

boruch's WOH 12 steps journal

Posted by boruch - 30 Jan 2009 19:57

So last night I went to my first 12 steps meeting. Hashem has once again been extremely Good and Kind to me. And I really don't deserve it... but, as they say, I am certainly not complaining and I am only too glad to be able to share with you all, at least until I reach 120, how Good Hashem has been to me, and im yirtzeh Hashem, nismach besimchaschem... I will be only too happy to share in your stories of how Hashem has been good to you.

Dear Yidden, I write this with all humility and sincerity, last night after the meeting, I was looking at a personally very uncertain future with the 12 steps. The meeting itself was really good -- it was a relatively small group with real quality guys -- many of them long timers --- this was no recidivist meeting of guys stuck in the middle and constantly wavering. I was also very open to working with whatever I could of the 12 steps. But I really believed that as far as the steps I would never be able to get past first base.

I had separately and individually, both before and after the meeting, in person and with one, for hours by phone, discussed some of the difficulties I had with the first of the 12 steps with three long-time members of the group and I shared with them that I felt that the difficulties would only increase the longer I continued my fight against addiction, especially the longer I would be an active part of the group..

As of late last night I had spoken in total with three of them as I told you above and each had his own way of essentially conveying the same message. Yes, they had all certainly submitted to G-d in weakness. They did not have any insights at all from their own religions of how to deal with addiction, and nothing made them believe that was even a theoretical possibility. They did not have even the slightest suspicion that they could have found another way, be it therapy or anything else. They had exhausted every option they had come up with only to fail miserably. When they did step 1 and they said that they were powerless, they were making a very powerful personal and totally unqualified statement.

I am not going to speak for others, although much of what I write here will apply to everyone to a greater or lesser degree, as a frum yid who had learned full time in yeshivos and kollel for many years, who had worked on himself with mussar for almost 20 years, and who has been very fortunate to have had excellent Rabbeim, and with my own set of circumstances, I was coming into this from a totally opposite direction. Being totally true with myself, and not looking for any excuses, I was really coming in to the program from a true position of strength. I will explain that in detail soon.

Now many, if not most of you, will say, right away, what's the difference? What's the big deal? Why does everything have to be a debate? Why does everything have to have a pshat? Just go with the program and see if it works.

But that is extremely flawed thinking and as you will see, B"H I was not even tempted to go down, what at least for me, would have been an extremely foolish path. The very reason that the 12 steps work is because the people doing it, are being totally true to themselves. They are not just going with the flow. They are absolutely and totally sincere. They know no chochmos. They believe, absolutely literally, in every single word they are saying, with every fiber of their being. If they encounter any problem with any part of the process, they work it through thoroughly. They do not look for temporary patches and excuses. And so, if I even wanted the 12 steps to work, as they are supposed to, I needed to avoid any and all temptation for chochmos and schtick, for excuses and short-cuts. If it was going to work at all I had to do like them and be no less true to myself, regardless of the consequences, even if it meant that I could never do the 12 steps.

So I asked them how could someone coming from strength, someone who has far from exhausted all his options, someone who is just at the very beginning of his fight, someone fully committed and determined to go it for life with no relapses, how can he make a statement, "I am powerless and cannot manage"?

As an intellectual and theoretical proposition, it's a total non-starter. Who's to say? They, themselves, were far from convinced that I was powerless and had no other options and they freely acknowledged that I might well have other options. So that was out.

From a personal perspective as a personal statement it was also a total non-starter. No statement captures my determination less than the statement, "I am powerless, my addiction has beaten me and I cannot manage".

On this forum, I basically got 2 pieces of advice:

- 1) Do what you can now, because it's very likely that at some point like everyone else you will bottom out.

2) Look, there are all sorts of interpretations one can find to explain the statement in a way that conforms with ma'amorei Chazal.

If either of those approaches worked for you, well, hey, right or wrong it worked.

But being true to myself and speaking only from my own experience, both approaches were fundamentally wrong.

