

"The First Day of the Rest of My Life"

Translated by www.guardureyes.com

Day 1

A book in Hebrew called "**The First Day of the Rest of My Life**" has recently come out in Israel. It was written by a religious Jew who suffered from a strong sexual addiction and who was able to break free with the help of the 12-Steps support groups. He wrote the book as a preventive measure, to try and help others break free from the vicious cycle of addiction. It is his hope that through his book, people suffering from this issue should not have to "hit the very bottom of the pit" as he did, before seeking and receiving help.

To order the Hebrew book (it has not yet been translated into English) [click here](#).

As a project of www.guardureyes.com, I present to you below excerpts from this book translated from Hebrew. I did this – with the author's permission of-course - because I believe that the book is a wonderful resource with lots of wisdom for people struggling with these issues. The lessons of the book apply to **anyone** working on this area, whether he has hit "rock bottom" or has only begun the decent into the cycle of addiction. However, in the translations below, we will focus mainly on the lessons that apply to those who have not yet "hit bottom", since most of the members of the GuardUrEyes.com community probably fit into that category.

I have divided the translations into a set of 24 days, to make the reading easier on the reader. Our suggestion is to read at least **one day's reading each day**.

The book is written in the form of a fictitious story about a Rosh Yeshiva who was living a "double life", on the one hand leading a Yeshiva, and on the other hand caught in a vicious cycle of sexual addiction that had begun years before in his youth. He had tried countless times to break free but could not, until it reached a point where he stood to lose everything; his job, his honor and his family. He finds out about the 12-Step groups, and slowly but surely begins to rebuild himself and become a new man.

As the Rosh Yeshiva is well on his way to recovery, experiencing a new joy and freedom in his life, the Mashgiach of the yeshiva brings to his attention a boy named "Yerachmiel" that was caught having a sexual encounter with a boy from another Yeshiva. The Mashgiach is ready to throw Yerachmiel out of the Yeshiva, but he is shocked when instead, the Rosh Yeshiva calls Yerachmiel in for a long talk.

And so begins a saga of dialog between Yerachmiel and the Rosh Yeshiva, in which Yerachmiel is transformed into a new person over the next year, through the Rosh Yeshiva's love and understanding, and the wisdom he had garnered from the lessons of his own bitter experience.

For now, let me just leave you with one short excerpt from the book:

*Every night, when my father would give me a kiss and tuck me in to sleep, he would say to me: "My son, Remember that tomorrow is **the first day of the rest of your life**".*

Day 2

In continuation of the story from yesterday, Yerachmiel was caught having a sexual encounter with another boy and was called to the Rosh Yeshiva's office. As the Rosh Yeshiva waits for Yerachmiel to arrive, he reflects back to his own personal journey, remembering how he had been once so similar to Yerachmiel.

How I understood him. I was just like him in my youth, a sharp student... from the best in the yeshiva. "Especially talented" they said of me, and their expectations for me reached the sky. Understandably, I didn't want to disappoint my Rabbeim and teachers, for whom I was an endless source of Nachas and pride.

As I struggled in my efforts to actualize everyone's expectations, I wasn't aware of the deep pit that was opening up inside me. It was a pit of loneliness that just got deeper as time went on. My subconscious dealt with this by creating a wall of sorts, deep inside my heart. At first, this wall was just between me and myself, but as time went on, it became a wall between me and the rest of the world. I closed up inside myself, and slowly began to withdraw from life and from the world around me.

And then on one clear day, a new friend entered my life: "Lust". The loneliness, which had been my lot in life for so long, suddenly disappeared like it never was. "Lust" made me feel more wanted and desired than ever before. I felt that I had finally found my true friend, a friend in times of need. Whenever things were hard or I felt down or lonely, "Lust" would appear to be there for me, as if to encourage me and give me a false sense of belonging and acceptance.

And so, as the years progressed, "Lust" accompanied me where ever I went. While everyone else had such high expectations of me and made demands accordingly, my dear friend "Lust" had no demands of me at all. All that "Lust" wanted was that I feel good and be comfortable, and forget the cruel world around me. In "Lust", I always found a listening ear, offering comfort and solace.

All was good and well, until one day I discovered that this dedicated "friend" was actually the very thing that was not letting me make progress in life and achieve my goals. I asked "Lust" to give me some space and let me be a little bit, but "Lust" was not willing to accept this under any circumstances. And suddenly he changed his appearance. From a good friend in times of need, "Lust" became an unrelenting and cruel oppressor that dwelled deep within me and used my weaknesses against me - weaknesses that he knew better than anyone, often better than myself.

Day 3

The Power of Accountability

In continuation of the story from the previous days, Yerachmiel was caught in Yeshiva having an illicit affair with a boy from a different Yeshiva, and was called to the Rosh Yeshiva's office for a talk. Instead of throwing him

out - as the Mashgiach had wanted to do, the Rosh Yeshiva is determined to try and help Yerachmiel, relying on his own bitter personal experience with the addiction. The Rosh Yeshiva begins by trying to engage Yerachmiel in small talk in an effort to get him to open up, but is met with little success. Instead, he tries a different approach and says:

"Yerachmiel, I want to tell you a story that happened in our Yeshiva a few years ago. We had a boy in the Yeshiva - let's call him Meir, who had a sharp mind and was one of the most talented Bochorim I ever taught. One day, a boy from the Yeshiva approached me and said that he had seen Meir hanging out in places that a Yeshiva Bochor should never be found.

When Meir was confronted, he denied it completely. I called Meir to my office and asked of him two things. One; that he should tell no one what I was about to tell him (that no one should say the Rosh Yeshiva allows hanging out in such places). And two; that if he ever felt a strong need to go to these forbidden places he should let me know before hand, and I assured him that if and when he asked, I would let him go. Meir nodded in agreement and left my office.

About two weeks later, Meir came over to me and asked to speak with me privately. Looking ashamed, he asked me for permission to go to that place, that in our first talk he had fervently denied even being there. I immediately praised him for showing the strength of character to stand by his word and tell me himself - before the deed. Understandably, I also stood by my word and gave him my approval; asking only that he come talk to me again when he came back.

And so he did. The next day right after davening, Meir appeared in my office and we made some small talk. And then I asked him, just out of curiosity, what was so interesting about that place he went. At first he tried to shy away, but after a few more moments of talk he finally opened up and told me that he had met a girl and that they meet there on occasion. I saw on his face that he was afraid he had taken too great a risk by telling me all this, but he was surprised when I asked him to tell me how they had met, and how long they were together.

As time went on, I gained Meir's full trust and he told me everything. I asked him to try not to meet with the girl during the times of learning, so that it shouldn't disturb his learning schedule. Together, we came to an understanding that he should only meet with her once every two weeks, and Meir agreed to this right away.

From then on, Meir would come to my office to talk on a frequent basis, and would speak with me about whatever was on his heart. My door was always open to him, and he always found a listening ear with me. With time, his need to meet with this girl became less compelling, until they finally separated.

Two months ago I got an invitation from Meir to his wedding. He is engaged to a special girl with good Midos and from a good home. I was very happy for him."

And so ended the Rosh Yeshiva his made-up story, hoping that the message to Yerachmiel had gotten across.

Today's Lesson

The Rosh Yeshiva was attempting to convey to Yerachmiel the "power of accountability" which can help a person break free no matter how low they may have fallen. If we can find someone (a good friend, Rabbi or even our wife) who we respect and who can be there for us with wisdom and understanding, we should take the opportunity to talk to them about our problem, and indeed continue to give them an update on our situation every week or so. This can ultimately prove to be an invaluable tool to help anyone break free.

Day 4

The Vicious Cycle

The Rosh Yeshiva continues the story...

I was happy when the very next day after Mincha, Yerachmiel appeared in my office for a private talk.

"I'm so happy you are here" I said to him. "Please tell me what's on your mind".

"I have a serious issue and I don't know what to do with myself", Yerachmiel began - looking down at the floor, and after a moment of silence he continued: "I can't focus on my learning. I am plagued by sexual fantasies the whole time and they give me no rest. The more I try and rid myself of these thoughts and focus on learning, the stronger they get. Even now during Mincha - in middle of Shmonah Esrei, indecent images were flooding my head. What can I do?"

"You should know Yerachmiel" I replied, "that I would like to get up and give you a hug. You know how much the fact that this bothers you tells me about you? It means you are already on a high level. To many Bochorim, this simply doesn't bother them".

Yerachmiel looked at me in surprise and said "But the Rav has no idea what terrible things I think about! And the Rav says I'm on a high level?!"

"Why do you classify these thoughts of yours as bad?" I asked him. "The thoughts you have are natural. That is how Hashem created human beings, and the fact that you have these thoughts only proves you are normal".

"What? Everyone thinks about girls?" Yerachmiel refused to believe.

"What do you think, Yerachmiel? Was I not once your age?" I asked him. "Do you think I did not have fantasies? Of course I did. Everyone has sexual fantasies. Some people more, some people less. But we are human, not angels. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created the world in such a way that men and women are attracted to one another, and because of this people get married, have children and populate the Earth. But not everyone is bothered by these thoughts as much as they bother you, and that is already impressive".

"How can the Rosh Yeshiva say this?" asked Yerachmiel. "The Rosh Yeshiva still doesn't know me and doesn't know what bad things I've done. Not just the story that

the Rosh Yeshiva knows about that happened in Yeshiva. I did many other things, even worse things, that I am embarrassed to even mention them".

"I want to tell you something, Yerachmiel", I said to him, "and it's important to me that you listen well". Yerachmiel strained to lift his gaze to me, ready for the worst. "What I don't accept about you is the fact that you keep getting down on yourself. Let me tell you what I think of you. I know you for a few years already and you are a sharp student with a good head, and one of the most talented boys in Yeshiva. Why don't you try and focus on the good things about you, instead of criticizing yourself the whole time? I want to ask you a question", I continued, "and I want you to answer me honestly".

"When, in general, do the fantasies come; when you are happy? After having a good Seder and saying a good Svara? Or at times you are feeling sad, down or lonely?"

"Usually when I am sad" answered Yerachmiel almost immediately.

