

Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 13 Jul 2009 21:08

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I'm new to this forum, but not new to this struggle. I signed up to the weekly E-mail lists a few months ago. I often just glance at them, as I'm trying not to spend so much time reading E-mails. But, even with this, I have gotten chizuk through the themes that keep repeating themselves.

I grew up secular, but did Teshuva in college--I came to Yeshiva in Israel and never left. Now I'm married with five children (our oldest is eight and our youngest is a month old).

I was in the habit of staring at girls, I remember even in nursery school. I just liked the way they looked. Things got worse when I was 10 or 11. My sisters had a "facts of life" book with indecent pictures and crooked ideas, and I found it. It described Mast... as a fun thing to do, and so I followed the instructions. I've been stuck ever since.

I was a member of a shul youth group around the age of my bar-mitzvah. The youth group leader gained my trust very early on, and I could discuss anything with him. Luckily, I learned early on that mast... is wrong. I've been fighting it ever since, sometimes more successfully and sometimes less so. I think now I go two or three months clean, and then I tend to trip up a few times close together. I always feel that the yeitzer hara tricked me, and somehow it's strategy was different than last time. Also, I view it as tripping up for one "phase," instead of multiple times. So, I manage not to get too depressed about it, and can pick myself up again pretty quickly.

I would like to be able to stop altogether. But, I am more concerned with controlling my eyes. I feel that it is impossible to walk down the street without taking a look at every woman along the way. I think the trickiest part is that, in my neighborhood, everyone is dressed so tznius that it's hard to feel that I'm really doing anything wrong.

Besides that, I slip up every once in a while with the internet--probably a few times a year. But then, I feel that I was somehow outsmarted again by my Yeitzer. I wasn't looking for indecent pictures... I was just curious about such-and-such an actress... I wasn't expecting to find such indecent pictures...

I see the progress is still very slow on my own, and that's why I decided to become more involved in this forum.

But, I find this is also a challenge. I think my own situation is rather mild, and I find that by seeing other people's stories which are more involved than my own, I end up getting thoughts instead of getting rid of them. Any advice on this point would also be helpful. Thanks.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 01 Nov 2012 13:09

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[nederman wrote on 01 Nov 2012 09:21:](#)

We cannot choose to pass on a desire that we do not acknowledge. When you surrender you do accept it, so you can move on. Your mind is hearing "look, I am surrendering it, that means it's okay to have this desire." And the reason we do not acknowledge the desire is because we only value ourselves when we are performing well as Jews.

What?

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 01 Nov 2012 14:12

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I think what Neddy is saying is something that I often use and that I have found helpful. When I am confronted with a strong trigger and I am dying to look and drink it in, if I tell myself "I don't want to look" that is very difficult because it is essentially denying reality. Instead I say to myself "I want to look but it's bad for me because it will lead to other things so I can't".

And an important step for me was to understand that I don't need to feel guilty about my desires. The fact that Hashem made me to have these desires is not my fault and does not make me a bad person. It's how I choose to act when confronted with them that counts. So I don't deny that the desire exists, but I surrender the right to use it against Hashem's will.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by gibbor120 - 01 Nov 2012 16:24

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Well said Gevurah!

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Dov - 01 Nov 2012 16:44

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[Eye.nonymous wrote on 01 Nov 2012 13:09:](#)

And the reason we do not acknowledge the desire is because we only value ourselves when we are performing well as Jews.

What?

Nederman is pointing out a common mistake that frum Yidden make (and incidentally, religious christians make the same *assumption*, though I can't comment on their religion itself). It is not based on Torah - only on guilt and false humility:

People see the ugliness that their desires cause in them by the shameful and destructive acting out that they do. But then they make the fateful jump to equating **having** desires with **sinning** and destroying their honesty.

This is false, and a product of our guilt and pride. Halachically, the issur of 'hirhur aveirah' is

only **planning** - not *feeling* a desire. But after years of wanting a free orgasm and then taking it, we start to see it all as a disgusting continuum. But it's not. I have no regret whatsoever that I feel a desire towards certain women, no regret at all that I need to make calls to admit the lust I feel sometimes and then let it go with G-d's help. I can share openly and freely with safe people exactly what's doing with me. It's actually a pleasure to really do what is naturally needed for me to do. I know it's G-d's Will for me. I am like any chronically ill person taking his right medicine.