1) This is going to be long, and long for a reason. Because my circumstances in this respect to a certain degree are quite individual.

11 days ago, I, was a guy who basically thought he was in total control (despite all blatant indications to the contrary) because he had never even smoked a cigarette in his life, because he could drink alcohol, as often and as seldom as he wanted. I had seen that when I really wanted something badly enough, and I wholeheartedly applied myself to it, I could be absolutely single-minded, fearless and relentless.

This guy, me, had, in reality been totally out of control his entire life and I didn't even know it. I, was a total slave to every whim and desire that I could live with yielding to, and by the day the list of desires that I could learn to accept was slowly but steadily and dangerously growing. The majority of these whims and desires were intrinsically perfectly legitimate. Learning, looking up seforim, investigating mar'eh mekomos, researching secular knowledge, lots of intrinsically worthwhile pursuits. But I was totally out of control.

Beyond the basic discipline that came naturally from upbringing and beyond a basic sense of self-respect, I was only able to do what I was in the mood of doing and had to act upon everything that I felt like doing.

This affected absolutely EVERYTHING. I was unable to revise any of my learning. B"H for some things I have an excellent memory, otherwise I would be a total ignoramus. Much as I was capable of davening with instant understanding of the words and deep kavono, 99.99% of the time, my davening was literally nothing less than total oblivion. Same for most mitzvos. No

matter how much I learned mussar about torah, tefilla and mitzvos, there was no change at all (at that point in time). I was capable of being extremely disconnected in relationships with family, friends and colleagues, ALL my relationships, without exception, were revolving door relationships. No amount of mussar on bein odom lechaveiro made an iota of difference (at that point in time). Work was a constant spiralling nightmare of unpredictability and unreliability. My finances were exponentially deteriorating and they were a tsunami waiting to happen.

But such is man's ability to fool himself that until 11 days ago, deep down, I really believed that I was really in absolute and total control and *if only I wanted to enough...* and that was the critical error. Because what I thought was my single greatest strength, *if only I wanted to enough* was my single greatest weakness --- **I could only do things if I really wanted them enough** and that was why much as I tried I was so out of control.

Then, and I speak here not of theories and hypotheses but of deep and searing personal experience, I realized that I had gotten so out of control and that I had sunk to such depths, that that Monday night 12 days ago, when it was time for a certain publicly observed mitzvo that was extremely important to me, much as I wanted to break free and much as I had every incentive and enjoyment to be involved in that mitzva, I was imprisoned, hiding in isolation, viewing forbidden material, unbeknown to anyone, my accountability partner included, and much as I tried to break away, the mitzva totally came and went and I was unable to do anything about it.

It was particularly painful because just that day I had been checking through the emails I was getting updating me on every one of my partner's keystrokes and all of his activity on his PC. Well he had been posting right here on this forum and I visited the forum for the first time that very afternoon, and I was very inspired. And where did all that inspiration go? Well, ultimately it brought me to sign up with a vengeance right after I fell, but I'll tell you what it felt like initially. Initially just after I fell, I remembered the inspiration I had had from reading this forum and I remembered how it had given me a sense of determination that with that inspiration I would be successful and I remembered it all having failed. So at the time, it felt like all that inspiration had gone, not down the drain, but forgive me, I felt, inappropriate as it was and inappropriate as it is, that all the inspiration had gone right into the toilet bowl.

So what did I do? Well, I have many faults, but wallowing in self-doubt and despair is, Chasdei Hashem not my problem. So, I am going to tell you what I did the best way I know. I will use strong language because I am passionate. But genuinely and sincerely, everyone must find their path to teshuva and with all the strong language I talk only about me. I make no insinuations whatsoever and no attacks, even veiled.

