

Britt's Beyond

Posted by briut - 02 Feb 2010 18:00

Dear Friends: Sorry I've been off in my own mind these last couple of days and not posting.

I've had a very very emotionally busy couple of days as I approach the end of a 20-day kaballa to be clean. Here's an update, and I'm hoping for your insights/comments.

That kaballa ends this evening. I've learned a lot. I want to express my thanks to all of you for jumping in to post, even in the face of some pretty long rambling posts without clear message. It means a lot.

And to the author of many insightful PMs, your direct, almost brutal comments scared away a lot of delusional thinking and brought me a tremendous sense of clarity. Saying thank you doesn't even come close to my gratitude for your time. I'd love to hear from the decades of accumulated wisdom here on the forum.

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!

Posted by briut - 28 Apr 2010 14:55

Dang nabbit! Everytime I think I'm getting a beautiful view of the land, some jerk shows up and points out there are nasty giants all around (and even the grapes are too heavy to carry alone). (Sorry to bring Yehoshua into this, but after all he was just a 'na'ar' in his line of work, too!)

Anyhow, it happened yesterday. My first serious nisayon of a slip. I think I passed the test. But even so, it sorta threw me.

I was buying something online from a dept store. Didn't quite meet the minimum for free shipping, so started thinking of 'filler' items. Noticed they had a big sale on men's underwear; thought, okay. T-shirts. Yeah. Clicked.

Big mistake. Underwear models. A screenful. Well, er, modeling. (Several funny punch lines come to mind, but I'll skip them.) I took between 1-3 seconds in shock. And then the decision point came.

And? And?? And???? I closed my eyes. Said to myself, no - I don't want this. It would mess up the mental synapses being rewired in this GYE work. I've got to trust that it's the right thing to do.

I opened my eyes just long enough to close the tab. Told myself that no markdown on t-shirts is worth setting myself up for a conflict. Found some towels to buy instead. (Thankfully, no modeling of shower towels!)

So why do I want to document this on my thread? Because it's the first time I've felt a real nisayon since I told myself that I wanted to do this, that I could do this, that I was going to do this. And I passed the challenge. But that's not the point. The point is:

I DO NOT FEEL GOOD ABOUT IT! (There! I've said it.)

I do not feel good about remembering that the emotional rush of an image can feel good, so avoiding it feels like avoiding something good.

I do not feel good about thinking I'll never "allow" myself this rush anymore, and that I'm supposed to feel "bad" about a slip or fall.

I do not feel good about feeling something fun is being taken away, even before the higher good has really sunk in as a reward/replacement.

I do not feel good about being powerless to handle the scene except by closing my eyes and telling myself 'no' like a stupid puppy.

So, anyhow, I might feel good about sticking to a plan, and living al pi halacha, and letting Hashem get a closer to me and whatever scent I'm giving off. BUT I DON'T WANT TO LIE TO MYSELF. AS OF TODAY, I'M NOT FEELING COMPLETELY GOOD. OR VICTORIOUS. OR MERITORIOUS. PART OF ME IS FEELING LIKE A DIETER WHO WALKED AWAY FROM CHEESECAKE AND DIDN'T EVEN FIND A PIECE OF FRESH FRUIT AS A REPLACEMENT.

So I guess I'm not 'there' yet, wherever 'there' is. Still got work to do. But still completely clean/sober. (Chizuk, anyone?)

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!

Posted by Chazak Amenu - 28 Apr 2010 15:07

I have felt the same way sometimes and all i can think of to say is that these are desperate attempts by the Y'H to bring you down and you were able to defeat him! what you are feeling are the reverberations from such a great victory! its like when an army wins a battle and only loses a few soldiers but the reverberations are that the men in the victorious army feel bad for killing men that have families and wives and they are wondering why the enemy could not just surrender? but than they have to remember that the enemy was trying to kill them and torture them and how the enemy was trying to keep them imprisoned and enslaved! thats how you need to look at it, sure it would be easier to have continued looking but what are you missing? enslavement.

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!

Posted by the.guard - 28 Apr 2010 18:50

That's amazing that you were able to walk away from that, Briut.

