

Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 01 Nov 2010 10:35

[Note: this is a copy of my post from the Introduce-Yourself forum. I am placing it here as my initial entry for my 90-log. I don't promise to post updates every day, but do hope to do so a few times a week - or at the very least when significant things happen (either good or bad). I thank everyone for their support and hope to share good news with you.]

I am fairly new to GYE and this is my first post to the Forum.

I am a frum married man and have been struggling with this addiction for approximately twenty years (shortly after my bar-mitzva). The word 'struggling' can mean many things; in my case, some of the meanings are:

- the actual sin of MZ"L, the obvious things that precede it, and the **immense** spiritual damage involved
- a constant sense of shame and guilt, sometimes conscious sometimes sub-conscious... but always always there
- brief periods of progress, success and growth surrounded by longer and longer periods of darkness, failure and despair

If I blamed my problems entirely on the Internet - I would be lying. It is true that at this point, I *think* that about 95% of my SA current issues are triggered by internet usage. However, I had this problem way way before the internet existed.

My first MZ"L was a few months after my bar-mitzva. At the time, I thought nothing of it (actually, I remember being sort of proud). After a few weeks of experimentation, I began thinking that there may be something wrong with it; I did recall that my Father had told me not to ever touch myself there (probably some number of months before) but I figured that on a relative scale it was the same level of 'bad' as staying up way-way past my bedtime. How I wish that I would have asked more about it then...

Experimentation gave way to mild habit; I was pretty sure at that point that it was something weird and that I should stop - but figured that I could do that any time I wanted, so no big deal... Then about midway through 8th grade I found out. I was looking at an english Kitzur Shulchan

Oruch, probably studying for a test, and found a strange sounding entry in the index. Looked it up - sure enough it was talking about exactly what I had been doing - and I was shocked. According to what I read, I had been engaging in one of the worst possible sins. I was embarrassed but was also familiar with the idea of being a Shogeg... so I was filled with a resolve to stop immediately. But I didn't. Days dragged on to weeks, weeks to months, months to years. Having cable-tv in the house (with premium channels) when I was in high-school surely didn't help - *although in retrospect, just as the internet - I would not necessarily blame it as the root cause.* One time, my father even found out indirectly and had a talk with me. While I was deeply ashamed, I was relieved at the same time - since there was absolutely no way that I could do that again afterwards, right? Right? But no... We did have a few more talks afterwards, and soon enough I learned to lie just the right way for them to stop..

When I was in high school, I was absolutely convinced that there was no way I would continue doing that when I went to learn in Israel. That was not the case either, although towards the second part of the year - I read quite a bit on the topic (Reishis Chochma, etc) and bought a small collection of various Chassidic/Kabbalistic sefarim filled with various Tikkunim/Segulos/etc. Though I did very few of these tikkunim, I did achieve some level of growth, cried real tears, and mostly stopped for somewhere between two to three months. That was probably the longest period that I have ever been sober since.

When I went back to the states, the old habits came back quickly (even though I was not watching any tv anymore) and then - THE INTERNET.... While the result (MZ"L) was the same as before, the material was so much more vast. Whatever 'preferences' I had before - could be found within seconds. Anything you could think of could be found.... the abyss was complete.

When I was single, I was absolutely convinced that there was NO WAY that I would keep having this problem after getting married - I mean, how could I? Took about a month for it to come back in full force. Then I remember thinking that when my wife would get pregnant, there would be absolutely no way (I am somewhat familiar with some of the kabbalistic ramifications, so I figured there's no way I could do that then...) - but I didn't stop... Then when my son was born, that was the absolute end... but NO IT WASN'T! I don't want to go into details, but one time that really stands out in my mind is looking at porn while my wife and newborn son are sleeping in the same room. I don't need to go on, I'm sure you know where this is going.

I don't think that I've hit rock bottom yet.... I don't want to hit rock bottom. Although I have some tears in my eyes while writing these words - the truth is that over the years it has begun to hurt less and less. That scares me most of all, because if it hurts then there is at least still hope.