But there is still a **world** of difference between mine and any other disease:

When a Jew humbly uses the tools of the program, rather than pridefully relying on his intelligence or willpower, he is left with a gift of profound gratitude and a dependence on his own G-d and on his G-d's people. And that is what Torah happens to be all about, too.

Of course, addicts are the small minority of humanity (and the Jewish people, too) so this path is not the way for most Jews. Hashem 'used' slavery, ten plagues, gilui k'vodo b'sinai - and finally a mountain over the heads of the Dor Deyah to give them an acceptance of total dependence on Him. There are many, *many* ways to reach those precious gifts for all kinds of people. Some people can probably only reach them *davka* through using willpower and intelligence! Strange, but true...

But for me and many addicts, this path is a 'derech arukah shehi k'tzarah', and works just fine.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Machshovo Tova - 01 Nov 2012 17:02

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[dov wrote on 01 Nov 2012 16:44:](#)

... Halachically, the issur of 'hirhur aveirah' is only **planning** - not *feeling* a desire.

Doesn't sound right. I think it needs to be clarified. The issur is not only 'planning'. Feeling a desire is not an issur, but if he dwells on it and drinks it in (even without 'planning'), that is definitely included in the issur.

MT

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 01 Nov 2012 20:03

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*Lo sassuru acharei levavchem v'acharei eineichem* sounds to me as an issur **to follow that what we desire**. The desire on its own is not the problem.

When the desire is to gaze at a good looking body, then looking and drinking in the image seems to be the problem. Not the mere WANTING to look & enjoy it.

So it seems to me.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Dov - 01 Nov 2012 21:29

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[Machshovo wrote on 01 Nov 2012 17:02:](#)

... Halachically, the issur of 'hirhur aveirah' is only **planning** - not *feeling* a desire.

Doesn't sound right. I think it needs to be clarified. The issur is not only 'planning'. Feeling a desire is not an issur, but if he dwells on it and drinks it in (even without 'planning'), that is definitely included in the issur.

MT

Are you seriously concerned lest this condone fantasizing?

Quite the contrary, for any addict in recovery holding onto fantasy is not an issue of issura, anyway. It is an issue of sakanta. And as we know, halachically, cakanta chamira me'isurra and addicts in real recovery treat it that way. But being afraid of it will just mean more hiding it and denying it...as is done in the normal frum world. This is obvious. And hiding and denying **work** for normal people.

Addicts are different.

This is such a major issue that I really do not want to let it sit. And I bet we agree far more than we disagree.

Yes, there is Kedusha and yes, it can be measured by not **having** such desires. As extreme cases, Rabbi Yochanan and R' Adah bar Ahava (were they the ones?) who sat by the ladies' mikvah, were clearly kedoshim, not just blind or too old. And that is a good thing. But I doubt they could do that by learning to *control* it (the holy grail of nearly all frum sex addicts!). Rather, I believe they could do those things because they grew *past* the shtus. They saw people differently than most people do so that *there was no issue for them there*.

And yes, there is taharas hamachshovah - and I do not concern myself with it. I'll tell you why, be"H:

I keep meeting guys - good men - who come here or call me, and make a whole to-do about kedushas habris, taharas hamachshovah, etc. Or they set their sights on never having wet dreams, or on never consciously desiring to look at a pretty woman. Sounds nice, no?

Gevalt. It's horrible. They don't get better! They are fighting a battle in New Jersey when the enemy is in Denver. Here we are, hands shaking and breath shallow watching nudes engaged in sex acts every now and then, or masturbating ourselves every now and then, for following women around the kosher supermarket every now and then, or coercing our wives to do sexual favors with us every now and then...and yet we set our sights on the least of our worries: "our lack of Kedusha"?!

It's a frequent mechanism, called **denial**. Deep in our addictive lifestyles, our (very untrustworthy) intelligence tells us that we must fight the *little* things in order to be saved from the big things. And that's actually correct - but not yet.