"Good. So let's see what's going on. Basically, without meaning to, you are bringing these thoughts on yourself. Because as soon as you get down on yourself you become sad, and the sadness brings the fantasies, and this becomes a vicious cycle that is difficult to break away from. But the moment you start to look at yourself in a positive light, you will see that even if you have fantasies once in a while, they will come much less often".

Yerachmiel stood up and prepared to leave. I saw that he was trying to digest what he had just heard.

"You think I will let you leave here without a smile?" I said to him. The words had an immediate effect and a broad smile stretched across Yerachmiel's face. I stood up and gave him a hug and pat on the cheek, which was already blushed. Yerachmiel left the office with a good feeling.

Today's Lesson

"Getting down" on yourself after falls leads only to a vicious cycle of sadness, acting out, and more sadness. The first step to breaking free is to start to view yourself in a positive light and to keep an upbeat attitude no matter what.

Day 5

Battle Strategy (Part 1)

The Rosh Yeshiva continues the story...

"This is not the Yerachmiel I know", I thought to myself as I gave over the *Shiur Klali* in the Yeshiva hall. Yerachmiel, who usually doesn't let any *Svara* pass him by - asking and joining in with his sharp mind, looked burnt out and closed within himself, as if only his body was here but he was somewhere else. After the Shiur, I came over to him and asked him how he was doing.

"I'm fine", he replied unconvincingly, as if trying to brush me off. I knew that burnt look on his face only too well. After all, I myself had been in these situations countless times. And I didn't intend to let it happen to him as well, I determined in my heart.

"Come with me to my office", I instructed him. Yerachmiel escorted me down the hall, clearly unwillingly.

After a few moments of total silence, I decided to risk a calculated gamble. I asked him if he was angry at himself because of something he did and now regrets. His body language told me I was correct. Before I could get another word out of my mouth, Yerachmiel burst out crying as he murmured "I can't do this any more! The Rav has no idea how much I tried to stand up to the test and not fall. I thought I would succeed, but in the end the temptation is always stronger than me. Why am I such a bad person? Why is my willpower so weak? Why can't I ever succeed to overcome my urges, and instead only continue to sink more and more? The Rav is wasting his precious time with me - I am not worth it. The Mashgiach was right when he wanted to throw me out of the Yeshiva. I can't learn Torah or even put on Tefillin after the things I do. I just want to leave everything - even Judaism!" he blurted out tearfully.

I gave him a few moments to calm down and then I asked: "Tell me Yerachmiel, my dear student, when an army goes out to battle, do they always win? Are there never casualties? People injured? Why do you start with the assumption that you must always win? Who says it needs to be **"all or nothing"**?"

You surely remember what we learned: "There is no Tzadik on earth that does only good and never sins" (Koheles 7:20). Do you think you need to be more righteous than Avraham Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu, that the Torah tells us that they too sinned?

The notion that you must always succeed actually turns you into easy prey for your Yetzer Hara. Did you ever think about it? Your evil inclination knows you a lot better than you know yourself. He knows your constant yearning for perfection and the high level of self-criticism you subject yourself to. Don't you see how he is using your good qualities against you?

It is precisely these important qualities that are meant to allow you to grow and flourish, that are causing you to get down on yourself and enter into depression and hopelessness - to the point that you are talking about leaving everything, even Torah and Mitzvos. And why so extreme? Just because your Yetzer won you over a few times?

My dear Yerachmiel, maybe instead of focusing on those times you lost the battle with the Yetzer, we should start focusing on all the many times that you completely overpowered **him**? After all, you yourself told me just a few moments ago, that there were times that you won him over. Is this a small thing in your eyes, that you the small, were able to win over your crafty and cunning inclination, that dwells deep inside you and knows you inside out? If you would count, one by one, all the times that you won the Yetzer, and you would line them up against the times you lost, I am sure without the shadow of a doubt that you would immediately see **you have the upper hand!**

Today's Lesson

It's not "all or nothing". Winning a war is a process that is the sum total of many smaller battles; some lost but most won.

Day 6

Battle Strategy (Part 2)

The Rosh Yeshiva continues the story...

For a moment Yerachmiel lifted his gaze which was still cast to the ground, as if to signal me to go on.

"A complete victory" I continued, "is the sum of many small victories, and sometimes losses too. Let me bring you a parable from the battle field:

Many years ago there were two kingdoms that lived side by side. One was a very poor kingdom with a large population of people who struggled to get through each day. The second kingdom had much fewer subjects but was very rich, and the people there lived a high life style and knew no want. For many years the two kingdoms lived together in harmony, in spite of their vast differences.

One day, the king of the rich country died and his son rose to the throne. He was very unlike his wise and thoughtful father, and instead was aggressive, hasty and unrestrained.

One bright day he decided without any reason, that he would like to conquer the neighboring kingdom. He wished to show off his great strength, without thinking for a moment about the destructive consequences that his actions were likely to cause. His advisors tried to talk him out of it, but to no avail. In a well planned surprise strike, the young king managed to invade the territory of the neighboring kingdom with his large army.

At first, the people of the poor kingdom tried to show resistance. They fought valiantly with great sacrifice to protect their homeland. But when they saw that the enemy had already succeeded in conquering significant areas of their territory on the very first day, their spirit was broken and in a short period of time they surrendered.

The people of the poor kingdom thought that perhaps the new king would share his riches with them, but they were quickly disappointed. Over time, he pillaged even the little that they had, until the entire population were left starving and broken in body and spirit.

When the populace understood that they were destined to die of starvation and had nothing more to lose, they decided - especially those who lived on the border with the rich kingdom - to try a stealth incursion into the enemy kingdom to search for food. Under cover of night, they cut through the fences and tried to slip inside. But those who were fortunate enough to be saved from the guard dog's vicious teeth were quickly shot at by the many soldiers who manned the border. The few that managed to survive were caught by citizens and given over to the authorities who

threw them in prison. And so, the people of the poor kingdom knew that their fate was sealed. They sunk into despair and self pity, and awaited their deaths.

Suddenly one of the older advisors of the king got up and said: "My dear people, instead of sitting and just waiting for our deaths, let's do something. We already saw that individuals who try to steal across the border doesn't work. Our only chance of success is if we unite and work together with wisdom and judgment. It's no secret that we outnumber the enemy by far. Let us use this to our advantage. We can choose an area on the border that is the least guarded and invade there with our thousands of men, women and children - men first, and the women and children behind us. It needs to be an area that is the right size for us to be able to insure that we can keep complete control over it for the long term. And then, with the help of the riches that we'll find there, we'll be able to firmly establish our hold on that territory and get stronger. Then when we feel secure enough, we'll go out and conquer another area for ourselves, and establish our hold there too. And so on and so forth, until the entire neighboring kingdom will fall into our hands like a ripe fruit.

"So the citizens followed his wise advice, and what do you think happened in the end, do you think they succeeded?" I asked Yerachmiel.

"I'm sure they did" answered Yerachmiel. "They acted with wisdom. They didn't try and conquer the entire country at once, because that would have failed miserably. But I really don't see how this is related to..."

"Good" I replied. "That is exactly what I was aiming for. The two neighboring kingdoms are our Yetzer Hara and our Yetzer Tov..."

Day 7

Battle Strategy (Part 3)

The Rosh Yeshiva expounds on the parable (from yesterday) for Yerachmiel:

The "two neighboring kingdoms" are our Yetzer Hara and our Yetzer Tov. One bright day, the Yetzer Hara decided to try and conquer you with a surprise attack of sexual arousals and fantasies - precisely at a time when you least expected it, as you were involved in learning in Yeshiva and were full of desire to get stronger and become uplifted in Torah and Middos.

When the Yetzer succeeded to make you stumble, instead of recovering right away and returning a valiant fight, you started blaming yourself that you let him win, and you sunk into self-pity and hopelessness. And this is exactly what let the Yetzer Hara continue to overpower you, until you finally surrendered to him unconditionally. This is just like those individuals in the parable who attempted an incursion into the enemy's territory that was bound to fail from the start.

But now you can start to act with wisdom, and instead of trying to conquer the entire territory right away - after all, you yourself understood that that won't work - try and conquer for yourself a small territory, but one that you will be sure you can maintain defense over it well. And then, slowly but surely you will make progress, until you

will succeed to conquer everything back. Does this sound doable and reasonable to you?

"Y-yes" answered Yerachmiel, hesitantly. "But how do I do this?"

"The key is in your hands" I answered. "Tell me, from all the many temptations that you are tested with, which temptation would be relatively the easiest for you to overcome? I ask this even though I understand that even the smallest temptation, when it is facing you, is difficult to bear".

Yerachmiel, who wasn't ready for this question, thought for a few moments and then answered: "I think the easiest for me to overcome would be to undertake not to be with other boys".

Are you ready to take this upon yourself, that no matter what - and no matter how you feel, from now on you will not transgress the serious prohibition of homosexual relations? Are you able to undertake that on this one thing the Yetzer Hara will not overpower you?"

"Yes, Rebbe" answered Yerachmiel determinedly, "I am ready to take this upon myself fully".

"Wonderful" I answered, "you have just taken a big step. You have succeeded in conquering a small territory that your Yetzer will not be able to enter.

Now as you surely know, in a war - like in all wars, after conquering a territory one must barricade it well to assure that the enemy can't penetrate. Only after the territory is well fortified will it be possible to continue on from there and conquer additional territory.

Do you understand what you have actually done now? You have changed your strategy. Instead of conquering the entire territory, which everyone understands is impossible at this stage - and would only cause you to sink into depression and hopelessness, you have decided with wisdom, to conquer a relatively small area that you know almost certainly that you will be able to maintain vigilant guard over. And after you have succeeded in this mission - and you **will** succeed G-d willing, your self esteem will become strengthened, and you will see that this enemy is not undefeatable after all. And through conquering this one area, you will be able to make additional territorial gains.

"So we're clear Yerachmiel?" And I repeated again for emphasis: "for the time being you will focus only on guarding and fortifying this new territory you have conquered, without thinking about other territories at all. And this alone will be a big win for you."

Yerachmiel's countenance reflected that a big burden had been lifted from his shoulders. We set a regular time to meet in my office - once every two weeks. Yerachmiel's hand was already on the door when I said to him: "You should already know by now that I won't let you leave without your wonderful smile!". Yerachmiel smiled sheepishly, left the room and closed the door behind him.