I don't recall anywhere where it says that changing the way we thought and the things we 'ran after' for years would make us "feel good". The initial "high" we get when starting out on recovery is just Hashem's push to us, but ultimately it's just a loan... As David sang Shira when Hashem saved him "Miyad Sha'ul" - from the hands of "the loan", and instead was able to do it

Dov once had a great piece on how "the feeling good" is only a bonus, but should never be the "reason" we stay sober, or we'll lose it as soon as we don't feel it. We need to just not want to "die". (I forget though where that piece is...)

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!

Posted by Steve - 28 Apr 2010 19:16

First of all, KOL HAKOVOD!! What you did was AMAZING!!

Now for the meat n' potatoes:

I think what Dr. Briut was reacting to is that he (perhaps) FANTASIZES that "recovery" or real, final "sobriety" means that I'll never feel the urge again, ever, I'll be too busy with Hashem to care, too filled with Hashem's light to notice any triggers. And every struggling moment is just an ugly reminder that I'm not there yet.

Doc, it's JUST A FANTASY. We are all human. We're gonna get urges, we're gonna have varying degrees of ease or discomfort as we face down the triggers, depending on how we are looking at and processing the stuff of our lives at the time. If we get Riddy, it'll be a tougher challenge to avoid the second look, etc. If we're comfortable in our own skin, looking at life in a positive light and busy with Hashem, we'll still see the triggers and have to remove them, but that action will be as simple as turning aside, or brushing off a pesky fly. Once in a while they won't even be on our radar, but that's the rarity.

Real recovery and sobriety is a LOT like what you just experienced. Having the tools we need to avoid following the triggers. Three of the biggest tools are the 90-day + "rewiring" system; the learning to PAUSE before reacting to stimuli, and thinking "what does Hashem want from me this second"; developing a POSITIVE perspective on life, being honest about our motivations and their degree of purity.

So you are well on your way, my friend. Time to start re-orienting your mind to look at things in that positive light. Us 12-steppers know that happens through the 4th and 5th steps. Which is where we're holding right now on the DC Call.

I hope this post helped.

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!

Posted by the.guard - 28 Apr 2010 19:58

One more thought I had about the pain of saying "no"... We humans are made up of a body and soul. The soul craves a deep and sublime connection to G-d, who is the source of all good, beauty and pleasure. Our body "messes up these signals" and tries to fill this "G-d hole" with the bubble and illusion of lust. As long as we are still mostly "physical" people who haven't advanced the "soul" part of our existence as uppermost importance to us, it will feel very painful to say "no" to the illusion, as it leaves the "G-d hole" feeling empty, with nothing to "cover over the hole", even if the patch is imaginary and will come right off.

The only way that we can one day truly not feel pain at "saying no" and feel good in our lives without the imaginary "balm of lust", is if we strive to intensify our soul's prominence in our lives. When we feel the pull of lust, we need to tell ourselves that it's our soul's yearning for G-dliness and for G-d's loving embrace that we are really craving. We should use this opportunity to cry out "Father! I know that it's really YOU who is calling me. I just get the signals all mixed up because my body is still in control of me more than my soul is. Help me, Father, to be more spiritual, so I can run to You and to Your ever-loving embrace..."

As the Ba'al Shem Tov says, these feelings of lust are given to us so we can uplift this "fallen love" to the highest heights. If we never yearned for love, connection and pleasure, how would we know that such a thing **exists** in a spiritual form? It is **only** because we experience it on this world, that we can imagine what the TRUE love and connection with the real source of all good and pleasure must be like.

So at the end of the day, our deep yearnings and pain are our biggest blessings. They are the hidden signals of our soul, calling us to experience the true subliminal love and connection with the source of all beauty and good, comfort and pleasure, warmth and light.

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!

Posted by briut - 28 Apr 2010 20:28

Wow. Just when I was feeling comfortable in feeling all alone in this work.... Thanks to CA, Rage, Steve, Guard, and Guard (again) for jumping in. I'm embarrassed that your calling my nisayon "amazing" was any comfort, but it really was. I tend to underestimate my true grit and overestimate my fears, at least in my heart of hearts. And today, I've been feeling my actions are more puny than amazing.