So in my own words I did the one thing that I knew I needed to do. I knew that I needed to do teshuva. Not the motions of teshuva. Not, what for me, with my personality and background, would be a half-baked, temporary let's see how it goes, baby steps teshuva. But a teshuva that proclaimed from the depths of my soul, horeisa derech teshuva l'amcho Yisroel. You Hashem have showed us the way to Teshuva in your Torah. The words of your Holy Torah are Eternal and can be applied **ABSOLUTELY LITERALLY, PESHUTO KEMASHMO'O IN EVERY GENERATION** if only we do teshuva as you have told us to, Hashem, bechol levovcho uvchol nafshecho -- absolutely wholeheartedly.

I said, somewhere deep down in my heart, Hashem, you have taught us through your Chossid, Rabbenu Yonah, that for frequent and addicted sinners, after a fall, there is no time and no place for charotto -- regret, and that the absolute total focus is to first do a total Azivas Hachet -- to abandon the sin with all one's heart, for life, once and for all, right here and right now. I cannot explain it, other than to say HaBo LeTaher Messayin Osso min Hashomayim, how I even got such feelings. Obviously years of mussar and inspiration do not really ever go down any drainage system. But Chasdei Hashem deep within me I heard the faintest stirrings of a lifetime commitment with no relapses at all. Of course, I knew that in implementation, it would be not just one day at a time but sometimes as little as one second at a time, but deep down I felt that I was developing a commitment for life.

And so I went out there and did everything that would come to mind. I confessed to my accountability partner. I signed up on this board. I divulged it to the therapist I was seeing for ADD treatment. I built up a fearful array of filters and accountability software which I have further, extended and fortified in these last 11 days. And I put everything I had into the enterprise.

So getting back on track after this long detour, in these last 11 days, all the time I was building and growing my commitment and building and growing my sobriety and I really became convinced that with Hashem's Kindness I would be able to follow through on my internal notions of a lifetime kabbolo. All without the 12 steps, to which I had always been allergic, since I read about them, years ago, and which I thought would never work for me.

And then, my therapist told me to try a 12 step group just one time. And I knew that to ignore the advice of my therapist would hardly be wholehearted, and since teshuva has to be wholehearted I have to do whatever I can, without compromise, being true to my values and beliefs but equally without excuses.

And so I believed that even without the 12 steps there was good chance that if I did my little part

Hashem would do the rest and even today, in our dor, He would bring me to a teshuva sheleimo. And I was equally convinced that if I added the 12 steps to the process then I would be almost guaranteed to succeed. Not because there was no other way but because I was being wholehearted about doing my little piece.

And so, what hope of hitting rock bottom? As unbelievable as it probably sounds, I really didn't and couldn't believe that there was any strong likelihood that it would happen, especially not if I went to 12 step meetings and became an active part of the fellowship.

So that was why at least for me waiting for a rock-bottom sounded like a real dud of an idea.

2) The other suggestion, I got on this forum, was to at least in the short-term, find some level of interpretation that allowed for a qualified meaning in the statement, "I am powerless, my addiction has beaten me and I cannot manage". Well, for me at least, this was the worst piece of advice. Imagine for a moment saying, "I am, to a certain limited extent, absolutely and totally convinced that..." That's not a very meaningful and inspiring statement to say the least. I am afraid there is not a lot of resonance in saying that to a certain limited extent you are absolutely and totally anything.

Same with powerlessness. Maybe it's just me. But if you are powerless, it means you have NO power. Gornishct. Zero. Nada. Zilch. That's certainly what it means to all of the multitudes of goyim who, being totally true with themselves, use the program.

So, again, being true to myself, who would I be fooling if I would say a very qualified, "to a certain specific degree and from a certain specific aspect, I am powerless."? Certainly not myself, because beyond that specific degree and beyond that specific aspect I am actually not powerless at all. Unlike the goyim who had no expectations at all that their religion could help them, as a frum Yid, I have been taught by Chazal, hafoch bo vehfoch bo dekullo bo, that we are very empowered, because **everything is in Torah**, unlike the goyim who were all at their wits end, I was at the very beginning of my journey and was getting more and more determined and more and more resourceful by the day. So, in theory all of the advice above might have made sense to different people, in different circumstances, but for me in my circumstances it was all totally impractical.

