

An SSA Man

Written by An Anonymous Married Man in Roanoke

This letter is written to any unmarried or married young man who experiences Same Sex Attraction (SSA) and written to the parents or friends of such persons. I hope and pray that Jews and others who experience SSA will be spared the suffering that I have endured and will realize that the feelings and cravings for persons of the same gender can be a source of personal growth in Torah and Love of G-d. The feelings can also serve as a guide to discovering the incredible soul that one possesses.

By way of background, I am writing this well into adult life and as a father of several children. As a child, I went to a Hebrew day school, the majority of whose students came from observant families. I continued on to a yeshiva that is headed by students of Rabbi Aharon Kotler, *zt'l* (of blessed memory) and, eventually switched to a major *yeshiva* in Brooklyn. I remained in that *yeshiva* until I was in my early twenties. When I left the *yeshiva* I had been married for a year and my wife and I were already parents.

Curiously, I am writing about my *yeshiva* experience before I write about my home life, possibly because my *yeshiva* experience was a source of great happiness for me. My home life was not. My mother was overbearing and over engaged in my life. I was one of several children, and became my mother's right hand man (or

should I say maid?).

My father was physically present, but we did not have a close relationship for most of my growing up years. In my late teens, we actually began to build a close relationship, but he died shortly after that. I did not cease mourning for him until April 2006, for reasons that will be clear in this writing.

As a child, I was (and continue to be) a sensitive person, often taking in the feelings of others as my own. In school, I was not athletic, which caused me to be excluded by my peer group and even ridiculed by them. The element of an over engaged mother, an emotionally absent father, a sensitive personality, and peer rejection, are ingredients that are the seeds of homosexual behavior in some boys and men.

In the three years before I married, I heard lectures from Rabbis that downplayed the role of romance in marriage. Since I was not attracted to women anyway, these ideas sat well with me. I was certain that after I married, the attraction that I did have for men (and quite strongly by that time in my life) would go away.

As is the case with many (perhaps all) SSA men, the attraction not only did not diminish, it grew stronger. There was no one in the therapy world at that time who could explain that the attraction to men was a signal from my brain and body that I needed legitimate male companionship and friendship. After four years of marriage, I gave up the fight with my desires and started seeking men. At first, it was just going to gay discos and watching men dance, a great source of calm to me. But

gradually, as the years went on, I sought out men for sexual activity. Suffice it to say that my behavior was a constant source of shame. Even so, I couldn't put a stop to it. Over the years, I saw several therapists, one of whom encouraged me to simply accept who "I was" and even find a lover.

By 2005, I despaired of ever overcoming both the attraction and the behaviors associated with it. Then I heard about a film, *Trembling Before God*. While the film promotes, to some degree, the idea of being Jewish and gay, its real impact on me was that there was a Jewish voice to what I was experiencing and that I was not alone. The film led me to several web sites, all sponsored by organizations whose messages and focus I do not support. In the course of my web-related research I came across Kedusha.com and, finally to JONAH whose activities and guidance have given me back my life.

At first, I was resistant to the types of therapy that JONAH promotes which are variously called reparative or reorientation or change therapy. But as I read more of the books that are suggested by JONAH, I realized that my homosexual desires were not ends in themselves, but symptoms of a man who had lost his manhood, his masculinity, and, in my case, longed for his father. The more I recognized and acknowledged what the symptoms were telling me, the more the behavior decreased.

The really pivotal powerful moments came at a *Journey into Manhood* (JIM) weekend that I attended in early April 2006. The event is sponsored by an organization called People Can Change, a non-religious organization that accepts all faiths. I am not permitted to go into the

specifics of the activities, but what I gained from the weekend can only be described as life transforming.

I finally came face to face with the fears that drove my homosexual behavior and was able to use those fears to transform from a frightened boy into a courageous man.

I began to recognize the incredibly powerful masculinity that lay within me, the gold I possess within that makes me a unique man with a mission.

My manhood was affirmed by other men who were in attendance in a way that finally swept away the sense of low self-esteem that had permitted the undesired behaviors in the first place. Lifetime, healthy friendships were formed with men who are also seeking a path of complete manhood.

I was finally able to come to grips with the loss of the father I knew and realize that, despite his absence, he loved me very much and was proud of the young man I had become before his death. I came home from the weekend as a better husband and a better father.

Above all, I learned that to touch another man can be done in a way that is healthy, holy and noble. The Torah speaks openly of such touching, as with David and Jonathan as related in the Book of Samuel. In fact, their friendship is described in *Ethics of the Fathers* as a pure love, because it is not tainted with a desire for reward, sexual or otherwise. I learned how that touch can happen. As a result, I came away from the activities with a restored sense of personal sanctity and a belief that G-d was giving me strength *through* SSA.

The so called "gay-lobby" and "gay rights" people would have us believe that homosexuality is normal in some people and that there is actually such an entity as a homosexual. The Torah condemns the behavior, but never calls a person who performs the act by a specific noun. Even in the English language, the word did not exist until the mid-nineteenth century. The fact is that there is no such entity or identity as a "gay" person. The behaviors are a matter of choice, though driven by intense desire.

Even some in the religious world believe that there is a genetic basis to the condition. The fact is that there is no evidence to that effect. Even when the American Psychological Association (APA) removed homosexuality from the list of conditions considered worthy of treatment, they did so because of political pressure, not based on research. There are millions of people who have an attraction to members of their own sex, but there is no valid research that shows that they are a biological group in the same way Caucasians, Blacks, or Orientals can be biologically grouped. The Torah's ways are pleasant. There is no way that G-d would give a person a biology that is diametrically opposed to the commandments G-d bids us to fulfill.

An unmarried or married young man who is faced with this condition should investigate reparative therapy. He cannot assume that he must live with homosexual longings for a lifetime. Marriage is *not* the cure. The repair comes from within, knowing what the cravings are messaging. Please, for G-d's sake, do not accept what the gay community wants you to believe. Their interest is

in pandering to desires that fit in with a basically selfish world view and are certainly not in line with the Torah's teaching. Possessing a Jewish soul requires you to guard the sanctity of your life. There is a way to do so that will liberate one from SSA and actually enable one to have insight into one's innermost needs.