What I think I heard, and what of course has always been the case, is...

> recovery doesn't lead to either fun or happiness, it leads to understanding and tools. (Joke about patient finishing 7 years of psychoanalysis; complains to shrink he's not ready to leave because he's still not happy; shrink answers, analysis only promised you self-understanding; it never promised you'd like the 'you' that you've come to understand. Hmmn...That is a joke, isn't it? ?)

> filling up (on good) ain't as poshut as pushing out (the shmutz). So yeah, there's gonna be a stage where I walk away from the cheesecake and still don't know where to find the fruit plate. Get over it. Part of the package deal called recovery.

> what we think we want ain't always the same as what Hashem wants, or even what Hashem wants US to want. So focus on the kedusha and not on the crazy little place we call Erev Geula (Earth in this century), in order to keep the Eyes (!) on the prize.

> this challenge isn't unique, unusual, etc. This makes me think that perhaps my reaction is normal and not really so 'amazing' either. But if it helps me to think that I'm waging great battles and winning, then it's better to have my big ole ego on MY side and not C'V the Yetzer's.

I'll keep reflecting; I'd welcome more chizuk & analysis; I'll gird for the next battle that surely lies somewhere ahead. (Anybody got a MAP of this battleground? Arrrrgh.)

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!
Posted by briut - 29 Apr 2010 15:46

One fresh piece of insight from yesterday.

Yes, I know that staying away from this shmutz isn't necessarily going to make us (or 'let us') feel good.

It might fulfill our tefkid, it might fulfill mitzvos, it might make other parts of life (esp marriage) workable.

But it has nothing to do with feeling good.

Why do I connect 'feeling good' to staying clean, then?

Not because I'm so great and wonderful and clean and unique and... that I "deserve" happiness.

But just the opposite: I'm so weak and tired and disturbed and... that I "need" the gift of a little "free" happiness.

Come on, Tatty, give me a little cheesecake.

I know I don't deserve it yet because I haven't finished the hike.

We both know it's a hike I'll never finish in 120 miles, so don't hold out 'til then.

But I'm tired, my blood sugar is low, and I could use the calorie boost.

Especially when I've given up those other boosts I used to use.

And besides, it'll be good to know it came from You, just because You love me.

Yeah, that's it! I want the happy feelings because I'm weak.

The battle sometimes weaken me, and I'm looking for a substitute energy booster.

And I want it to come straight from Hashem, because that adds still another blessing.

A strong man might not need this, but I'm not too proud to say that my efforts have exhausted me.

So please, just a little piece of stuff that makes me happy? Just because? Thanks, Tatty. I love You.

Guys: am I alone in this thinking?

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!
Posted by briut - 30 Apr 2010 03:15

Okay, friends, here's another sick and disturbed revelation.

HERE IT IS: In the past, my self-image included some of the elements I'm now working on discarding.

High in libido, sexuality. Creative in fantasy, role-playing. Unique and accomplished in various lust-related arenas. Impressively gutsy in taking on challenging lifestyles, balancing acts, etc. In short... defining myself in terms of my sexual self.

So now, if I give up the lust as a central definition of who I am... do I still know who I am? And if there's an empty place left where those lust-related images used to reside... do I have a replacement?

Growl... yet another piece of work to address before being sober feels either stable OR fun! (Didn't someone on this forum say it was going to feel GOOD to stop feeling like a hypocrite? I'm beginning to wonder.... Just kidding. Sorta.)

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!
Posted by strugglingyid - 30 Apr 2010 04:03

Yeah by just commenting on the ridiculousness of it all you should be feeling good!

I am not sure that the stopping in itself is what will make you feel good. I think the stopping will allow you to better connect to Hashem, your wife, your true self and that will have a positive

impact on you and help make you feel good about yourself. Anyway, to me it seems that the approach to stopping is by focusing on that we do not want the negative things that come from giving in. Every time I look away from a pair of legs I tell myself I do not want to give into this lust, I do not want that to be what I am thinking about. I just remind myself how bad I would feel after looking at P and it would help me look away. We also need to focus on positive things as a way to develop ourselves once we are breaking away from the addiction in order to fill the voids in our lives. By doing positive things we give ourselves an identity that is not about lust, but when we are faced with a challenge I think we need to avoid it for the negative things it causes us.