So, last night, in brief, I explained my quandary separately, to my 3 new advisors from the 12 step group, and they understood the issue very well and they were not really able to give me

anything useful. Except that they did give me something extremely useful. They were able to listen and they were able to understand. They tried to help with suggestions, ideas and in the case of one of them, even with arguments. But ultimately when they saw, from their own experience, that I was being true to myself and not using artificial excuses, they just accepted it.

So, as I said from the beginning, how could I be true to myself and at the same time give the program a chance. Last night after being open with myself and after being open with 3 others in the fellowship, I was at total impasse. One wise man suggested that I pray for guidance, but I was so much at impasse that I was unable even to do that. (aha, the sharp ones among you grin, *he was powerless after all*, not really, because I knew, correctly, it turned out, that gam zeh yaavor... I was only temporarily stuck)

And then this morning, terem yikro'u va'ani e'eneh, without my even turning to Him in prayer, Hashem in His Infinite Kindness, showed me the light. I want to share it with you all, but Shabbos is soon upon us.

Yes, this morning Hashem showed me how I could without compromising on any of my sincerely held beliefs as expressed above, davka come from strength and make an **unqualified, meaningful and totally genuine** declaration, "I am powerless, my addiction has beaten me and I cannot manage".

You should all enjoy a wonderful Shabbos!!!

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by the.guard - 31 Jan 2009 18:49

Wow. What a beautiful post from someone who seems very genuine, very determined and BRUTALLY honest with himself. A breath of fresh air. I am truly impressed Boruch. You have real strengths in you. And when you fully recover IY"H, you will be a great asset to us and many other Yidden who will be able to learn from your experience.

I just don't understand one thing. It seems to me that you DID hit bottom and you DID admit powerlessness. It was at this point in time where you write:

Then, and I speak here not of theories and hypotheses but of deep and searing personal experience, I realized that I had gotten so out of control and that I had sunk to such depths, that that Monay night 12 days ago, when it was time for a certain publicly observed mitzvo that was extremely important to me, much as I wanted to break free and much as I had every incentive and enjoyment to be involved in that mitzva, I was imprisoned, hiding in isolation, viewing forbidden material, unbeknown to anyone, my accountability partner included, and much as I tried to break away, the mitzva totally came and went and I was unable to do anything about it.

That was your own personal "hitting bottom" and "admitting powerlessness". It was at that instant in time that you realized that the addiction had beaten you. You had thought your were in control and suddenly it became clear you were NOT. You realized then, that half measures would no longer work and you were ready to surrender to.... an entirely NEW PERSPECTIVE.

That is pretty similar I think.

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by boruch - 01 Feb 2009 06:08

[guardureyes wrote on 31 Jan 2009 18:49:](#)

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Yes, Guard, that was a point made by the guy at SA that I spoke to the most. I think that a useful way to explain my dilemma is with a thought experiment that borrows from the pages of the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

In the days leading up to the War, the Israelis, despite multiple warnings, were largely in the dark of Egyptian and Syrian intentions, due to a combination of bad intelligence and arrogance. In the hours leading up to the attack they finally realised that an attack might be imminent and the Cabinet discussed the possibility of their favored form of defense, a pre-emptive attack. Israeli PM Golda Meir decided against a pre-emptive attack. Due to threats of an Arab boycott and embargo, Europeans were not selling the Israelis armaments and the Israelis were left totally dependent on the US, who would be very unlikely to resupply Israel if they acted first. Meir's assessment was independently confirmed soon after by a message from Henry Kissinger the US Secretary of State ordering them not to pre-empt.

Egypt and Syria attacked first, catching Israel off-guard. The Israelis initially suffered heavy losses in the war. The Soviets rushed to resupply Egypt and Syria. Following a personal appeal by Golda Meir, the Americans launched a massive airlift to resupply Israel that was critical to Israel's ability to fight off the Arab attack and to eventually counterattack and come within striking distance of each of Cairo and Damascus.

