

## **My Secret Life**

*Written by Avrohom in Israel*

(Posted July 2012)

At an early age, I began to wonder why G-D had punished me by having attractions to other men? Being in an all-boy yeshiva just made the matter worse. I found myself having homosexual thoughts. I spent more and more hours praying to the Creator that He would help me change to the person that I wished to be. I didn't care whether it was right or wrong for other people, it was not right for me, and the life I wished for.

Thoughts of homosexuality were one level, but after so many years of struggling with frustrations, I began to act on these thoughts. According to my faith, I felt acting out were sins, and I felt they were disgusting to me, yet I had no way of stopping them. My obsessive impulse was out of control and eventually it became like an addiction to a drug that I felt I was powerless to stop. Discussing the problem with the people I loved was not an option for me because I feared that if I revealed my secret life, my friends and family would grow to hate me, even as I hated myself. I was so ashamed, yet I lived a secret double life like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

It was a modest miracle the day I found a therapist who would work with me to help me on the long and arduous process of changing my sexuality to one that I was more comfortable with. It took many years of self-examination and introspection for something to shift within me, to repair the profound emotional wounds that drove my actions and desires.

It makes me laugh (yet cry) when I read that the media thinks it is impossible to heal a broken sexuality. It was not easy by any means, but to me it was the biggest endeavor of my life. I did not think that change was possible, but through perseverance and personal faith, I was ultimately startled to find out that it was possible to change. G-d blessed me with gradual healing and then introduced me to my soul mate.

Then came the day when you, my friend, danced at my chassenah and you didn't even know that I had been through hell and back while right in front of your eyes. I wonder how many others suffer in this toxic silence of shame?

It is with this in mind that I address the recent heated debate on "homosexuality and Jewish law." It is a good thing to discuss this that has been so taboo. I believe that it is the beginning of healing this serious and dangerous epidemic that afflicts more yeshiva students (as well as other members of the Jewish community) than anyone has dared to imagine!

Rather than debate the minutia of Halacha, which is rather clear-cut, I encourage our Rabbeim to remember two things: First, this kind of change is possible, and please have empathy on the afflicted. Second, there are Jewish people out there who do not revel in their "queerness," but rather are suffering alone and want help to do t'shuva .

JONAH is a group I fully support based upon my personal experience. JONAH helps those silent strugglers who wish to change as well as offers support to families who have been devastated by this issue.