My Yom Kippurs are filled with remorse and kavona. I find that it's one of the few days when the shell opens up and the real me comes out. Every year, on THAT day, I find myself feeling like I finally came back, for the first and last time. Never again will I go back to the filth and darkness. Sometimes I make it to Hoshanah Rabba, more often not. This year I did B"H - but after reading what you guys define as falling, I certainly fell way before then (just not the final result).

Still, I did do something very different this year on Yom Kippur. I was a bit more honest with myself and with Hashem than usual. I told him straight out that while I have chorota, and never ever want to do this again - I know that I say this every year. I'm not stupid and I know plenty of practical ways to improve my situation (ranging from a serious daily accounting, daily mussar reading/chizuk - to seeing a therapist privately) but why WHY am I not taking these steps!? Hashem, you have to help me help myself - I don't want to be saying the same things again next year. (This is of course a dramatisation, the above words were not exactly my thoughts/words - but it was something to that effect...)

A few days before Hoshanah Rabbah, when I was very close to final breaking point, out of desperation I started typing a plea to Hashem into a google search (I know it sounds tacky, but I do that sometimes...) I don't remember the exact text of it, so will not attempt to reproduce it - but the general gist was how I was frustrated and wasn't meeting my obligations and goals. I don't remember there being any mention of MZ"L or related keywords.. Anyways, something really weird and amazing happened. Even before I clicked on Search - all the results on the page disappeared and the browser was trying to load a page from the guardyoueyes.com forum. It never loaded, but I figured that you don't get more of a direct answer than that - so I typed out the url and after ten minutes of reading felt my first breath or relief in years. Not relief that my problems were solved, but that this was solid proof that I'm not the only one out there and that THERE IS HOPE.

(This is completely an aside, not important to what I am writing, but I wanted to write a bit more about how I found GYE. I would not call the above a 'miracle' - although it is one to me on a personal level. I am a computer programmer, and specialize in web applications. So I kind of understand what happened - to a point. Google has a new feature called "Instant" which shows you results as you type your search. Also, I have a few virus-protection plugins that slightly change the content-results coming in from google. That together explains why all the content 'disappeared' from my screen before I even hit search (i.e. the sentence had so many keywords that google somehow narrowed it down to one site, then gave up, but the plugin was already trying to analyze it & got stuck.. or something like that). It doesn't explain why content from the GYE started automatically loading in the progress bar without my hitting anything though - and though I was not able to reproduce it after trying a bunch of times that day, I'm sure it that it was due to a google/plugin/firefox glitch. Except that it wasn't a glitch to me - to me it was Hashem reaching out to me and showing the way forward. One very practical point that comes out of this, personal inspiration aside, is why didn't I find GYE in the past; I use the internet fairly frequently - read blogs, news, etc... The answer, I think is that I don't really go on Jewish sites that much (other than debka.com - to whatever degree that's jewish). Perhaps there's a way to do an advertising campaign via Google AdWords that somehow targets orthodox men... I realize that this would not be simple to do but in any case food for thought & it's something that I would be glad to contribute to financially...)

Anyways - I've been using GYE 'lightly' for the past month. The first week was full of renewed resolve. Afterwards less and less, but all I was doing was randomly reading articles and entries in the handbook - not doing anything else. However, I think that I am ready to really jump in

now. Over the past week I have:

- signed up for daily chizuk emails (which I try to read, although not every day yet)
- downloaded the guidebooks
- started attending a weekly introductory phone group (Elya's)
- created a 90-day profile (have been clean 5 days now)
- requested a Sponsor (*From my communication with the parter-admin, it doesn't look like any sponsors are currently available. I'll hopefully be set up with a parter soon, so I'm looking forward to that. Still, if any of you reading know of a good Sponsor who you think would be available, please let me know! !*)
- joined the forum (obviously)
- installed & configured K-9 on my computer. (*I have not yet given the password to anyone. This is because I have very specialized uses for my computer, and need to make sure that I can use it for several weeks without any problems from the filter. After a month (maximum) once I am satisfied with the configuration - I will give the password over to either a partner/sponsor (assuming I have one by then) or to the password gabbai*)