The US, as a senior ally had insisted that it's junior partner, Israel, forgo the option of pre-emptive attack with all the strategic advantages that would have conferred and the Israelis being totally dependent on the US for resupply had decided it was worth the cost. And when Israel turned to the US for resupply, the US, their ally came through and helped them. Did the Israelis surrender to the US? No. They recognized their dependence, recognized that they were a Junior ally, behaved accordingly and the US came through for them in their time of need.

Let us imagine a hypothetically different scenario. Let's imagine that Meir had ignored Kissinger's instructions and had decided to pre-empt. Let's imagine what would have happened had the Israelis, being unaware of the impending strength of the Arab forces arrayed against them ready for attack, had badly miscalculated and that the pre-emptive attack had turned into a strong Arab counterattack. Let's imagine what would have happened if after ignoring Kissinger, Golda Meir had then approached Kissinger asking for help and rearmament. Let us imagine that Kissinger was very unsympathetic with Meir who had defied his instructions and let's imagine that the US had hypothetically insisted that before any support would be forthcoming Israel would have to comply with the following pre-conditions:

1) Israel would have to totally relinquish it's sovereignty to become the 51st State of the US that would henceforth be renamed the State of Judaea, which would encompass the lands of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

2) Israel would have to totally relinquish it's identity as a Jewish State and become a State like any other in the US.

3) Israel would have to accept that all current residents of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, both Jewish and Arab alike become immediately entitled to US citizenship and that from then on Jews elsewhere in the World have no claim whatsoever on citizenship in the new 51st State of Judaea any more than any other foreigner.

Would Israel, in desperation, have agreed to those conditions? Hard to know. But one thing is certain. The implication of such conditions would have been very clear. If Israel wanted any help under such conditions it would not be help from one ally to another. If Israel wanted any help it would have to first recognize it's powerlessness, totally surrender to the US, lose it's own identity and become a US State like any other.

So the allegiance of allies, even senior to junior, even when the senior ally makes certain conditions is very different than the conditions of surrender.

So returning to the first of the 12 steps. Yes, at one point I was stuck (before I resolved to do teshuva). Yes, I knew, when I decided to do teshuva, that without Hashem's help teshuva would be impossible. But I also knew that Hashem was not insisting as a precondition, that before He helps me I have to come before Him powerless and surrender the fight completely to Him. Why, Hashem goes as far as describing his role as an ally or help-mate "*Hakodosh Boruch Hu Ozro*" -- *Hashem helps him* that is that man retains independence and Hashem is presenting His role as that of an ally coming to help. Moreso, Hashem ascribes any future victory over the Yetzer Hora to man --- "Eizeh Gibbor Hakovesh es yitzro" --- Who is strong? He who conquers his yetzer -- in other words in Hashem's words, ultimately, it is man that is considered to have made the conquest. So Hashem's help in my situation is really analogous to the US allegiance with Israel in the 1973 War as it actually played out, as the partnership of allies, one senior and one junior.

Now, the 12 steps are not 12 individual programs in their own right, they are successive steps that are a part of one program, and their meaning is very clear. I am powerless and cannot manage. Hashem is all powerful and he can. That's why I surrender the fight to him, **because unless I surrender to him completely He will not help me**. That is the belief of the goyim who follow the 12 steps and if you share that belief, those statements are very powerful statements. In such a vision Hashem's help would be directly analogous to a hypothetical Israeli surrender to become a part of the US as a precondition to American support.

My problem with step 1 of the 12 steps was, because as stated, intended, understood and practiced it means that Hashem does not help until you surrender to Him. That's plain wrong and untrue. Hence my dilemma. Hashem is ready to help as long as we want to do teshuva, he does not require that we first have to give up our own role. On the contrary, He considers His role as that of an ally and helpmate and ascribes success to us. So we are not forced into powerless surrender, on the contrary, Hashem is ready to make Himself appear as no more than an ally and to give us any credit in victory.

BE"H tomorrow I will describe how Hashem helped me see the light.