It can't really **start** that way. First there needs to be an open facing of the full extent of our problem. And that takes a long time for some of us. For there are layers and layers of Torah-digeh excuses as to why and how certain things we do are actually OK or necessary, b'dieved and serve a good purpose like: s'eir la'azozel, pas b'salo, meshaneh mipnei haSholom, a twisting of the true Breslover idea of "starting new and fresh from today!", etc. We are full of it - and we b'nei Torah are often worse than most people are, because we are soooo smart.

**After** having the help of other real people to face the full truth about where our battle *really* is...**then** we learn how to gradually bring the battle lines farther and farther back. For that is the

sign of true surrender: giving up more and more. For the pendulum swings the opposite way (even for frummies!) and we begin saying to ourselves, "well, this schmutz isn't *technically* acting out..." So yes, addicts in recovery frequently live with great taharas hamachshovah - but if we started out trying to get that, we'd never have gotten out of that toilet to begin with! Our brains and inner yiddishkeit are way too screwed up, twisted and sick.

None of this may make sense, but it's just the way it really is for many real folks, like me.

Wooh. You OK with all this?

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Machshovo Tova - 01 Nov 2012 21:50

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[dov wrote on 01 Nov 2012 21:29:](#)

... Wooh. You OK with all this?

Not quite, but that's all right. Let's leave well enough alone.

(You may not want to be meshadech with me, based on my warped hashkofos - but if it's bashert, it may happen without you realizing that it's me, and without my realizing that it's you. Hah!)

MT

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Blind Beggar - 01 Nov 2012 21:51

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I don't want to argue with Dov's wise words but I do think the *issur of hirhurim* is to **fantasize** and **imagine** getting illicit sexual pleasure, not only not to plan how to get it.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Dov - 01 Nov 2012 21:54

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[Blind wrote on 01 Nov 2012 21:51:](#)

I don't want to argue with Dov's wise words but I do think the *issur of hirhurim* is to **fantasize** and **imagine** getting illicit sexual pleasure, not only not to plan how to get it.

Yes, to intentionally do that. But not to simply be one who *deeply wants* to do it or to see that you *are* doing it. In fact, the only one who is mekayem the mitzvoh of lo sasuru is the one who *has* a desire and then does not follow it.

Getting all bent out of shape trying to explain that tzaddikim get s'char or 'are considered as if they are performing this mitzvah' because they made themselves into kedoshim who do not have these base desires - is missing the point entirely.

But I feel that my point is missed here, anyway.

A (rare) modification:



Back to your point - yes: and why *would* a person fantasize and imagine himself getting such pleasures if he was not planning to do it? That is fantasizing. Actively wishing **is** planning. [It's why Hashem considers wanting (and planning) to do a mitzvah as actually having done it for a Jew. For He knows that the true inner heart of a Jew [b]is [/b]to really want to *do* it (Derech Pikudecha). Same here - for one who is a professional porner and masturbater, intentionally wishing to do it and imagining it - **is** doing it. That's just honesty, not spooky 'religion'.]

But just *being* such a person who Hashem knows *wants* it and will occasionally remember the idea of doing it is *not at all* intentionally fantasizing. **Having** a desire is just the way one *is*. **Being** is not an aveira - it is only *bringing it out and nurturing it* that is bad (and certainly *doing* it is, too).

Gevalt! Enough theory!!! Ahhh!!! Lets just live right, right now, be"H. Gotta go and vacuum for Shabbos. Bye!

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 02 Nov 2012 07:59

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I thought I'd top one sticky subject with another one:

Actually it's a whole litany I thought of in response to another thread a while back, but I didn't post it there because I didn't think it would do any good there. It came up again in a conversation I was having with someone, so I thought I'd go ahead and post it.

