gained from my last fall is diminishing. So, I've decided to jump in here to reinvigorate my journey. I look forward to growing together with each of you!

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 13 Apr 2022 07:17

Here to type out a few reflections before bed. Another one to skip if you are easily triggered as I'm going to discuss what I think happens to me psychologically when I seek out shmutz. I used to write quite a lot and would use it to explore ideas of what life was about in a pretty deep way. But, when I became a baal teshuva I switched gears pretty much completely to absorbing information and making sure I internalized a correct Torah perspective. I stopped producing ideas of my own, as what I can learn from chazal and my rebbeim is much more valuable than what I can come up with. I do miss engaging with that more creative/philosophical aspect of my mind, it was a defining characteristic of me in the past and I'm going to try to pick it back up. I'm wondering if anyone relates...

I've been wondering lately how much of this struggle actually has to do with sex. It goes without saying that the case will be different for each person. For me, the overwhelming motivation for falling is escape. More accurately it isn't about escape, but instead feeling like I have a place. A place created by the imaginary woman who has always existed in my mind but takes the form of whatever image or real person my fantasy has latched onto in the current moment. A

woman who will tend to me, care for me, make her world about me, and give her very own self to me. Somehow the act of this imaginary woman giving herself over to me in the most complete way possible is encapsulated by her revealing her physical body to me as it were. I've wondered for a while why the desire to be nurtured/cared for and sexual desire seem to have their wires crossed (at least for me they do), but I think their connection comes from this phenomenon. Seeing women at a shocking level of intimacy, instantaneously and cheaply creates the sense that they have given themselves over to you as a token to keep. And, what I imagine to be a willing, loving, self-imposed objectification by this imaginary woman for me and to satisfy my whims creates a deep feeling of being taken care of. Of course it is me doing the objectification and this exists purely in the realm of my imagination.

This I believe is the psychological pull that drives me to look at shmutz. It is the desire to fall into another human being who exists solely for me. This explains why my most triggered moments are those where I feel like a failure, unwanted, insecure etc. Anyway, just some thoughts I've been mulling over.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by Hashem Help Me - 13 Apr 2022 11:13

[committed_togrowth wrote on 13 Apr 2022 07:17:](#)

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Mitzva l'farsem. You have put into words so clearly what so many of us have tried to express.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by 5Uu80*cdwB#^ - 13 Apr 2022 12:12

[committed_togrowth wrote on 13 Apr 2022 07:17:](#)

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Thank you for sharing your thoughts. I bolded one line above. I just want to say that the biggest irony about this feeling that you (and probably so many millions of others) feel is that **these women are literally the farthest you could possibly get from being solely for you.** They are literally the most disgusting, hefkier women in the world that put themselves naked in front of hundreds of millions of men. This realization is something that definitely helps me to be disgusted by pornography, which is again an extremely powerful tool for quitting (i.e., to be disgusted by it). If similar feelings hit you in the future, you could try to think about how literally **not solely for you** these disgusting animals are and maybe it will help to evaporate the lies.

Keep on growing and sharing! I enjoy reading your posts!

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by cordnoy - 13 Apr 2022 14:28

[committed_togrowth wrote on 13 Apr 2022 07:17:](#)

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It is well written; thank you.

Personally, my triggers are many times when I feel on top of the world: after a successful meetin', a fundraisin' hit, a chaburah that went over real well, a speech at an event, etc.

Other times as well.

Which is why I came to the conclusion that it's all about sex.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 13 Apr 2022 18:12

[5Uu80*cdwB#^ wrote on 13 Apr 2022 12:12:](#)

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Keep on growing and sharing! I enjoy reading your posts!

I agree, the whole entire thought process is ironic as it's all imagined but what you mention here is one of the sharpest ironies. Thanks!

@cordnoy that makes sense! Definitely there's lots of ways to end up here

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 29 Apr 2022 06:48

I want to put down some reflections I had over Pesach before they leave me, just a stream of consciousness. We each possess a deep sense of nobility, and we have to cling to it. We are human beings and we are Jews. We are poised, significant beings, and our actions have an incredible impact on the world. This isn't something that is measured by your accomplishments or accolades. We, simply as we are, carry weight.

And yet, we over the years have become overly familiar with ourselves. Accurate self-perception diminishes and we devalue and criticize ourselves by measuring ourselves repeatedly against external measures of success. We become small, so small that we subconsciously start to feel uncertain as to whether or not we have a right to occupy the very space we exist in. This feeling

is manifest in many small ways. Feeling nervous/awkward when walking towards people on the sidewalk, being excessively jokey/frivolous, fidgeting around. We don't take ourselves seriously. We don't think there's any harm in spending hours of time watching TV, engaging in totally idle chatter, or worse, because nothing great was going to come from that time anyway. We come up with a categorical difference between ourself, and those who attain greatness. Great people have better brain, a bigger neshama, whatever it is I don't have it. I am consigned to category of average, blowing in the wind, not so significant. This deterioration of self-image makes us unanchored, listless. It's a prison.

I don't know if it was the special quality of the zman or what, but this Pesach I was given a tiny glimpse of the freedom that comes by escaping smallness. I hate to say this, but I do feel a bit back in jail now. Back to normal, plain old me and my usual problems. But, this time around I think I have more understanding of the prison architecture. It's a webwork made of millions of tiny actions I have performed which say "I am insignificant and small." Each nervous fidget or shifty glance, these are all subconscious actions that make me smaller and smaller. I will fight against these small ways that I diminish myself. They are small actions, but their effect is enormous. Anyway, an amalgam of thoughts on an idea I wish I had more clarity on, but I'll end with saying may we all be able to carry ourselves in a manner that reflects who we really are.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 03 May 2022 05:47

I've been doing a mental exercise recently to try to rewire my understanding of intimacy, and I thought I'd share some of my reflections here. For better or worse I've been dissecting some of the tropes that are exploited by online shmutz to clarify to myself how wrong they are. I think those who have never seen such things should not read this post.