Day 8

Finding Replacements

In the next phase of the story (in the book "The First Day of the Rest of My Life"), the Rosh Yeshiva gives over to Yerachmiel the job of being in charge of the *Otzar ha'Seforim* (the library of the Sefarim) for the coming year. This wise step achieves many important objectives in helping Yerachmiel break free of his addiction and enables him to make a steady progress over the course of the Z'man (semester).

Self-Esteem Boost:

Being in charge of the *Otzar ha'Seforim* and the responsibility that this entails, serves to boost Yerachmiel's self esteem, which in turn enhances his positive self image and helps him break the vicious cycle of feeling down, acting out, feeling even worse and acting out again.

Staying Busy:

Yerachmiel's occupation with the new job serves the purpose of keeping him occupied and interested in what he is doing. This leaves less room in his mind and less time available for unhealthy pursuits.

Healthy Fulfillment:

In doing something he enjoys, Yerachmiel is left feeling accomplished and fulfilled. This takes away the subconscious need to seek artificial sources of fulfillment, and it helps remove the desire to "medicate" his feelings of inadequacy through self-destructive pleasure seeking.

Reconnecting with Life:

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, the new job gives Yerachmiel an opportunity to to open up and reconnect with life and the people around him.

It is a known fact that a person who is a "loner" (i.e. he spends most of his time alone and/or is closed up within himself), has a much harder time to break free from these addictions. One of the most powerful techniques for someone who is trying hard to break free, is to make sure that he constantly mingles with people, reconnects with society and remains an active member of the "club". Examples could include taking part in Shul or communal activities and spending more time with your family.

Today's Lesson

It is very helpful when trying to stop these destructive behaviors, to find healthy activities that we enjoy and that can keep us occupied and give us a sense of fulfillment and purpose. This helps fill the subconscious "void" that we were trying to satisfy with unhealthy pleasure seeking.

Find some new project/s that will enable you to express your creativity, find enjoyment and reconnect with life and the world around you. Some ideas can be found in our Kosher Isle (especially in Kosher Activities section).

Day 9

Balancing Strategies

A big smile spread across Yerachmiel's face as he entered my office. It wasn't hard to notice the positive change in his mood over the last period of time. "I must say", I told him, "that since you took the job of the *Otzar Ha'sefarim*, there's almost no sefer that I look for that isn't in its proper place. You know how many *zechusim* (merits) you have because of this? I remember in earlier years that it sometimes took me a half an hour to find a particular sefer. How much *Bitul Torah* this caused! So first of all, a big Yasher Koach to you!"

"And now tell me: what's happening with the territory you conquered a month ago? Did you succeed in fortifying it well yet?"

"I have almost forgotten about that", said Yerachmiel with a smile. "Dealing with the *Otzar Ha'sefarim* doesn't leave me much time for thought".

"Good", I said. "It's not necessary to think too much. The simple fact that you stood by what you accepted upon yourself and didn't stumble, shows that you have manually fortified the territory you conquered. And how do you feel about your continued progress?" I asked.

"Wonderful", answered Yerachmiel. "I must admit that in the past few weeks I am feeling really good about myself, and exactly like the Rosh Yeshiva said, it really did become a lot easier and I can't even explain why."

"I am happy to hear that. So which territory are we going to conquer this week?" I asked.

"The truth is, said Yerachmiel, that from a practical standpoint, there is already not much more I can accept upon myself B"H. I already don't surf the internet, I don't meet up with girls, and I don't look at p-rn anymore. The only thing that's really left - and it's the hardest thing for me - is masturbation. In this area, I am not sure I can succeed to overcome it. I am very afraid to take something on myself that maybe I'll stumble in; because if I stumble, it can cause me to get down - *chas veshalom* - and return to square one. This could even jeopardize all my recent progress. What does the Rosh Yeshiva think I should do?"

"Before I address your question - which is excellent in its own right", I said to Yerachmiel, "I must tell you how impressed I am with your remarkable progress on the practical front. Not only have you succeeded to overcome so many temptations that in the past you never believed you could - which is already a great achievement on its own - but I also see that you listen carefully to your heart and understand your own weaknesses, and this is more important than anything else in this struggle.

"Now let's return to your question. Your fear that maybe you'll disappoint yourself is indeed in place, but nothing would happen if you would fall and get back up. This is 'part and parcel' of any progress. Moving forward and falling backward are both essential ingredients to learning how to deal with the Yetzer Hara. Like we already discussed once: 'Seven times the Tzadik falls and gets up again' (Koheles 7:20). But

still, you are correct that this doesn't tie in with the previous strategy that we were employing until now, which was conquering small territories and fortifying them well, before moving on. Conquering terrain that we are not sure we can hold onto, does indeed pose a certain risk.

So let's look for a way to balance between these seemingly contradictory approaches: conquering one territory at a time and fortifying it before moving on - on the one hand, and on the other hand - making progress in spite of the fear of failure. So let's think: How can we still tread solid ground? I suggest that instead of you trying to give up masturbation altogether right now - something which at this stage (and I emphasize "at this stage") you feel is too hard for you, let's see if we can try to progressively minimize the amount of times you do it. For example: if you did it until now twice a week, accept upon yourself at this stage to do it only once a week; and so on and so forth. Only you can know the exact amount of cutting back that you can handle at this stage.

Know Yerachmiel, that Chaza"I say something very interesting about this desire. The more one feeds it - the hungrier it gets, and the less one feeds it - the more satiated it feels. So as you begin to cut back and see that it becomes a lot easier, you can try moving forward and cutting back even more - until you feel you can stop completely. Do you think you would be able to hold up to this plan?" I asked Yerachmiel.

"Yes, Be'ezrat Hashem", he answered. "This will let me make progress and work on myself even in this area - which I don't think I'd manage to stop completely at this stage, and at the same time I won't feel that I am getting myself into danger".

"Wonderful! You see, Yerachmiel my dear student? When we search well, we can find a solution for anything, as Chaza"I say: 'If you struggled and found - believe'. I am happy that I was able to help you find a straight path to take in this struggle".

Today's Lesson

It is vital to balance between varying strategies in this struggle. Certain aspects of this addiction can be removed completely from our lives through the strategy of conquering, fortifying and moving on. But in some areas, we need to make balanced and careful progress before we can be ready for ultimate victory.

Day 10

The Phone Call

Almost a year into the Rosh Yeshiva's own recovery, he finds himself once again on the verge of a big fall. Lust has overtaken him suddenly, and he feels powerless against it. And just as he begins the process of falling to the depths once again, his cell phone rings...

At first, I chose to ignore it. In such situations I have no strength for anything, I don't want to speak to anyone; I cut myself off from the world. But for some totally unexplained reason, I picked up the phone and glanced at the number to see who dared disturb me in this critical moment. It took me a few seconds to register that it was actually him.

"Ribonno Shel Olam, why is this happening to me? From all people in the world - it has to be Yerachmiel? What does he want from me? He never calls me on his own, even though I did tell him again and again that he can call me any time he wants. But now?!" For a moment I thought that I wouldn't answer it and would get back to him later - after I finished taking care of myself, but something inside me decided otherwise. I pressed "Receive".

"Yes?" I said - without making it obvious that I knew who was calling.

"I'm so sorry to bother the Rosh Yeshiva", Yerachmiel began. Tears choked up his voice. "I simply don't have where to turn. I feel so powerless. Lust attacked me out of nowhere, without any prior warning, and the temptations I feel now are so strong that I can't overcome them. Why, precisely now when I'm in such a good place and feel so much better about myself, suddenly everything is turned around? I so much don't want to fall again because I'll know how I'll feel afterwards, but the temptations are stronger than me, I can't overpower them! Believe me Rebbe, I tried everything. I even reviewed in my head all the talks that we had in the past, but nothing helps. The Rav has no idea how hard it was for me to call".

He was silent. I could hear his deep breathing. "How, in Heaven's name", I said to myself, "am I to help Yerachmiel to do something that I myself cannot do? Yerachmiel is a thousand times stronger than me. How transparent am I being if I even try to help him! Chaza" I meant exactly my situation when they said 'Fix yourself before you fix others' (Baba Metzia 107b) and 'preach well and practice well' (Chagiga 14b). I'd better hang up and explain later that my battery died".

But something inside me called out: "Come to your senses! Take yourself into your hands! This is not the time for self-pity. Yerachmiel needs you now more than ever. You must get a grip on yourself and be there for him, because you are the only person in the world that can truly understand him". I closed my eyes and tried to distance myself from my situation and think about what Yerachmiel was going through at that moment.

"Yerachmiel dear", I began, "I know how hard it was for you to call me, and I am so glad you called! Regardless of what will happen, whether you fall or not in the end, the simple fact that you called proves to me once again that my good impression of you is 100% correct. You are a super-hero! After all, we spoke about how even if sometimes we fall, we win many more times, and what you did right now is a perfect example of that. Just by calling me, you have already won the Yetzer Hara. What did you think - that precisely when you are doing so well and are feeling happy and fulfilled, the devious and cunning Yetzer who knows you so well - will just stand on the side and surrender without a battle? Of course not! He knows your tremendous longing for perfection, and he understands that precisely now, a fall would cause you to get down on yourself and enter into a whirlpool of self-pity, from which the path to hopelessness and closing up is short indeed."

All of a sudden, the reality of what I had been in the midst of doing struck me. "Yerachmiel", I said quietly, "would it be Ok if I called you back in a few moments?"

"Sure" he replied.

I quickly hung up and realized something incredible. The Lust, which only a few moments ago had burned in me with all its strength, had disappeared as if it had

never been. "What is a man like me doing here?" I asked myself. I stopped what I had been doing, gathered myself together and left the room.

This is the first time in my life that I left a situation like that without feeling deep regret and self-pity. This time I left with my head held high. I had been on the very edge of the abyss - and yet I was extricated. My heart filled with a deep sense of fulfillment.

I took back out my phone and called Yerachmiel back. *To be continued...*

Today's Lesson

The power of having a sponsor in this struggle cannot be underestimated. And often the partnership helps the sponsor just as much, if not more, than it helps the newcomer. (To try and find a partner/sponsor, download [this questionnaire](#) and e-mail it to us at eyes.guard@gmail.com).