If you want to think of it in terms of a marriage relationship perhaps this would make sense. For example if your wife does something that upsets you, you can realize that by reacting negatively it will cause a fight and a lot of aggravation, so if you are smart you do not respond negatively. Once the annoyance from this episode is over you can give your wife a hug and kiss and tell her how wonderful she is. So you are avoiding the fight by realizing you do not want the negative outcome and when things calm down you can do positive things to build a better relationship. I know this is not a perfect example but I think it suitably illustrates the concept.

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!
Posted by briut - 30 Apr 2010 04:10

[guardureyes wrote on 28 Apr 2010 19:58:](#)

So at the end of the day, our deep yearnings and pain are our biggest blessings. They are the hidden signals of our soul, calling us to experience the true subliminal love and connection with the source of all beauty and good, comfort and pleasure, warmth and light.

Wow. Re-reading these words of yours just makes them all the more worthwhile. I'll hold onto this.... Thanks.

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!

Posted by silentbattle - 30 Apr 2010 06:23

Dov has posted in the past about giving up on seeing himself as a porn star - I think it may have been in one of the recent chizuk emails (link, anyone?).

I think that there are two things here - naturally, when we accomplish something (especially something we know is worthwhile), we feel good. We feel a deep sense of accomplishment. So I'd go so far as to say that if you're not feeling that, there's a *reason* you're not.

For me, I often do feel good, but I know what one of my issues is. When I pass a girl on the street, and I want to look twice, but restrain myself, there's a part of my brain that asks - no, whines, really - "does that mean I can never look anymore? Never fantasize or dream? How can I give up something so sweet?"

And I remind myself, with absolute certainty, that *I'm not giving anything up*. I'm freeing myself, and allowing myself to live a life that I know will be happier.

And that's the key, for me, because for years, I've drilled into my thick head that all these pleasures are good, and will make me happier. It's going to take some time to retrain myself, and realize that it just ain't so. So for now, I keep on drilling this new awareness in.

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!

Posted by the.guard - 30 Apr 2010 12:26

[Briut wrote on 30 Apr 2010 04:10:](#)

[guardureyes wrote on 28 Apr 2010 19:58:](#)

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Wow. Re-reading these words of yours just makes them all the more worthwhile. I'll hold onto this.... Thanks.

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!
Posted by briut - 30 Apr 2010 15:28

Wow. I've seen so many good thoughts pass here in the last few days. I want to make a little compendium so I don't lose track -- partly because they're deserving of this and partly because going back to see what 'speaks to me' will probably be helpful when I end up down the road and forgetting what today felt like.

So, with thanks to all and in no particular order....

[silentbattle wrote on 30 Apr 2010 06:23:](#)

Now you are holding a diamond that can answer all the questions...

When I [...] want to look twice, but restrain myself, there's a part of my brain that asks - no,

whines, really - "[...]Never fantasize or dream? How can I give up something so sweet?"

And I remind myself, with absolute certainty, that I'm not giving anything up. I'm [...]allowing myself to live a life that I know will be happier. And that's the key, [...]because for years, I've drilled into my thick head that all these pleasures [...] will make me happier. It's going to take some time to retrain myself....

Aha, so one focus can be that I KNOW this new set of tools WILL make me happy. Happier. Perhaps if I don't see that YET, the problem isn't with the tools or the results but with MY ability to retrain my initial thoughts. And that this is a LONG-TERM process. Okay. Thanks.

[strugglingid wrote on 30 Apr 2010 04:03:](#)

Yeah by just commenting on the ridiculousness of it all you should be feeling good!

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If you want to think of it in terms of a marriage relationship perhaps this would make sense. For example if your wife does something that upsets you, you can realize that by reacting negatively it will cause a fight and a lot of aggravation, so if you are smart you do not respond negatively. [... W]hen things calm down you can do positive things to build a better relationship.