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by the.guard - 01 Feb 2009 10:34

In Chaba"d (I am not Chaba"d, but I love all Jews and try to learn from everyone) there is a strong emphasis on the inyan of total "Bitul" to Hashem. They say over a story from the Tzemach tzedek, that when he was only 5 years old he asked his grandfather the Ba'al Hatanya a very deep question. It says "and you shall love hashem your G-d with all your heart and soul". If we are mevatel ourselves totally, **who is there** to love Hashem? The story goes that the Ba'al Hatanya answered him and the child understood the answer. But we don't know what the answer was.

I believe that the answer was probably something along these lines: "My child, when you will achive true and complete Bitul to Hashem, you will understand what true Love of Hashem means".

And I say the same to you, dear Boruch. When a human being is able to achieve true "bitul" and surrender his entire life to G-d - he will also understand how it is that HE is considered the "Gibor" and "He" gets the credit for achieving this great level.

It is not something that can be understood until you are there. And even when we are there, I am not sure if we can understand how it is that Hashem truly does everything for us, and yet we have free will and we get the credit? Even Moshe Rabbeinu was told that the 50th level of wisdom he will not attain in this world... This is a controdiction that we, as believing Jews, must learn to live with. And living with controdictions allows us to believe "above and beyond logic" - *le'Malah Min Hada'as*. And THAT is true Emunah. (For it it was all *Be'toch Hada'as*, it wouldn't be true Emunah")

I do not believe that the 12-Steps say that G-d won't help us until we totally surrender to him. But if we want Hashem to fight for us as it says "*Hashem Yilachem, Ve'atem Tacharishun*", we need to reach a high level of "bitul". And **the higher the bitul, the more Hashem will fight for us**. But there are no absolutes, they go hand in hand.

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by boruch - 04 Feb 2009 16:07

[guardureyes wrote on 01 Feb 2009 10:34:](#)

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I believe that the answer was probably something along these lines: "My child, when you will achive true and complete Bitul to Hashem, you will understand what true Love of Hashem means".

"what true Love of Hashem means"? The question was not *what* but *who* is left.

The truth is that I believe that I know what you mean or at least I think I do. Either way, to my mind, the following is what the Baal Hatanya no doubt answered:

There are two concepts in hilchos *bittul berov*.

1) *Hamiut bottel bemiuto veharei hu kemi she'eino* --- the minority is lost in the majority and it is as if it did not exist at all.

2) *Issur nehepach lehetter* -- the minority which is for example ossur loses it's prior natural

identity of issur and assumes the halachic *identity* of the majority and becomes hetter. In this type of bittul the minority does not cease to exist, on the contrary, it very much exists, it just gets the identity of the majority.

When we Yidden are mevattel ourselves before Hashem, we are not vaporizing and nullifying ourselves out of existence as in *bottel bemiuto veharei hu kemi she'eino*. What we are doing is peshuto kemashmo'o *Issur nehepach lehetter*, we are shedding our identity of tuma and aveiro and assuming Hashem's identity of kedusha --- Kedoshim tihyu ki kodosh ani Hashem Elokeichem --- as the Rambam says of the Baal Teshuva, Emesh hoyo muvdal --- before teshuva he was far from Hashem and with teshuva, today he is finally bound close to Hashem...

[guardureyes wrote on 01 Feb 2009 10:34:](#)

And I say the same to you, dear Boruch. When a human being is able to achieve true "bitul" and surrender his entire life to G-d - he will also understand how it is that HE is considered the "Gibor" and "He" gets the credit for achieving this great level.

What you say here is all very true and all very good. However it didn't really help me, and here's why.

Yes, I know, we should certainly be mevattel ourselves to Hashem. That's the ultimate and most lofty goal in Yiddishkeit... battel retzoncho mipnei retzono.