Day 11

The Phone Call (Part 2)

I took back out my phone and called Yerachmiel back...

"Hello Rebbe", answered Yerachmiel. I could sense in his voice that he had waited for this phone call with baited breath.

"I'm sorry I couldn't talk earlier", I apologized, "but now I am totally with you".

"The Rosh Yeshiva won't believe me", said Yerachmiel, "Rebbe must have special powers, because something incredible happened: as soon as we ended our conversation I started to feel a lot better about myself and the lust became much weaker. I don't have any rational explanation for this. It truly seems that just making the phone call did the trick. Now I feel a lot stronger, and I think that this time I'll be able to overcome it and not fall. For the first time in my life I was able to really fight back and prove to myself that I could do it."

"Do you see what happened here?", I asked. "The Yetzer Hara wanted to cause you to fall, and that would have caused you to close up and cut yourself off from reality. But you chose to do exactly the opposite. You called me, and the simple fact that you called, renewed your connection with life. And **that is** what took all the air out of the bubble of lust. *Kol Hakavod* to you, my dear Yerachmiel!

All Hashem really wants from us is to try. When we are facing a test that looks stronger than us and we feel we won't be able to overcome it, all we need to do is simply lift our eyes to shamayim (heaven) and ask "Father! Help me!" and immediately we will find new powers within ourselves that we didn't know existed before. Like Chaza"Isay: "Open for me a door the size of a needle head, and I will open for you doors that wagons and oxen can pass through" (*Shir hashirim Rabba 5:3*). Let's meet this afternoon in Yeshiva and drink Lechayim in honor of today's victory".

Yerachmiel obviously didn't know that I had my own personal victory in mind as well. "I'd love to", he answered, and as I hung up I thought of the words of Chaza"l:

"Even if a sharp sword is on the edge of your neck, don't hold yourself back from divine mercy" (*Brachos 10a*). How hidden are the ways of Hashem! How Hashem wondrously worked things out so that two people standing powerless against an attack of lust, ended up helping each other to overpower the lust and win!

The Lessons of Chapter "The Phone Call"

Hashem just asks of us to do what we can, whether it means heartfelt tefillah in a time of a test or getting an accountability partner who we can talk to when feeling weak. The addiction wants us to disconnect from life, but a partner in this struggle helps us reconnect with life and the world around us - and thereby prevents the falls.

When we do our Hishtadlus, we are wont to discover new powers inside ourselves that we never thought we possessed. Also very often, the very act of Hishtadlus causes the bubble of lust to pop, and it becomes much easier to deal with.

Day 12

Understanding Lust (Part 1)

In continuation of our story, Yerachmiel meets with the Rosh Yeshiva in his office that afternoon, to drink Lechayim and celebrate the victory they experienced that day over Lust.

The sense of victory and fulfillment were evident on Yerachmiel's face, but I noticed that in spite of this, something seemed to be bothering him. "Yerachmiel", I said to him, "I know you already well enough to sense your feelings, and the look in your eyes tells me that in spite of today's impressive victory there's something that still bothers you. Do you want to share it with me?"

He smiled sheepishly and said: "I can't hide anything from the Rosh yeshiva. It's true, there's something that I think about often, especially lately, and it bothers me a lot - but I have no idea why."

"That's why I'm here, Yerachmiel", I answered, "even though you are so busy with the *Otzar Ha'sefarim* lately, that soon I'll need to make an appointment with you before we can meet", I joked.

"I know and I feel that I've made great progress since our first talk, and today I'm in a different place altogether than where I was then", said Yerachmiel. "In one of our first talks, I asked the Rosh yeshiva if other Bochorim also have thoughts like these, and the Rosh Yeshiva told me that almost all Bochorim have fantasies about girls, and that it's natural. But what is difficult for me to understand and accept is, why is it so hard for me to **cope** with Lust, while I'm sure without any doubt that most of the other Bochorim in Yeshiva, even if they do have fantasies from time to time, don't have these powerful struggles like I do with Lust. Why does this happen particularly to me?"

"The question you asked now, touches on the very heart of understanding what Lust is and how it works", I told him, "and the fact that this bothers you specifically now,

is yet another proof of your impressive progress. It shows you are mature enough to seek a deeper understanding of yourself - which wasn't possible when the lust used to burn inside you and require immediate gratification.

"And so, what indeed is Lust, and how exactly does it work? I don't know if you paid attention, but you were very specific in the way you expressed your question. You didn't ask me why you are tested sexually more than others, but rather why it is so difficult for you to **cope** with Lust.

"Let's think for a moment; what is the difference between a sexual drive and Lust. Let's start with the sexual drive, which is easier to understand. This drive is a strong need to engage in sexual relations of any form. It's a physical and existential need of man, by virtue of the fact that he is human. It's similar to many other physical needs like eating and sleeping, which a man, both as an individual and as part of mankind as a whole, could not exist without. This is apparently simple, and self-understood.

"But if this drive was only a physical-existential need to engage in sexual relations, all people should have the same sexual drive more or less. And the same goes for eating; if eating was only a physical need to keep us alive, all people should have more or less the same appetite for food. But it's not that way. The reality is, that the tests and drives of one person are not the same as the tests and drives of another. Why is this? Why is food an insatiable temptation for some people, while for others, a minimal amount of simple food is enough to satisfy them? And why do you for example, have much stronger tests in sexual areas than others have?

"Maybe", Yerachmiel ventured, "food and sex are really just physical and existential needs, but some people simply have bigger appetites naturally, while others are happy with little?"

"If this were true", I replied, "we would see that the same people that had strong sexual drives would also be particularly predisposed to eating lots of good food, and people who had less cravings for food would also have weaker sexual drives. But the reality shows that this is not so. There are some people with strong cravings for food, and others that have stronger sexual drives.

"What we can learn from this, is that each particular drive - whether it's for sex, food, or anything else - must have an additional component that needs to be taken into account. Besides the simple physical nature of lusting for sex or food, there is an additional layer, which is deeper and more connected to the subconscious. Heightened sexual desire or uncontrollable cravings for food, are actually symptoms of a deep subconscious need, that for some reason, has still not reached fulfillment. This lack of contentment creates a kind of void inside us, something like a subconscious vacuum, which Lust immediately fills. This is then actualized in our conscious mind, through a powerful sexual drive that feels out of control.

"What we can learn from this in a practical sense, is that if we seek to understand the deep subconscious void that exists inside us and we learn to channel these powerful inner strengths in a positive and constructive manner, then automatically the lust - along with the sexual drive, will be significantly lessened".

"So the Rosh Yeshiva is saying that, as opposed to other Bochorim in Yeshiva, there exists a subconscious void inside me that hasn't been filled for some reason or another, and because of this, I suffer from stronger sexual drives than everyone

else, did I understand correctly?" asked Yerachmiel.

"You are getting close", I answered, "but it's even deeper than that"...

To be continued...

Day 13

Understanding Lust (Part 2)

In continuation of our story, Yerachmiel in the midst of a discussion with the Rosh Yeshiva, trying to understand why he has trouble coping with lust more than other boys do. The Rosh yeshiva continues...

"You surely know what our sages have said, Yerachmiel: 'Whoever is greater than his friend, his Yetzer is greater as well' (Sukka 52a). If you think about it though, common sense dictates that the opposite should be the case. After all, one who is greater than his friend ought to have an easier time dealing with his desires. But Chaza"l say that the exact opposite is true. So with your permission, Yerachmiel, in order to understand Chaza"l's words better, I would like to take you as an example".

"Me?" Yerachmiel's eyes widened in surprise.

"Yes", I continued, my dear Yerachmiel, inside you lies a great and lofty soul that is destined to brighten the world with a light that is unique only to you. All that this soul desires is to surge forth through you, outwards into the world. For some reason though, it is blocked and can't succeed in being expressed yet properly. But because of its great strength, your soul can't stay corked up inside you for even a short amount of time; it must burst forth, and it looks for an alternative way to find expression. In you, it finds expression in the uncontrollable sexual drive that you experience. In other words; the strong sexual drive that you feel, is a physical expression of the power of your soul's character that is locked up inside you".

"I wish!", said Yerachmiel with a bitter smile. "Judging by the sexual urges I feel, I must have unlimited inner strengths".

"Yes, Yerachmiel, that's exactly what I mean", I said. "Now we can also understand better the words of Chaza"l: 'Whoever is greater than his friend, his Yetzer is greater as well'. The greater a person is, the more his soul's strengths require expression. And if the strengths of his character do not succeed - for what ever reason - to find expression in a constructive and positive way, they are forced to erupt forth in an negative way.

Yerachmiel was quiet for a moment and then spoke, weighing each word: "So in actuality, what Chaza"l are saying is that the Yetzer Tov and the Yetzer Hara are really the same inner force, and when we say the Yetzer Tov won - we really mean that our character's strengths succeeded in expressing themselves in a constructive and positive way. And when we say that the Yetzer Hara won, we mean that our inner strengths didn't find a positive way of expression, and that is why they chose a negative way out".

"Wonderful, Yerachmiel", I said, impressed. "I couldn't have expressed it better myself".

Day 14

Understanding Lust (Part 3)

In continuation of our story, Yerachmiel in the midst of a discussion with the Rosh Yeshiva, trying to understand why he has trouble coping with lust more than other boys do. The Rosh yeshiva continues...

"Another example comes to mind: 'water'. There are many similarities between our natural strengths and water. Like water, our inner strengths can't stand still for even a moment. When there's a blocked pipe, water will immediately seek a crack or a weak place to burst forth to the outside. And the stronger the water pressure is, the stronger the water will gush forth - exactly like when our individual strengths feel blocked - they burst outwards through Lust.

"Now you can also understand why lust attacks you mainly when you are sad or depressed. When you feel closed up inside yourself, your inner strengths feel blocked and the only way they can burst out is through an uncontrollable sexual drive. But this is not the case when you are feeling happy and connected to the world around you, because then, your many good inner strengths and qualities find expression in a positive way and they don't need to find alternative outlets".

"That is so true", smiled Yerachmiel. "From when I started to manage the *Otzer Hasefarim* and became more involved in the goings-on in Yeshiva, the drive became significantly weaker."