Yep, focus on the beauty etc in GIVING the POSITIVE, rather than mope around from being

FED the NEGATIVE. That's my choice to make. Yep. A long-term effort for me to really assimilate, but an obvious truth even so. Thanks.

[guardureyes wrote on 28 Apr 2010 19:58:](#)

The only way that we can one day truly not feel pain at "saying no" and feel good in our lives without the imaginary "balm of lust", is if we strive to intensify our soul's prominence in our lives. When we feel the pull of lust, we need to tell ourselves that it's our soul's yearning for G-dliness and for G-d's loving embrace that we are really craving. [...] As the Ba'al Shem Tov says, these feelings of lust are given to us so we can uplift this "fallen love" to the highest heights. If we never yearned for love, connection and pleasure, how would we know that such a thing **exists** in a spiritual form? [...]

So, at the end of the day, our deep yearnings and pain are our biggest blessings.

I've always been able to say that my challenges and shortcomings are my most loyal teachers and friends. That I wouldn't trade my peckelach of tzuris for anyone else's. Here's my chance to live that lesson -- focus on the higher levels even when the lower ones don't make sense YET. Thanks!

[Steve wrote on 28 Apr 2010 19:16:](#)

Briut (perhaps) FANTASIZES that "recovery" or real, final "sobriety" means that I'll never feel the urge again, ever, I'll be too busy with Hashem to care, too filled with Hashem's light to notice any triggers. And every struggling moment is just an ugly reminder that I'm not there yet.

Doc, it's JUST A FANTASY. [...] Real recovery and sobriety is a LOT like what you just experienced. Having the tools we need to avoid following the triggers. Three of the biggest tools are the 90-day + "rewiring" system; the learning to PAUSE before reacting to stimuli, and thinking "what does Hashem want from me this second"; developing a POSITIVE perspective on life, being honest about our motivations and their degree of purity.

This learning about a conflict between what Hashem presumably wants and what my body definitely wants is a long-term efforts (see above). So I might come to see your view eventually IYH, but right now I'm not living in my soul as much as in my body. Oh well....

[Rage ATM wrote on 28 Apr 2010 15:09:](#)

briut, ...you just walked into the quad convention and said, "i feel so sorry for myself that i cant move my arms"...we're all like that, bro....dem are the cards we've been dealt...but you should feel grateful that hashem allowed you to walk away from that nissayon without injury...and i promise you, had you gone further you woulda been so badly injured...

No, I might never KNOW that if I'd gone further I would'a been badly injured. But my KNOWING is probably not the point. Isn't that what emunah is for?

[strugglingid wrote on 27 Apr 2010 05:44:](#)

Doing a big Teshuva or what not might be great -- but when you love someone it is not really about the big things but in how you do all the small things. Not that I am knocking the big things, they are important, but if you to really show someone you love them you have to constantly be doing the little things that matter so much.

Yeah, doing something "little" for Hashem. Like what, like changing my self-perception of sexual orientation and my pegging my self-worth to my sexual prowess or my power to keep things "under control" and my self-congratulation for keeping all these little boxes of life compartmentalized from one another, and... Yeah, right. This is "little" stuff. And the yam suf was just a global warming tidal wave from some non-miraculous natural event. Yuk. But even if it's big stuff in MY eyes, the issue is that it's probably small stuff in HASHEM's eyes. Just like bringing the wife some flowers might be small for me and big for her. Small is in the eyes of the beholder. Your insights are always thought-provoking and 'genuine.' Thanks.

Okay, that's all I found on this latest page. Maybe if I have time I'll find more. After all, you guys

have a lot to say that's worth listening to. I hope y'all know that.

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Re: La-Briut and Beyond!
Posted by briut - 30 Apr 2010 20:53

Oh, darn.

I had sorta hoped that others might see all those amazing posts I highlighted from all those wise members, and that it would inspire them to add their own.

Hasn't happened yet.

I suppose folks are bringing in early Shabbos. And therefore preparing for their neshama yetera to arrive.

Fair enough. But maybe I'll have the honor of some other thoughts over the days ahead....

Shabbos koidesh, oy yooy, Shabbos koidesh. GS, everyone.

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