Things that I plan to do in the near future:

- join a responsibility-group (in about a month)
- join the noon SA group (when they start a new cycle)
- possibly install an accountability program in addition to K-9 (*tried this in the past, but didn't have a good experience... if I get a partner/sponsor who I build a good relationship with, perhaps it will be a viable option*)
- possibly use some form of the Tapsik method described on the site
- work on true Teshuva (combination of SA steps + some Tikkunim that I am familiar with & have been planning on doing)
- if all above don't work out for over ~half a year - I will contact one of the professional therapists referred to on your site

I realize that this post was LOOONG... I just felt like I had to get it all out (or most of it, anyways) after keeping it bottled in for so long. If you made it this far I really appreciate it. Any advice and/or chizzuk would be greatly appreciated.

I cannot express how much appreciation I have for the people who made this site and community and continue to make it thrive. While we all have our missions in life, and don't necessarily always know what they are - I am SURE that you are making major roadwork in Shamayim. I hope to some day not only be thanking you but contributing as well - although there is so much work to be done beforehand...

Thank you again & chotzlocha to everyone here

- Naftali Z

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by Ineedhelp!! - 01 Nov 2010 17:53

Hey Naftali Z,

Welcome to the forum. Dont worry about the long post. Its all for you anyway so the more effort you put into this is the more you're going to get out of it. So keep posting. You sound like you have a great plan set out for you. Hatzlocha in everything you do here and everything outside of GYE as well.

-Yiddle

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 03 Nov 2010 08:46

At day 7 now.

On the positive side, B"H the desire to look for stuff on the internet is significantly weaker than I remember in a long time - and I was working from home today too! K-9 is helping with that, but I so have the password for it at this point - so I think it has more to do with having gotten more active in the forum over the past week. All the chizuk from everyone & actually writing about my problem really is helping.

On the negative side, I am beginning to feel tension - both in general, and not so in general (assume you know what I mean). B"H it isn't connected with improper thoughts YET, but from prior experience I know these usually soon begin to follow. Will try to daven with extra kavona tonight - and look forward to my phone group tomorrow night.

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by ur-a-jew - 03 Nov 2010 13:48

Naftoli I know what you mean about the tension. And I was thinking myself recently that one of the main factors in staying sober for me is to change the default setting in my brain. Whereas in the past when that feeling came on I would default to the internet for some "innocent" wasting my time which inevitably would lead to not so innocent activity I now default to GYE. There is always something new to read and just seeing how someone else is struggling is usually enough to tell myself well I know I don't want to be there thereby gaining the ability to return to real life and face whatever life is throwing my way. Continued hatzlacha.

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by kosher - 03 Nov 2010 13:58

Feelings of tension are very common/normal whenever trying to change any habbit (caffiene/overeating or anything else).

Some ideas:

- Keep reminding yourself why you want to change the habbit and why this is what you want to be doing and worth your while

- Reward yourself (mentaly and physically) for your success. (But be careful that the physical reward does not become extreme/unhealthy itself)
- Discuss your feelings and experience with people (either in person, of if not possible, virtually via GYE)

Hatzlacha Rabbo and KOT/KUTGW

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by dovekbashem - 03 Nov 2010 14:34

Naftali,

I identify with many aspects of your struggle and I am really inspired by your steps forward. Much hatzlocha! You will make it through this. You will soon be a GYE success story.

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 04 Nov 2010 06:52

[dovekbashem wrote on 03 Nov 2010 14:34:](#)

Naftali,

I identify with many aspects of your struggle and I am really inspired by your steps forward. Much hatzlocha! You will make it through this. You will soon be a GYE success story.

Hey dovek - thank you so much for the chizuk.

Much hatzlacha to you as well!