"Today", he added, his face full of expression, "my eyes have been opened to understand the battles going on inside me in a totally different light than I used to view them. This helps me accept my difficulties in dealing with lust on a daily basis and understand it better. But I still didn't receive a complete answer from the Rav to my original question: Why do I, particularly, have such a difficult time coping with my sexual drives, while I see that other bochurim don't have it so hard? Why do my inner strengths find expression by experiencing an endless sexual drive, while others struggle with totally different tests, like cravings for food, money or anything else?"

My heart overflowed with love for this young Bochor. I put my hand on his shoulder and said to him with a bright countenance: "That's a wonderful point you bring up, Yerachmiel. I thought I wouldn't have to get into that and I hoped you would be satisfied with what we said until now; but I keep discovering anew what a deep thinker you are. No idea can pass you by until you understand it till the end!"

"The truth is, there **is** another factor that we haven't spoken about yet and it needs to be brought into the equation as well, at that is - each person's particular character traits. As you surely know, every person has a unique nature and character. For example, there are those who get angry easily and others that almost never get angry. There are dominant people and others who just 'go with the flow'. Some people are very outgoing, while others are more introverted, and so on and so forth. Our inner strengths find expression - whether positive or negative - through our

character traits".

"Perhaps this is most noticeable when choosing a job. One person chooses to be a doctor, another a lawyer - and so on. This doesn't mean that one person has more strengths than another, only that his nature is more suited to the specific job he chooses. Outgoing people will want to be more involved with society and will choose a job that reflects that, while more introverted people will choose a job that requires less human interaction. The character traits that are common to people with strong sexual drives are, like you have; for example, high creativity, endless love for people, spiritual sensitivity, and so on".

"So I hope it is clearer now why your particular character strengths find expression through a strong sexual drive. And by the way, sexual lust doesn't express itself the same way with everyone. One person's sexual preferences may be completely different than another's. It's actually sometimes possible to size up a person's personality and psychological makeup based on his sexual preferences".

"Now I feel that I finally got a complete answer to my question", said Yerachmiel, "and it's also clear that if I can channel my inner strengths in a positive and constructive way, the powerful sexual drive that I suffer from so much will become noticeably weaker. But again I have a question. How do I do this in a practical way?"

Day 15

Understanding Lust (Part 4)

In continuation of our story, Yerachmiel in the midst of a discussion with the Rosh Yeshiva trying to understand why he has trouble coping with lust more than other boys do. Yerachmeil asks...

"So how can I put this into practice? How do I assure that my inner strengths find expression in a positive and constructive way?"

"A wonderful question, as usual. And like always, I would like to bring a parable to try and answer the question: A sick man arrives at the emergency room in a life-threatening state with symptoms of chest pain and shortness of breath and his situation is deteriorating by the minute. The best doctors gather around him immediately, and decide he is suffering a heart attack. They perform a catheterization, and on the heels of that procedure they roll him in for emergency bypass surgery. The surgery is a success, and after a period of recovery the patient is ready to be released from the hospital - but not before he gets detailed guidance from his doctors on anything that could be dangerous to his condition, as well as instructions on how to ensure healthy blood pressure, which medicines to take every day, and how to lead a healthy life style from now on - including prevention of stress, a regimen of exercise and a fat-free diet.

"Why do you think it was so important for the doctors to give the patient such detailed guidance on how to live? After all, they already dealt with the disease and he's being released already from the hospital?"

"Well, obviously", said Yerachmiel, surprised even by the question, "they want to

make sure it doesn't happen again".

"Right", I replied. "In other words, you're basically claiming that had he been more careful to lead a healthier life style in the first place, and he would have found ways to release and prevent the build up of pressure inside his body, his disease could have very well been prevented in the first place. Correct?"

"For sure", answered Yerachmiel, "everyone knows that a stressful and unhealthy lifestyle are from the top causes of heart disease."

"Exactly", I agreed. "This means that a heart attack is not **the reason** for his disease, but rather a painful **end result** to having lived a misguided life style over time!"

"For sure", he replied.

"Now", I continued, "let's see how this parable can help us understand better the phenomenon of Lust. Uncontrollable sexual drive is similar to a heart attack. In this case too, if we don't stabilize the condition of the patient, he won't survive even in the short term. And even once his condition is stabilized, he needs a quick and comprehensive treatment, otherwise he won't be able to survive in the long term either. But then, when he finally begins to feel a lot better - to the point that he might even mistakenly think that he has been completely healed and has put it all behind him - precisely then, he must learn that he needs to change his life style completely around, and that he can never rest on his laurels.

"Back when we first started our talks, you were in a situation where the most critical thing was to stabilize your condition, because without that it would have been impossible to make any progress. Now that you are starting to feel a lot better with yourself, this is the time to deepen your self-awareness and start recognizing the many unique inner strengths that you possess. With proper guidance and much prayer and help from above, you will be able to channel the strengths you have in a positive and constructive manner, and return once again to a path of fulfillment and inner peace. For example, like you said yourself how managing the *Otzar Hasefarim* helps you a lot in coping with the lust".

The Lessons of the Past Few Days **"Understanding Lust" Parts 1-4**

Part 1: Heightened sexual desire is actually a symptom of a deep subconscious need, that for some reason has still not reached fulfillment.

Part 2: The Yetzer Tov and Yetzer Hara are really the same inner force. The greater a person is, the more his soul's strengths require expression, and they will find expression in either a positive or a negative way.

Part 3: People with particular character traits, such as creativity, love for people and spiritual sensitivity, are more prone to seeking alternate expression for their inner strengths through a strong sexual drive (if these strengths are not channeled in the proper way).

Part 4: When dealing with addiction, it is vital to first stabilize the situation. Only afterwards, is it possible to deepen one's self-awareness and begin to recognize the unique inner strengths that he possesses. Once he understands better his inner qualities and strengths, he can learn to channel them in a positive and constructive manner through proper guidance, prayer and help from above.

Day 16

The Daughter of the King (Part 1)

A year goes by in our story... Late one night, the Rosh Yeshiva gets a phone call and receives great news. Yerachmiel is engaged to a special girl from a wonderful family!

The Rosh Yeshiva continues telling the story...

I hung up the phone. My heart rejoiced over the fantastic news that I just heard. The tremendous change that had overcome Yerachmiel in the past year was noticeable from afar. The color had returned to his cheeks; zest and happiness - that for a long period of time had eluded him - had come back to him in full strength. His job as the manager of the *Otzar Hasefarim* did much good for him, it helped return his self-esteem and gave him fulfillment. He was in over his head, in both learning and public service.

I felt like my own son had gotten engaged. I was so excited that I didn't sleep a wink all night; I couldn't stop thinking of the long journey that Yerachmiel had taken together with me over the past year. Who would believe that I would merit to see him building a wonderful home in Klal Yisrael in holiness and sanctity! There is no greater happiness than that.

The next morning right after davening, Yerachmiel came over to me, his face beaming. I hugged him warmly and wished him Mazal Tov properly.

"I have an unusual request from the Rosh yeshiva", said Yerachmiel.

"What can I do for you, my dear Talmid?" I asked, my curiosity peaked.

"The Rosh yeshiva once told me that I can come to him about everything and anything, and that his door is always open for me. Now I want to perhaps take advantage of this special privilege. Because of the special connection that I have with the Rav, I wanted to ask if the Rosh Yeshiva himself would perhaps agree to guide me in preparing for marriage. I know that the Rosh yeshiva doesn't usually deal with this and that there is a designated Rav who usually prepares the grooms in Yeshiva, but I would feel a lot more comfortable asking the Rav personal questions that I could never bring up with anyone else"...

Of-course, I agreed to teach Yerachmiel. How could I not? We made up to meet in my office twice a week during the afternoon breaks.

For a few weeks, we discussed all the aspects of Shalom bayis and learned in depth

all the relevant Halachos of family purity. With only two weeks left to the wedding, when I felt that Yerachmiel already knew the halchos of niddah well and understood the nature of a Jewish home properly, I told him that the time had come for him to ask me whatever was on his heart. The look on his face showed me that he had been waiting for this moment for a while.

"How can I know that all the many sexual experiences that I had in my past, won't affect my ability to remain true to my wife in the long term?" he asked.

"This is an excellent question", I answered, "but before I answer you directly, I would like to focus on the differences between those sexual experiences you had in the past, and between a lasting and meaningful relationship that you would like to build now. I want to apologize in advance if the questions I will ask you now should cause you a little discomfort, but I have a reason to ask these questions. Tell me Yerachmiel, do you know what your sexual partners of the past liked to eat?"

"No", answered Yerachmiel, "why would I? We never spoke about such things, it didn't interest me".

"So maybe you know what made them happy? Or what made them sad? I'm almost certain you don't", I said, and Yerachmiel nodded in agreement. "So in actuality, the only common denominator you shared with them, was that each of you wanted the other's body, with no connection to personality, goals or uniqueness. Correct?"

"For sure", answered Yerachmiel.

"In other words, you created in your mind a very large constraint factor, kind of like a huge umbrella, under which most people could fit. And when you go in the street and see a pretty girl, she can definitely fit the constraints that you set in your mind for potential partners to fulfill your sexual desires".

Yerachmiel nodded in consent.

"Now", I continued, "let us think about the relationship that you are about to build, Be'ezrat Hashem. I am pretty sure that you already know what your future wife likes to eat, no?"

"Sure", answered Yerachmiel, "I even took her out this week to a Chinese restaurant".

"And did she share with you what makes her happy or sad and what her goals in life are?" I asked.

"Certainly", answered Yerachmiel, "we speak about everything openly, we don't hide secrets from each other".

"Great", I said. "In other words, you have connected with her as an individual, with all the unique ingredients of her personality. It is clear that what is common between you two is unique only to you two. So when you see another girl in the street, she has no connection to the intimate relationship that you have created with your bride".

"For sure, Rebbe, this is clear and obvious".

So let's progress onwards, and let me ask you another question...

To be continued...

Day 17

The Daughter of the King (Part 2)

Yerachmiel is holding a deep discussion with the Rosh Yeshiva in preparation for his upcoming marriage. The topic on hand is; How can Yerachmiel be sure that the relationship he is building with his bride will not be affected by his addiction and his past memories and experiences.