But as I wrote earlier, when I spoke to and listened to the steppers, their first step was not some lofty inspirational goal, or even the ultimate goal, it was an absolute visceral gut life or death necessity, right here, right now. They were coming to a realization that in their own experience, if they did not do the steps as soon as possible then they would be totally lost and they would be as good as dead. I have seen their determination and I am absolutely convinced beyond all personal doubt that it all starts with their yesod hayesodos, their first step. They are empowered by an unwavering belief that if they don't have the steps they have nothing and all is lost.

Now you may argue, astutely, that every Yid should see battel retzono as life or death, but I am

going to speak purely for myself here, with the tumo I have ingested into my neshomo over the years, battel retzono was sadly but really light years away and it was about as far from being an immediate life and death issue as you can get. So, yes, if I wanted to fool myself I would give droshos on end about the first step. Droshos that, for the moment, for me, at least, would begin and end in the head and never take even the first step to the heart. *Un der hartz iz gebbliben kalt* the heart, my heart, at least, was nebach unmoved.

And BE"H today, later on, I will finally share with you, what worked for me not just in achieveing the first step, but in understanding why we addicts allowed our taavo (lust bela'az) to take us beyond the point of no return.

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by the.guard - 04 Feb 2009 19:56

Nice vort on Bitul! Very wise.

I am curious to hear what you have to say in your coming posts... but take care of your family

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by boruch - 06 Feb 2009 20:07

[guardureyes wrote on 04 Feb 2009 19:56:](#)

Nice vort on Bitul! Very wise.

Thanks for the advice, also went to 3 step meetings in just 1 week... (2hrs travel each time)...

half-measures don't work...

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by the.guard - 07 Feb 2009 17:52

If there is one thing we can all learn from Boruch, that is **determination**.

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by boruch - 17 Feb 2009 20:03

B"H I am able to resume posting and a lot of water has gone under the bridge, so to get back to the real point here, I am going to do what I can to make my 12 step journey real simple. (That's right you don't need to read from the beginning of this thread, you can start right here)

This thread is about a guy (me) who had some prior knowledge of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and the 12 steps and was very allergic to them on many levels. I am almost certainly not alone in that, especially among charedi yidden, although I probably had a more extreme aversion than most. If you don't believe it and/or you are very bored and really have nothing better to do you could always check it all out on my anti-12 step thread on the Breaking Free forum.

But, to save you the trouble and keep it really simple, let's just say that I had lots and lots against AA and the steps and I used a lot of very strong language attacking them from every angle. Not just for the purpose of attacking them, but more to find my own path, as a frum Yid, and as an individual, in the fight against addiction.

So in the beginning my discussion was all about how and why the 12 steps were bad/silly/futile/self-defeating and whatever else you can think of. I was not even at the point of discussing whether they could work for me. It was very obvious to me that they were out of the question for me and the only question was how to develop a different path, which for me as a frum Yid, would obviously have to be a Torah path that would have all the maalos of a Torah approach and at the same time would make sure to avoid all the "foolishness/stupidity etc" of the steps.

But then a curious thing happened. I was going to a therapist to treat my ADHD (discovered only 6 months ago) and I told him about my addiction to forbidden images (not avodo zoro -- although more about that soon).

His reaction? You should do the 12 steps. They are a great fit for you.

I tried in vain to explain to him how he had totally got the wrong guy. That the 12 steps would not and could not work for me for so many reasons. That I had posted on this forum how they were nonsense (at that point I was getting quite desperate). He didn't buy it at all. He said he had someone like me once and he told him to try a group just once. He said that it had to be a good group, though. If I was unhappy with the makeup of the group I should make sure to try a good group just once. (For the record, the 12 steps people urge you to try at least 6 times but my therapist was and is a smart cookie and he knew that once would be enough and he knew that once would be very hard for me to refuse).

Now there are many good people on this forum. One of the best is, without a doubt, our Baal Achsanya and Big Boss Administrator Guard. He put up with me in the beginning, well, up to a point. And he was as convinced as I was that I would never, ever, even consider doing the 12 steps.