The question was one of those types of "let's bash the 12-steps again" questions. "How can it be that G-d will actually help people who do not believe in Him or, even worse, they believe in other religions or oak trees or something like that?" So, here are a number of responses:

1. Free will factor. If G-d ONLY helped those who believed in Him, and whoever didn't believe in Him was immediately struck by lightning or their lives got progressively worse no matter what they did, we would not have free will anymore.
2. Progress, not perfection (1). There are quite a lot of people who come into a 12-step program as being totally agnostic or athiest. I actually heard once (but I don't remember where) that idolatry is actually a step up from athiesm; a person who believes in SOMETHING is, at least, capable of humbling himself. A person who believe himself to be G-d can't even do that.

3. Progress, not perfection (2). As a person gets more involved in the 12 steps and with relying on his Higher Power (whatever he may have designated as such), it does happen that such a person does come back to a true relationship with Hashem. So, Hashem is patient in the meanwhile.

4. The generation of the flood was wiped out because they specialized in the infractions against their fellow man; idolatry was not a main part of their ideology. The generation of the Tower of Babel was spared; although they were rebellious against G-d, they specialized in getting along with each other. In addition, I think the generation of Achav enjoyed peace and success--although they were idolatrous, they excelled in getting along with their fellow man. I think a person who comes into recovery needs help with his relation with G-d as well as his relation with other people. Although the choice of one's Higher Power might seem open to interpretation, it is clear beyond a doubt that, through recovery, a person MUST straighten up his relations with his fellow man. So if, at least, a person is honestly doing that and is radically improving in this area, he has a lot to his credit despite his misconceptions about G-d.

5. Patience. The 12-step program has literally saved tens of thousands of lives when all other methods failed. So, even if some (or if would even be nearly all) of the members believe in gods that you would consider idolatrous, one is still yet free to choose his own conception of G-d and so you can choose Hashem. These lives that are being saved includes Jews who were once frum, who still are frum, or who even are on their way to being frum. Also, their entire families are being spared and saved from being totally destroyed and are, in fact, enjoying a new peace and serenity that they never before knew. So, even if the message does happen to be passed along by blatant idolators, if you consider the content and the results it has quite a few merits to it's name.

I'm going to run for cover now...

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Sturggle - 02 Nov 2012 10:53

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For what it's worth, Eye, and anyone else reading this, I think that was a great post! Shkoyach!  
And Dov, your post was insightful for me as well. And I miss you guys!

Love,

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by tehillimzugger - 04 Nov 2012 17:30

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[dov wrote on 01 Nov 2012 21:54:](#)

Yeah!

[dov wrote on 01 Nov 2012 21:29:](#)

I retreat back into my beis hamidrash.

... Wooh. You OK with all this?

Not quite, but that's all right. Let's leave well enough alone.

(You may not want to be meshadech with me, based on my warped hashkofos - but if it's bashert, it may happen without you realizing that it's me, and without my realizing that it's you. Hah!)

MT

Umm Zaidy, care to explain why you disagree with Reb Dov? I don't exactly get it.

[Also, about being Meshadech with Dov "Let's leave well enough alone." ]

And Dov, once we're back in Beis Midrash, let's discuss some Derech Pikudecha [and for you MT, some Rabbenu Yonah]

The Derech Pikudecha writes Bsheim Rabbenu Yonah that if someone is Avar V'shana then even machshava raah IS mitztareph leMaiseh, Derech Pikudecha then goes on to say, that since everyone [basically] was nichshal in Hz"l at some point, then it is considered that they were avar v'shana in a subcategory of "z'nus", Im kein [thumb twirl] if they ever have the slightest machshava raah in, I don't know, Shiphcha nechrefes! It is considered as if it was actually a maiseh! Gevalt! We need Teshuva on so many fronts!

[Derech Pikudecha]

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Dov - 04 Nov 2012 20:10

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I remember that in the sefer, b"H, and it doesn't scare me too much. Cuz I know exactly where my job is today:

While the mikvaholics are out there working on 'Teshuvah' in all those pratim of 'hirhur' and running from virtual spill to virtual spill mopping up all day...I'll be here smiling and keeping my pants zipped way up, working on being right with Hashem, with the people He puts in my life today, and with myself. And I will be leaving all those great worries to those who are better equipped to handle it.

Let's see who ends up spilling less seed in the long run, shall we?

If that was nasty, sorry. I just couldn't resist.

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