The Rosh Yeshiva continues...

"Now let me ask you a question, Yerachmiel: Did you ever think it would be nice if you had a new, state-of-the-art car?"

"Sure, I wish!", answered Yerachmiel. "I hope that in the near future I'll be able to allow myself to buy a nice car".

"I hope you succeed", I wished him, and added: "and what would you say to a state-of-the-art space-craft, like the United States has, or like other countries have built, that could take you and your bride to the moon and back, or just cruise through space whenever you felt like it?"

"Right!", answered Yerachmiel sarcastically, "I'm not some little kid that has totally unrealistic fantasies".

"In other words, you are basically claiming that we only desire that which we know we have some chance of attaining, but things we know we have no chance in the world of having, we don't covet."

"Right Rebbe, this is self-understood", answered Yerachmiel.

"Well, you have just explained the *Even Ezra* (Shemos 20:14) that asks: How could Hakadosh Baruch Hu command us in the 10 commandments: 'Thou shall not covet another man's wife'? It would seem that this is something out of our control! If we go in the street and see a woman, especially if she is pretty and attractive, how can we cause ourselves not to covet her? It's against the laws of human nature - which were designed to bring about an attraction between a man and a woman. It would seem to make a lot more sense if the Torah simply commanded us not to actually *be* with someone else's wife. And even this would be hard enough to fulfill, since the lust inside us sometimes threatens to overcome us; but at least on our actions we can try to maintain control. And yet, the Torah commands us straight out: 'Thou shall not covet', which means: Do not even desire it even in your heart! Is this at all possible?"

"To answer this question the *Even Ezra* brings a parable: The king of the land has a beautiful daughter, and whoever sees her is captivated by her beauty. A simple

villager is going along his way when the princess's entourage passes him by and he catches a glimpse of her. Will he covet her in his heart? Or would he even seek another woman of her caliber to be his wife? The answer is clear: If the villager is not crazy, it is clear to him as the mid-day sun that the King's daughter can never be his, and he will therefore not desire her at all. It's only natural for him to desire that which he knows he has *some* chance of attaining, if even the smallest."

"The Holy Torah is teaching us here an important lesson in human nature: The moment we internalize that something is not relevant to us whatsoever, and it will never have a relevance to us in the future either, automatically we won't desire it. But if everything is an open possibility in our mind, when we don't differentiate clearly between what is relevant to us and what is not, when we think we could get anything - if only we tried hard enough to attain it, then we don't have even the smallest chance that we won't covet these things in our hearts."

"So now, let's return your original question. You asked if the many sexual encounters and experiences of your past will effect the relationship that you are building now with your future wife. The answer is simple: As long as the common denominator that you created in your mind is open wide enough to include almost every woman as a relevant option to fulfilling your sexual desires - as unlikely as it may be, but still a realistic possibility to you - then it will indeed be difficult for you to stay true to your wife in the long term. But if you are able to internalize in your mind, in a manner that leaves no two ways about it, that of all the women in the world, only your wife is permitted to you and you have no other possibilities - not even the smallest of the small - to be with a woman other than your wife, then automatically you won't covet any other woman, not even in your heart.

"And I'll bring you a proof to this idea from the blessings that we will say soon under your Chuppah, be'ezrat Hashem. One of the brachos says as follows: *'Blessed are you Hashem... who forbade the non-married to us, and who permitted the married to us through Chuppah and Kiddushin'*. It seems that there is unnecessary repetition in this blessing. Why isn't it enough just to say *'who permitted the married to us through Chuppah and Kiddushin?'* What is the point of specifying in the blessing also that which he forbade to us?"

"I think I know the answer", called out Yerachmiel. "Just like the Rav is saying, that it is only if we know without any doubt that all other women in the world are forbidden to us, that we can truly connect properly with the *one* woman who *is* permitted to us."

"Exactly!", I smiled in pleasure.

Day 18

The Daughter of the King (Part 3)

"I have another question on this matter", continued Yerachmiel; "even if I am able to internalize that all other women in the world are not relevant to me at all and my wife is the only one permitted to me, how do I erase all the memories from the many sexual experiences that I unfortunately had in the past, which pop up in my mind morning and night without invitation, particularly in the least expected times? It

could happen in middle of davening, or while I'm learning with my Chavrusah. Even yesterday, when I went out with my Kallah to a restaurant, suddenly in middle of our conversation, without any connection to anything, I found myself going over in my imagination one of the sexual experiences I had; and as much as I tried to get rid of these thoughts, they only got stronger. What should I do if such thoughts come into my head while I'm with my wife?"

I smiled to him. "Another wonderful question. Again this shows how seriously you are taking the responsibility of the new home you are about to build".

"One of the central factors of a person's personality is his memory, without it we couldn't function at all. But let me ask you a question. When these memories enter your head, in what context do they come up?"

"What does that mean, in what context? In a sexual context of course!"

"Obviously, Yerachmiel", I answered. "Let me rephrase the question; are these memories pleasant to you?"

"Unfortunately yes", answered Yerachmiel flustered, "they remind me of all the pleasurable experiences I had in the past, even though now I regret them very much".

"And when these pleasant sexual thoughts come up in your mind, do the thoughts of disillusionment, regret and sadness that these experiences caused you, come up in parallel as well?"

"Totally not", answered Yerachmiel pointedly, "only the memories of the sexual experience itself come up in my head".

"Did you ever ask yourself why? After all, we both know how much pain and suffering these deeds caused you. So why don't these feelings come up as well, together with the pleasant sexual memories? The answer is, that the human mind distinguishes between pleasant memories - which it chooses to keep, and unpleasant memories - which it chooses to push away and forget. Forgetfulness is a big gift, it's a divine kindness that Hashem does with us so that life can continue even after we underwent difficult experiences or loss. If we remembered everything, we wouldn't be able to function at all; we would be sad and depressed the whole time."

"So for me, forgetting is a double edged sword!", called out Yerachmiel.

"Not necessarily", I replied. "As long as your mind continues to catalog the sexual experiences that you had as pleasant, they will continue to pop up in your mind again and again. The only way to prevent this is to change the status of these memories, in other words; to turn the sexual memories from pleasant memories - which the mind wants to keep, to difficult and bitter memories - which the mind will try to forget.

"But how do I do this?" asked Yerachmiel.

"There's an effective and simple way", I replied. "From now on, accustom yourself that whenever sexual memories pop up in your mind, instead of trying to forget them - like you've been doing until now without much luck - try and remind yourself

of all the suffering and pain that they caused you as well. This way, slowly but surely these experiences will be transformed from pleasurable memories which the mind wants to save, to difficult experiences that the mind will do everything it can to push them away."

"I am speechless" said Yerachmiel. "How does the Rav know all this?"

"On my own I wouldn't know anything", I answered. "But Chazal taught us: '*Thoughts of aveiros (sins) are worse than the aveiros*' (Yuma 29a). But this is hard to understand. Is thinking of a sin truly worse than someone who does the sin? Think about it for a second; who is worse, one who does the sin in practice, or one who thought about doing it but in the end overcomes his evil impulse and doesn't do it?"

"Of course, the one who sins in practice!", said Yerachmiel.

"But Chazal are teaching us, that thoughts of sin do more damage to a person than the sin itself. Perhaps this can be understood in the context of what we just discussed. Chazal, in their great wisdom, understood that in the case of sins we did in practice, we can feel a strong regret afterwards and do Teshuvah on them, and these experiences will be ingrained in our minds as painful experiences that we would prefer to forget. But this is not the case with sexual fantasies, which - even if we succeed in overcoming our desires and not sinning - the fantasies themselves become ingrained in our minds as things **we would have liked to do**, and memories of these pleasurable fantasies can be ingrained in the mind for a much longer time."

I saw that Yerachmiel was trying to digest what I had just told him. Finally he said, "I have one more question, but I am embarrassed to ask it to the Rosh yeshiva".

"I suggest we finish up for now", I said. "Mincha is in a few minutes and it would be a shame to talk under pressure. How about you write down the question and give it to me tonight, after Maariv? This way you'll feel less uncomfortable, and *be'ezrat Hashem* tomorrow afternoon we'll work it out together".

Yerachmiel accepted the idea happily and went his way.

Day 19

Pizza with Toppings (Part 1)

I didn't expect this question. It caught me completely off guard. How, *Ribbono Shel Olam*, can I try to convince my dear student Yerachmiel that this is possible, when I myself find it difficult? After all, I deal with this particular problem each day with my wife at home! I recalled the difficult discussion that I had just had with my sponsor on this very matter only a few weeks ago. This is perhaps the most difficult issue that I deal with since I started my own journey to recovery last year. How can I talk about this with Yerachmiel?!

I didn't have much time to think about it, because Yerachmiel arrived in my office.

"Did the Rosh Yeshiva get a chance yet to read what I wrote to him?" he asked restlessly, while taking a seat and attempting to hide his anxiety.

"Yes, I read it. The question is excellent, as usual. It's truly not a simple matter, and the question again shows how much you understood the issues we discussed yesterday. But with your permission, before I address the question," - suddenly Hashem put words in my mouth - "let me preface with an introduction".

"As you surely know, there are two types of pleasures: physical pleasures, which include all the bodily pleasures such as eating, marital relations and others, and then there are spiritual pleasures like Love or learning. These two types of pleasures have completely opposite characteristics. The basic characterization of physical pleasures is, that at first the pleasure is very strong but the more we have it, the weaker the strength of the pleasure becomes. For example, if the Yeshiva's cook would prepare pizza for supper, I assume everyone would be very happy and the pizza would be delicious for everyone. But what do you think would happen if the cook made pizza *every* night?"

"We'd get sick of it", smiled Yerachmiel.

"Right", I said. "And if the cook still insisted to make Pizza for a week straight?"

"I would suggest that he at least use a different topping every day", answered Yerachmiel.