The main point I have been thinking about is, most of what is "exciting" or "captivating" about shmutz is not the actual imagery itself, rather it is the message or connotation that comes along with it. If we were really just seeking imagery, then the first photo we find would satisfy that craving. But, I can unfortunately recall many instances where I spent a significant amount of time searching through images and videos looking for a particular intangible factor. I've been thinking about what it is I was looking for during these dives. I believe what I was looking for was essentially video proof that human beings do not have value and that morality does not exist. This sounds like an extreme statement, but there is an abundance of content online which tells this narrative. That anyone on the street can be bought, that seemingly "decent" people are just putting up a facade and really on the inside everyone is a pleasure-seeking hedonist, that it is exciting to exploit/blackmail women in exchange for intimacy, the list can go on. These are the sorts of things that drew me to watching, because after the habit of watching develops simple

indecent exposure is not enough to satisfy the craving. The actual meal was witnessing the corruption of society, while the intimacy was just an initial enticement and also the vehicle through which the corruption is done.

It's very embarrassing to say this, but I've realized that there is a part of my mind that actually gets excited by evil. This was highlighted pretty strongly for me while reading last week's Torah portion. During the section on forbidden relationships, (again massively embarrassing to say this) I found that my mind actually got excited by the discussion of these relationships. It's actually an astonishing thing to feel excited while reading the direct word of Hashem on what He objectively defines as perversion.

This is a bit of harsh introspection, but the only solution I have found is to start calling this part of my mind what it is and to rout it out. I'm not sure how I developed these interests, whether they are innate or whether it is from years of absorbing this kind of content. But, at least by naming it and telling myself it is simply bad I've begun to reeducate myself and pop the bubble of allure surrounding shmutz. I hope these thoughts are helpful to some.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by Hashem Help Me - 03 May 2022 11:18

[committed_togrowth wrote on 03 May 2022 05:47:](#)

It's very embarrassing to say this, but I've realized that there is a part of my mind that actually gets excited by evil.

We all have a touch of that. Look how many films are produced that portray murder, kidnapping, and other violent crimes. And they are best sellers....

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 04 May 2022 06:26

30 days today. Thank you Hashem for helping me get back on the horse.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by Ybird - 04 May 2022 14:33

wow keep up with your great work and stay committed to grow stronger!!!!

hashem loves you more than most tanuem and amoiruem!

they couldn't reach bassicly all avieres with a click of a button unlike us

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 04 May 2022 19:43

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 10 May 2022 04:16

A pretty difficult past week or so, mostly due to continuous work pressure, heavy hours, and tension with my supervisor. Anytime I let a problem consume my whole existence it becomes extremely difficult for me to be a grounded eved Hashem. My entire sense of why I'm alive and what I'm here to do drops away and I start to exist in a state of tantrum and clamber for coping mechanisms. This is the mind state I've been in for days now. Definitely a week where I relied on my gedarim rather than on motivation or willpower. There were a couple of positive moments though. I had two very large stressors that were of the scale that triggered my last fall. My mind went into the same scattered state as last time where I basically surrendered my daas, and I felt myself starting to lean harder and harder into entertaining fantasies with a an attitude of "screw it" or "my life is falling apart anyway." Then, there was a thought that pulled me through. I asked myself, "Am I really ready to sit down right now in front of a computer, watch pornography, and masturbate?" The answer was no, and I was able to recenter myself. I think by skipping all the

games and just being frank about what the outcome of this mind state was going to be I was able to stop. During a second moment I used the same thought and it worked, and I also actually said to Hashem that I want to turn to him in this moment. I didn't have an intense feeling of kavanah or any sort of moment of connection, but I did manage to say the words and to stop myself from going down the dark path. Hoping things get better soon, but my takeaway from this week so far is sometimes you really just have to pull yourself up by your bootstraps and move forwards. Even when you don't want to, when you have excuses to fall, when you don't have motivation. B'ezras Hashem I will get through this period.

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 12 May 2022 03:57

Had another positive experience today (most of what I talk about is work related stress as this is my biggest challenge, apologies for the broken record). I have a lot riding on some work going on right now because it can significantly determine my future. I was working on this project today and I noticed some abnormalities that suggested the whole thing was going wrong (in my eyes). I started to go into panic mode again, then all of the sudden I had the thought "Hashem is a lot smarter than me. Why am I panicking over this if He's in charge?" For months I've been trying to break my pattern of anxiety and work on my bitachon. This is the first instance where really, I felt total calm in the face of what would normally unnerve me completely. I was able to skip over the entire stress-induced nisayon that I've been having to wrestle in recent memory. This felt like a gift from Hashem. Thank you!

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Re: Living a holy life

Posted by committed_togrowth - 19 May 2022 02:10

Day 45, getting along well BH. It's interesting how working on this issue forces you to work on all areas of yourself (emunah, relationships, dealing with stress and difficulty, anger etc.). Rabbi Moshe Weinberger says that the middah of yesod, which he says is the central ingredient of being a shomer habris, isn't actually a trait in and of itself (like chesed or gevurah for instance). Rather, yesod is the link between all of your character traits. This sounded super abstract the first time I heard it, and I probably still don't understand it. But I'm coming to see that working on yesod means properly aligning all of the parts of yourself, which makes working on this struggle in particular a way to work on yourself holistically. Interesting that Hashem set things up in such a way, that working on this issue in particular is a door into working on yourself in your entirety.

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