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 04 Nov 2010 07:45

ok - **day 8**

Tension is pretty much the same as before (mostly localized now) - but it doesn't really bother me as much now. Elya & Kosher - thank you very much for your thoughts about chemicals/neural-pathways. Although I studied some of this in school - and already understood it on a (very basic) academic level - it was not intuitive to apply it to myself, and it's much clearer to me now after speaking with you. If I keep it up for a week or two - the tension should hopefully subside (l"H) so I'm at much more peace with it.

side note:

What's interesting to me is that I definitely have had longer streaks in the past and don't remember focusing as much as now on the "tension". Probably one reason is that, because I'm keeping a written log of sorts - I am being more introspective about it. Another possibility is that in the past, my clean streaks were either "mussar/ruchnius propelled" or "white-knuckling". In the case of white-knuckling, I think by now I would be having active impure fantasies and just be concentrating on not looking at porn (or worse) - so the topic of analyzing "tension" wasn't on my radar. In the mussar/ruchnius case - the clean streak was propelled by having strong emotional feelings - which sort of drowned out the tension

On a darker note - when I first posted a few days ago and kept busy reading & replying-to people's welcome-posts (etc) - I had a big rush of euphoria and kind of felt like I started a new life. I recognized that there would for sure be a TON of work to do, I was ready to conquer the world, jump in fully, etc.. and felt like a different person to some degree. Now, I still DO feel that way a bit (and am definitely committed to the plan I outlined & etc) - but the *drama* of it has begun to fade and I think that I'm starting to slowly float back to the ground.... and on the ground things aren't as pretty.

I kind of feel like for the past week I've been walking on a path in a field and things seemed ok. Now all of sudden I'm realizing that while the path is the same as before - instead of a field there is a huge 500-foot drop on either side..

What I mean to say in less cryptic/artsy terms - is that my emotions have caught up with me - and I am realizing that if I actually go through with what I've jumped into - I will **really** not have that disgusting... yet warm & comforting place to escape to now&then. Obviously I understand how it's destroying me and that I don't really want it - yet at the same time when I think that I can never have it again it makes me either stressed out or to lose belief in myself.

One solution I can think of (and I know that I'm certainly not being original here) is to take it one day at a time. Meaning, rather than focusing on the rest of my life, or even 90 days - instead just focus on today. That certainly makes sense and sounds much more doable..... Except... Except that I am a very 'big picture' person. In some cases this is very good - but in this case it definitely makes it harder. Although advice/chizuk is definitely appreciated - I feel in some ways that perhaps that's just a reality that I have to deal with and try to focus on the present...

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by frumfiend - 04 Nov 2010 12:45

Reb naftoli you cannot get out of this alone. Use the excitement of the beginning to find a mahalach that works. Dont become ninety day road kill. Lots of guys post and post and then they fall at sixty ninety etc and we never hear from them again. They thought that now they really had it figured it. When they fall they give up. So start searching for a plan.

Hatzlacha

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by dovekbashem - 04 Nov 2010 15:06

"On a darker note - when I first posted a few days ago and kept busy reading & replying-to people's welcome-posts (etc) - I had a big rush of euphoria and kind of felt like I started a new life. I recognized that there would for sure be a TON of work to do, I was ready to conquer the world, jump in fully, etc.. and felt like a different person to some degree. Now, I still DO feel that way a bit (and am definitely committed to the plan I outlined & etc) - but the *drama* of it has begun to fade and I think that I'm starting to slowly float back to the ground.... and on the ground things aren't as pretty. "

Let me help put things in perspective. The reason why you are losing that euphoria and excitement is NOT because you are falling back into your old ways but because you are becoming a WHOLE NEW human being for whom staying clean is not new and exciting - it is just the norm! From now on, whenever you realize that you are not excited about this journey and that the drama is fading, get excited about the lack of excitement. Get excited about the fact that you are a new person for whom staying away from p* and m**b is nothing out of the ordinary. These feelings are hard to handle, but I hope a little perspective can help.

"One solution I can think of (and I know that I'm certainly not being original here) is to take it one day at a time. Meaning, rather than focusing on the rest of my life, or even 90 days - instead just focus on today. That certainly makes sense and sounds much more doable..... Except... Except that I am a very 'big picture' person. In some cases this is very good - but in this case it definitely makes it harder. Although advice/chizuk is definitely appreciated - I feel in some ways that perhaps that's just a reality that I have to deal with and try to focus on the present...