"Now let's think about spiritual pleasures. Let's take, for example, learning a *sugya* in *Gemara*. When do you have more pleasure from the *sugya*, the first time you learn it, or after a few times - when you are already proficient in it and are able to answer a question or say a good *s'vara*? The truth is, you in particular, Yerachmiel, are a good example of this. I've observed you a lot in the *Shiur Klali*, which - by then - you've already prepared the *sugya* well and know it backwards and forwards. And I've seen what pleasure you have from a good *s'vara* or a good answer! This implies, that with spiritual pleasures, the situation is exactly the opposite: The more we taste of it the stronger the pleasure gets. And the same goes for Love. Who do you think love each other more: a couple who have just met, or a couple who have lived together for many years?"

"Surely, the longer they are together and give to one another, the stronger the love grows", answered Yerachmiel.

"How wonderful that you already understand this!", I said.

"So let's take a look now at what happens when a couple gets married. According to what we just explained, they would apparently find themselves in a problematic situation at the very start. On the one hand, they want to retain enjoyable marital relations in the long term. But this is something that, according to what we just said, should not be possible, because marital relations are bodily pleasures - which grow *less* enjoyable with time. But on the other hand they want to love each other, and Love is something that *grows* with time.

So based on what we've discussed until now, it would seem that every couple that gets married is faced with an impossible choice: either they stay together for only a short time and enjoy their sexual relations while giving up on true Love, or they can

opt to stay together for many years and merit a real love, but their marital relations will become less and less enjoyable as time goes on".

"It's a problem", summed up Yerachmiel with half a smile.

"But we know", I said, " that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* loves us, and he created this world for us to enjoy, yet still, the Torah commands us to get married! Apparently there's a secret here and if we can figure it out, we can enjoy both worlds together: to remain together for many years, and at the same time, still retain the enjoyment of marital relations the entire time!"

"But that goes against all the rules we laid down until now!" called Yerachmiel.

"True", I said, "and now I am going to reveal to you the secret, and I believe that this secret can help us deal with your question". Yerachmiel gazed at me with full concentration and attention.

"We determined that with physical pleasures, the more we have of them, the less enjoyable they become. But this is only true if the physical pleasure is the *purpose* and goal unto itself. If, however, the physical pleasure is only a *means* to achieving a spiritual pleasure, then all the characteristics of the spiritual pleasure attach themselves to the physical pleasure as well, and as a result, not only does the physical pleasure not get weaker over time, but the opposite is true, it gets stronger over time!"

"But I don't understand, Rebbe, how can this be?" asked Yerachmiel.

"Let me explain", I answered.

Day 20

Pizza with Toppings (Part 2)

"Let's take the example of the pizza again and assume that the cook would prepare exactly the same pizza every night. But then, he would reveal to you that he is using an ancient, secret recipe that he inherited from his forefathers, that the more one eats of this pizza the smarter and sharper they become, to the point that they will know the entire Torah and never forget a thing. But this is only on the condition that they eat the pizza without missing a single day, for one full year. Now if on one of those days someone would invite you to an expensive restaurant with juicy steaks, which would you prefer Yerachmiel? Would you prefer the delicious restaurant steak - or the pizza with the special powers that you already invested months into, and if you stop eating it for even one day you'll lose everything? I'm pretty sure that any wise person would choose the pizza, and he will also continue to enjoy it for the entire time - even *without* different toppings, because he knows that through it, he is attaining something very precious to him. The pizza for him is not the goal, but rather only a *means* to achieving an important and priceless goal; the knowledge of the entire Torah. And especially if he actually sees that the pizza's powers are beginning to work and his memory is getting sharper by the day; his love for the pizza will only grow as time goes on."

"So that's the whole idea: A couple decides to get married with the goal of building a home together and helping each other grow and develop. Their marital relations are supposed to be enjoyable, but they are not a goal in and of themselves, rather only a means to be able to share with each other and give each other pleasure. And when the relations are just a *means* and not a *goal*, then automatically, the stronger their love for each other grows, so will the pleasure in their relationships; not only will it not lessen with time, but it will *grow* with time. And that's why we don't just call it "sex" but rather "relations".

"But all this can only happen if it is very clear to both sides what is the *goal* and what is the *means*. However, the moment that marital relations become a goal in themselves, they immediately obtain the central characteristic of all other physical-bodily pleasures and are transformed from being "relations" to just plain "sex". And then, just like all physical pleasures, the enjoyment becomes progressively less strong over time. And as a result, the couple enters into cycles of disappointment, because they always remember the first time they were together and that first experience is always the strongest and most intense; from there on, the experience only fades in strength.

"So what do such disappointed couples do to get back the original thrill? Like with the pizza, they start searching for all types of "toppings". They try new, more exciting sexual experiences, at first together, but they quickly find that this too loses its thrill. And then they start, unfortunately, to search for it with strangers too, *rachmana litzlan*. Obviously, this causes their relationship to crumble, and the bitter end is almost certainly not long in coming."

Yerachmiel strongly related to this idea; especially when I spoke of the "pizza toppings". It was clear that he understood exactly what I meant. I smiled to him and said: "So now, let's get back to the question you asked: How can you enjoy "regular" relations with your wife for the long term, after you have already gone through and fantasized about so many different and exciting sexual experiences? Did I understand your question correctly?"

"Yes", admitted Yerachmiel abashedly.

"Basically, you have already tasted all the toppings and plain pizza doesn't even excite you any more, while your future wife has never even tasted pizza in her life!"

"But in light of the secret I just revealed to you, this is only an issue if your physical connection to your wife serves as a goal in itself, for your own personal pleasure and nothing more. In such a case, you can be sure that the memories of your many previous sexual experiences and fantasies will fill you with disappointment, because you won't find the same thrill as you had in the past. And if you try and take your wife - *chas veshalom* - to that same place as well, i.e. to the realm of fantasies and "extra toppings", your marriage is destined to be a complete failure from the start."

"But if you are wise and implement all that we have spoken about until now, you can be sure that true love will permeate your marriage always, and in addition to that, you will also retain the enjoyment in your marital relations with your wife for many years to come."

We were both silent for a while, and then Yerachmiel spoke: "I have one last question, actually - a request. Would the Rosh Yeshiva be willing to honor me with

his presence at the wedding and be the *Mesader Kidushin* at my *Chuppah*?"

I rose from my place, came over to Yerachmiel and grasped his two hands with warmth: "I would never give up this honor for anything in the world", I said.

"Thank you Rebbe", replied Yerachmiel with tears in his eyes, "for saving my life".

Day 21

For today's reading, I would like to review the lessons that we learned in the last two chapters of the book "The First Day of the Rest of My Life". The first chapter was called "**The Daughter of the King**" and we covered it days 16, 17 and 18 above. The second chapter was called "**Pizza with Toppings**", and we covered it in days 19 and 20 above. Both of these chapters deal with the issue of how someone who suffered/s from a sexual addiction can learn to have a happy and fulfilling marriage relationship with their spouse.

"The Daughter of the King" - Parts 1-3

Question: How can we assure that our past experiences won't affect our ability to stay true to our spouses for the long term?

Part 1

It is important to focus on the difference between the meaningless sexual experiences of the past, and the lasting and meaningful relationship you want to have with your spouse. With past partners/fantasies you shared no common denominator other than lust, with no connection to their personalities, goals or uniqueness. However, your connection with your spouse is on an **individual level**, with all the unique ingredients of his/her personality. What is common between you both is unique only to you two. Other people you see in the street have no connection to the intimate relationship that you have created with your life-time partner.

Part 2

Remember the parable of the simple villager and the king's daughter. Engrain in your heart that your spouse is the **ONLY** partner in the world that is permitted to you, and all other people are **not relevant to your world at all**. In this way, you won't even desire these things, in the same way that one doesn't desire a space-ship to travel to the moon and back each day.

Part 3

If, in spite of the above, pleasant memories of past sexual experiences/fantasies still do come up in your mind - and they probably will; bring up together with them, the memories of the pain, disillusionment and suffering that these experiences caused you. This will help your mind to try and forget your past, and the memories will come up much less frequently.

"Pizza with Toppings" - Parts 1-2

Question: After all the past fantasies and experiences that we had, how can we retain enjoyment in the "plain" marital relations with our spouses for the long term?

Part 1

With physical pleasures, the more we have of them, the less enjoyable they become. But this is only true if the physical pleasure is the purpose and goal itself. If, however, the physical pleasure is only a *means* to achieving a spiritual pleasure, then the characteristics of spiritual pleasures attach themselves to the physical pleasure as well, and as a result, not only does the physical pleasure not get weaker over time, but the opposite is true, it gets stronger over time!"

Part 2

A couple gets married with the goal of building a home together and helping each other grow and develop. Their marital relations are supposed to be enjoyable, but they are not a goal in and of themselves but rather only a *means* for them to be able to share with each other and give each other pleasure. So by learning to focus on your "soul-connection" with your spouse and on ways you can give to him/her and bring your spouse pleasure - and not, *chalilah*, on the question of how you can "use" your spouse to fulfill your desires, then automatically, the stronger your love for each other grows, so too will the pleasure in your marital relations grow.

And to this affect, it is also helpful to always daven and entreat the Creator of the world to guard and protect your spouse, and to help you to make them happy.

And for some final advice from the author of the book in this area...

It is also very important to know, that there will surely come times where you will feel that in spite of all your efforts, you still find the struggle very difficult and hopelessness and sadness will begin to creep up inside you. At such times, remember that you are not alone. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is with you and is accompanying you on the path you have chosen to go on; the path of LIFE. If you remember and internalize this, you will find that the difficult emotional turmoil will quickly disappear.

By fulfilling all of the advice above, you are guaranteed that love will fill your home always, and in addition, you will retain enjoyment in your marital relations for all the years you are together.

Day 22

Personal Advice from the Author of the book "The First Day of the Rest of My Life"

In Conclusion; On a Personal Note... (Part 1)

Let's say I finally found myself a quiet corner where I can be alone for a few magical hours and disconnect a little from my day to day troubles, to refresh myself and get some new strength - what's wrong with that? What, I don't deserve to enjoy myself a little? Who does it bother exactly if I sit at the computer and surf porn sites and watch sex videos? When I imagine that I am one of the actors in the movie, I can actualize my wildest fantasies through them. And all this, without leaving the framework of my life, and without even doing such terrible *aveiros* like *arayos* and other prohibited sexual relations. And when I'm done and I got my pleasure, I return to the world of reality with one click of a mouse. What a wonderful solution!