So what changed? Why have I now gone to the other extreme so that today I am putting 6 hours a week into attending step meetings ? (only 2 meetings, 4 hours travel time for them)

I could write pages and pages on this. Maybe I will one day. But the truth is that it is very very simple. As much as I need to (and even enjoy to) sweat the ideology, the shittos, the deios, the philosophy etc. and some of you may have noticed how much I really try and go the whole way with that... there is one thing that is much, much, much more important than all the sevoros and shittos in the world... the goal.

And I had a goal. Four weeks ago yesterday, with Hashem's help, I realized that I had crossed a personal red line. And right then and there, I said, Hashem, never again. For those who know anything about teshuva, that's called azivas hachet --- permanently and finally abandoning sin. It took me 36 years to get there, and it took me to get addicted as I was never before (in the month before I finally realized that I had gone overboard, I got addicted as I had never been at any time in 36 years of addiction) and then finally I was able beChasdei Hashem to see that there was only one meaningful goal, total and absolute azivas hachet and total and absolute teshuva.

Now that may seem quite extreme to some. But the reality is that every frum Yid who has struggled with sex addiction has to know that there is no way forward with sex addiction without teshuva.

Every frum Yid who has struggled with sex addiction needs to understand that, surprising as it may seem, **halacha lemaaseh the basic and fundamental minimum halachic requirement of teshuva is an absolute and total azivas hachet, a once and for all lifetime commitment to stop for ever.**

So, B"H after 36 years, finally I had the minimum goal that I needed for teshuva. And that goal was more important than any svoro, drosho, shitto or opinion that I could, would or did post or express here or anywhere.

So yes, I was totally convinced that the 12 steps were not for me. And, yes, I had gone out on a big limb taking on everyone here from Guard to Elya in trashing the 12 steps in the most public way imaginable. But, the goal of total azivas hachet was much bigger than all of that.

And if you have a goal as daunting as total azivas hachet it is easy to get very serious. And when you are very serious and you have a therapist who advises you to try a 12 step group once then no matter what you thought of the 12 steps, you instantly change your discussion from how the 12 steps are a disaster/scam etc. to, how can I make the 12 steps work for me?

Chasdei Hashem I discovered to my surprise that they can work for even the biggest arch-conservative (like me). But there is one pre-condition. You need to be honest about the absolute

life and death necessity to make a total azivas hachet and teshuva sheleimo.

Yes, people say, take it easy, you have to take it slow etc. etc. I am not going to talk for others right now. I will first just speak for myself. I tried 36 years of that and all it did was to get me more addicted than ever. Having been there and done that I can tell you that for me at least all it was, was excuses. 100% excuses. Excuses to lower my sights on the goal that I really needed to take and excuses to constantly slip and fall, slip and fall.

And then, four weeks ago Monday, I finally came to the realization. Habo letaher mesayin oso is not just an inspirational saying it is a MASSIVE MECHAYEV.

If you aim for total azivas hachet you will be surprised at how much you will be prepared to do, how far you will be prepared to go and how much siyyatta dishmaya you can get.

On the other hand, if you go for anything less the overwhelming odds are that you will spend your time wavering, slipping and falling.

Having been there for 36 years I can tell you that it's a horrible place to be.

So, yes, we are all different, and we each have our own set of circumstances. But did you ever consider the possibilities of a real azivas hachet? Did you ever consider what it would be like to rid yourself of your addiction once and for all? Maybe you too can give yourself the break you deserve and go for the Gold. Why not try doing it the right way? Why not try doing it whole way?

Take it from me it's so much easier, it's so much better.

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by Elya K - 18 Feb 2009 02:56

welcome home, Boruch.

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by the.guard - 18 Feb 2009 14:26

Boruch, this is such a beautiful post, I have to send it to Rabbi Twerski.

I'll let you know if he replies :-)

Wow.

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Re: boruch's WOH 12 steps journal
Posted by the.guard - 19 Feb 2009 07:38

Congrats Boruch on hitting Level 4 - one month! I updated your chart. KUTGW.

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