[/quote]"

Naftali, this is exactly my situation. I am now on day 3 of a new (and final!) clean streak. I am also a big picture kind of guy and I was always working towards the goal of "being someone who is clean for 90 days." Then, within the first couple days of a clean streak, I would tell myself "So I'll accomplish my goal in 94 days from now instead of 90. What's the big deal? Why can't I fall now and just do the clean streak starting tomorrow?" My only proof that this logic doesn't work is that I've been saying it for too many years, and still haven't had my 90 days. Even you are not a big picture person about everything. You move out of the way when a car is coming because you don't want to get hit by the car NOW, TODAY. You don't think about the next 90 days, or 90 years. It is something that you know is bad for you and you only think about today. Think of p*** the same way. Stay away from the "car" because it is disgusting and harmful TODAY. Think the same thing tomorrow.... and the day after that... etc.

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by kosher - 04 Nov 2010 15:13

Yes, breaking free from many years of habbit and familiarity are not easy. But as you change your nature and get used to a new routine and activities it gets a lot easier.

It is even possible that on the way up you will slip and not maintain the level that you want to and are aiming for. This can feel despairing at times, but it takes time to change what has become [second] nature and ultimately I am 100% sure that you can do it.

Many people with worse problems than you and with less strength and resolve managed to break free and there is no reason you shouldn't be able to.

On the other hand, even years from any slip or fall we still need to be vigilant and careful. I live in a constant state of mind that if I allow myself even one small "indiscretion" it can lead to a deep hole and a place that I don't want to go to...

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 09 Nov 2010 20:15

I had a major slip today :(- although I'm not sure if I should consider it that or a full fall. I didn't touch myself at all (B"H) - but wound up looking for over an hour. At first I wanted to just see one thing that was very borderline (although not technically porn), the next thing a bit more - and I crashed back into it. *(Without getting into triggering details: these were inappropriate comics as opposed to photos)*

Afterwards, I added the site to my filter (K-9) although frankly if I wanted to see similar content I could probably find a different site with the same content... so the filter is simply a help and I know the right thing continuing to work on attitude. It's funny - I've had much less of a desire over the past few days so I thought it would be easier today (I'm working from home) but I still messed up... Have been a bit down today and yesterday (due to some work/life-related stress) - so possibly that contributed to it..

I have a practical question: should I reset my 90-day counter or not? On the negative side: a) I definitely looked at erotic drawings for over an hour & b) I definitely feel that I could have stopped if I really tried. On the other hand, I did not "sit down" to do it (though I did expend some effort to find the first one - which was inappropriate but not 'adult') and I didn't touch myself in any way. I'm sorry to be so explicit in my question - but because I'm new to GYE, I want to make sure that I'm treating the 90-plan correctly & sincerely..

Thank you for all of your help & encouragement... hope to have better things to report in the future

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Re: Naftali's log
Posted by dovekbashem - 09 Nov 2010 20:55

You didn't touch yourself... it sounds like more of a success story than a fall to me!

Any experts want to chime in?

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Re: Naftali's log
Posted by Dov - 10 Nov 2010 04:18

"hope to have better things to report in the future"

Sorry to hear about your hard day. Your honesty is a mighty fine thing to report, as far as I am concerned. Alei v'hatzlach, my friend!

My suggestion is that you keep doing the next right thing today and mind your own business one day at a time, and after about 10 weeks from now, look back and see how close you are to 90 days and **then** figure out what your date is.

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Re: Naftali's log

Posted by returner613 - 10 Nov 2010 05:38

[dov wrote on 10 Nov 2010 04:18:](#)

My suggestion is that you keep doing the next right thing today and mind your own business one day at a time, and after about 10 weeks from now, look back and see how close you are to 90 days and **then** figure out what your date is.

Thanks - that's a very uplifting take on it & makes a lot of sense to me

tomorrow's a fresh day and I'll try hard to relax & focus on just that

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