So I thought. And indeed, at first this all seemed ideal. Things that used to stress me out and cause me sadness and depression suddenly stopped bothering me. My state of mind, which used to be unpredictable, became much more stable, until everyone - including myself - believed that I had become much more calm and pleasant to be around.

But this was all an illusion. In truth, instead of learning to deal with difficulties, disillusionment or even plain boredom, I chose to disconnect and run away. A process of withdrawal from life began inside me. Instead of building up my personality, communication with others or even work, I found an easy place to run - to the world of fantasy, enjoyable to my eyes and heart. And from there to complete surrender to fantasy and lust, the path was short indeed. Very quickly, I became a total prisoner, chained in the shackles of sexual addiction.

True, in life there are many difficult situations. Sometimes the pain is so strong that we feel we can't bear it anymore. And it's only natural that we should seek a magical corner of our own, where we can rest and sooth ourselves, without any criticism or demands; a place of warmth and love where everything goes; a place with no limits or prohibitions; and most of all, a place that gives us the feeling we exist and are alive.

This is exactly how tens and hundreds, if not thousands of our sons and daughters - all from ostensibly from "good homes", feel in the beginning. And before our astonished eyes, they sink into internet addiction, sexual permissiveness or any other type of addiction. (See [this story](#) for an extreme example).

However painful or surprising this may sound to you, they are 100% correct. What good reason do they have to give up on these powerful arousals and exciting temptations that they experience in the fantasy worlds that they create for themselves? They have long since learned to detest "self-righteousness" and stale preaching's of rebuke. They are sick and tired of hearing what they are supposed to - or *not* supposed to - feel. And more than anything, they can't understand how

people who are supposed to love and accept them for who they are without any preconditions, throw on them, morning and night, their disappointments and hopes for them that never materialized. And if all that was not enough, they add insult to injury by using every type of manipulation to get them to feel guilty about the suffering and - "as if" - pain that they are causing them, while trying to instill fear in their hearts using graphic descriptions of the terrible suffering that awaits them in the world to come.

And all this, before they even had a chance to experience this world - even a little, and to feel the most important and vital of human emotions; feelings of belonging and acceptance.

Let me tell you a little secret that may sound strange to you. You too, in their place, would not act any different.

Disconnecting from the imaginary world of fantasy and sensual stimulation and reconnecting anew to life, can only happen in one of two ways:

Either somehow in the beginning, before things have gotten out of hand and they have caused irreversible damage to themselves, they will have the good luck to happen upon realistic, obtainable challenges and goals, and through them, they will find fulfillment and belonging. And only if these positive feelings will be stronger and more fulfilling than the imaginary feelings they created for themselves in their fantasy worlds, will they succeed in disconnecting from their destructive behaviors and reconnecting to life.

Or, *challah*, they will undergo what I and many others underwent. And that is, that they will wake up a few years too late from their sweet dream into the harsh reality of a life that is too difficult to bear, alone and hurting, and find themselves bound from head to foot in the chains of addiction. And only after many more wasted years of unimaginable pain, of hurting others and those close to them, of wasting time and destroying their souls, of creating cycles of lies and deceit in order to hold onto their "comforting" addiction, will they finally come to their breaking point. And then, and only then, coming out of feelings of utter helplessness and despair, will they be ready to totally surrender and give themselves up to the higher power, and through that, begin to reconnect to life.

It is indeed possible to prevent the fall into addiction in the first place. But to do this, one needs a creative and practical approach that includes, for example, finding realistic and easily obtainable goals that will give the potential addict feelings of fulfillment, existence and acceptance. And this will allow them to reconnect to life and use those **positive** feelings as a counter-weight against the never ending arousals and imaginary feelings of "existence" that the world of addiction offers them.

Day 23

In Conclusion; On a Personal Note... (Part 2)

The Moment of Truth

I reached my own "moment of truth" only after many long years - way too long - of unimaginable suffering and pain. Only then, when I stood completely alone opposite the mirror and looked myself in the eyes, I began to understand that if I want to **live** there's only one way for me to get out of my impossible situation; to take complete responsibility for my own destiny. But how? Firstly, by admitting to the simple yet painful truth: I am sick with a harsh disease called "addiction", and there is no chance for me to recover with my own strengths; **I need help.**

I pray and hope that the book I wrote (["The First Day of the Rest of My Life"](#)) will find you a moment before it is too late, and that you will be saved from all the unnecessary suffering.

Like we said, the path to recovery from a strong sexual addiction - or *any* addiction for that matter, begins with the simple understanding and recognition that I am addicted and need help. But what to do from there? What is the next step? To whom do we turn for this intense - yet sensitive - issue?

Psychological Help

The subject of sex is intimate, sensitive and personal. In the religious camp, this subject is labeled as "Taboo" and guarded under a stamp of holiness and purity. It is very difficult for us to discuss these issues even with those closest to us, and it is especially difficult to reveal the deep, dark and painful aspects of our open sores before a stranger. This, on top of the fear that our secrets will leak out to the public and we will become a mockery and be scorned in everyone's eyes.

All this and more: For addicts, their addiction is an existential need, like their air to breath. And therefore addicts will do anything - literally anything, and resort to any means, to remove anyone or anything in their path that wants to break through the protective walls that they built around themselves. In light of all this, it is very difficult for an external source of treatment to succeed.

So, if - in spite of the above - we have reached a willingness to take a gamble and reveal ourselves before another person with the hope that this person can help us deal with our addiction, it is vital to know to whom it is worthwhile to turn for help, in order to save ourselves from further grief and unnecessary expenses.

There are many therapists who claim to deal with the field of sexuality in general and addictions in particular, but there are few that truly *do* possess the tools to deal with this complex and delicate issue. Besides for professional training and much clinical experience, the therapist should also be someone with a highly developed self awareness and an intelligent and keen sensitivity. In addition to all this, it is preferable that the sex addiction therapist themselves have had personal experience in dealing with some type of addiction, whatever it may be, since the psychological processes in the various types of addictions are extremely similar.

From my own personal experience I have discovered, that even if in other fields of treatment the therapist need not have experienced himself the illness he is treating, the situation is different with addictions. The best addiction therapists are particularly those that have dealt themselves with obsessions and addictions, because *only they* truly understand inside out, the psychological processes of the addict and his method of thinking.

Day 24

In Conclusion; On a Personal Note... (Part 3)

Medical Help

Are there medical treatments that can help with recovery from sexual addiction?

The phenomenon of sexual addiction is fueled by two central components.

1. Compulsion - which is the main fuel of addiction, is responsible for a strong need to be in control. This does not allow any external source to break through our protective walls. There *does* however exist effective medical treatment that can reduce the flames of our protective system, thereby opening a door for a professional and trained body to penetrate the walls we have built and help us deal with the range of our deepest fears, many of which we are not even aware of. The therapist can help us progressively get to a place where we feel more secure, and can help restore our trust in ourselves and in the world around us. Only then, under close professional supervision - and not on our own, can the dosage of the medication be progressively lessened, until we no longer need it.

2. The heightened sexual drive of a sex addict is different from person to person. Modern medicine offers medication and shots that can suppress the sexual drive to the point of chemical castration. I do not want to get into in this complex issue, but it is important for me to emphasize that if the sexual addiction is harming others, as in cases of pedophilia or rape, it is forbidden under any circumstances to wait. One must seek urgent counsel with a psychiatrist and take immediate action to prevent the next victim.

On its face, it seems like a relatively simple solution to the problem of addiction: As soon as signs of compulsion appear, let the candidate for addiction take the magical medication against compulsion, go for psychological treatment - and presto, all is well! Could this be? In reality, medical treatments are not a simple matter at all. First of all, medications against compulsion do not take effect right away, but rather only after taking them consistently for a long time. Besides, they often carry side effects, and therefore they require psychiatric supervision and follow-up, both before and during the taking of the medications, and it is prohibited - and dangerous - to stop taking the medications at once.

And herein lies a common problem. Accepting to take medication under supervision for a long time, goes completely against the compulsive nature of the control-addict. We can't expect the compulsiveness to act irrationally honorable and allow itself to self-destruct so that the compulsive person can take the medication that is to fight

against itself. And therefore, many times when people suffer from compulsiveness, even though they understand on a rational level that the medication can help them get out of their difficult situation, they still somehow manage to evade taking the medication, while using various lame excuses. And even when they do start the treatment, they often quickly stop, start again and stop again. Ironically, those who end up taking the medication for the long term, are usually those who have suffered to the point of complete surrender, as we discussed yesterday.

Support Groups

There are many support groups to treat the various types of addictions. These groups work according to the 12-Step traditions, and their most sacred principle is that of anonymity. In other words, the members of these groups introduce themselves only by first name and don't give out any identifying details about themselves, like where they live or work. They also accept upon themselves to discuss what goes on in the groups only within the framework of the groups. This complete and zealous guard over secrecy gives the addict a sense of security and is one of the most important tools in restoring his trust in himself and in the world around him. To all those of you who recognize that you suffer from addiction, I strongly suggest joining one of these addiction support groups. There you will also find the literature that will teach you about the steps and traditions.

And as you have reached here, I am sure and convinced that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will help each and every one of you to find the best path to save yourself from yourself. And [*as Rabbi Nachman used to say*]: "The most important thing is not to fear at all".

As long as the candle is lit, one can still fix... R' Yisrael Salanter.

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**To order the Hebrew book (it has not yet been translated into English) [click here](#)**

**Rabbi Ya'ir Shochet**, author of the book "The First Day Of The Rest Of My Life" has been working with sexual addiction in the frum community for many years.

He speaks both English and Hebrew and is Trained in the 12-Steps.

He also helps couples deal with a spouse who is addicted (as well as general marriage counseling as well). **Low Rates.**

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The number is only in use during the above hours. All other times, please leave a message and he'll get back to you. E-mail: [hayomharishon@gmail.com](mailto:hayomharishon@gmail.com)

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The translations above are a project of www.guardureyes.com and may be freely disseminated to help others in this area.

[Guardureyes.com](http://www.guardureyes.com) provides a whole system of recovery for religious Jews struggling with lust addiction.