**Adapting to the New Challenges:**

**Attending to (Post?) COVID Mental Health in the Community**

**Bikur Cholim Conference**

March 21, 2022 pm/19 Adar II 5782

**Packet # 1**

Assembled by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW

One day Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov (1745-1807) told his students, “There is no quality and there is no power of man that was created without purpose. Even base and corrupt qualities can be uplifted to serve God.” One student raised his hand and asked, "Rabbi, to what end can the denial of God have been created? Surely there is no purpose to atheism."

Rabbi Moshe paused and then replied, "This too can be uplifted through deeds of *tzedakah*. For if someone comes to you and asks your help, you shall not turn him off with pious words, saying: ‘Have faith and take your troubles to God!’ You shall act as if there were no God, as if there were only one person in all the world who could help this person - only yourself.”

**F**or individuals who have been exposed to traumatizing conditions, the nature of their social ties and their social network can be critical to recovery. Social supports can buffer them from impending traumatic events and help them recover from those they have endured. One overcomes trauma when current attachments with safety figures outweigh the terror of the past…

*-- See Bessel van der Kolk,* Trauma and development in children *(video), New York: Bureau of Psychiatric Services, New York State Department of Mental Health*.

**T**o be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.

### *Simone Weil, 1909-1943*

**F**rom generation to generation,

a person is obligated to view him/herself as if s/he emerged from Egypt.

*From the Passover Haggadah*

**R**abbi Simcha Bunem of Pshisske (1767-1827) told his disciples:

Everyone must have two pockets, with a note in each pocket,

so that he or she can reach into the one or the other, depending on the need.

When feeling lowly and depressed, discouraged or disconsolate,

one should reach into the right pocket, and, there, find the words:

"*Bishvili nivra ha'olam*/For my sake was the world created."\*

But when feeling high and mighty one should reach into the left pocket,

and find the words:

"*Ani afar va’eifer*/I am but dust and ashes."\*\*

*in Martin Buber, Tales of the Hassidim, vol. II, p.249*

*\*Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5 \*\*Abraham in Genesis 18:27*

**Rabbi Joshua and the ‘Ascetic’ Jews: Responding to Prolonged Communal Trauma**

*From the Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 60b*

Our Rabbis taught: When the Temple was destroyed for the second time (*NB: In 70 CE*), large numbers in Israel became ascetics, binding themselves neither to eat meat nor to drink wine.

R. Joshua got into conversation with them and said to them: “My children, why do you not eat meat nor drink wine?”

They replied: “Shall we eat flesh which used to be brought as an offering on the altar, now that this altar is in abeyance? Shall we drink wine which used to be poured as a libation on the altar, but now no longer?”

He said to them: “If that is so, we should not eat bread either, because the meal offerings have ceased.”

They said: “[That is so, and] we can manage with fruit.”

“We should not eat fruit either,” [he said,] “because there is no longer an offering of first-fruits.” “Then we can manage with other fruits [they said].”

“But,”[he said,] “we should not drink water, because there is no longer any ceremony of the pouring of water.(*NB: On the fall festival of Sukkot*.)”

To this they could find no answer, so he said to them: “My sons, come and listen to me. Not to mourn at all is impossible, because the blow has fallen. To mourn overmuch is also impossible, because we do not impose on the community a hardship which the majority cannot endure…”

The Sages therefore have ordained thus:

A man may stucco his house, but he should leave a little bare….

A man can prepare a full-course banquet, but he should leave out an item or two….

A woman can put on all her ornaments, but leave off one or two…

For so it says,

“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let ﻿my right hand wither,

let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I remember thee not,

if I set not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” (*Psalm 137:5-6*)

What is meant by “my chief joy”? (*NB: Literally, “Head of my joy”)* R. Isaac said: This is symbolized by the burnt ashes which we place on the head of a bridegroom…..

Whoever mourns for Zion will be privileged to behold her joy, as it says, “Rejoice with Jerusalem…﻿all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her” etc. (*Isaiah 66:10*)

*Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 60b*

**Considering the World/Life After a Prolonged Pandemic**

**Some of the Emotional and Spiritual Tolls of An Ongoing Epidemic**

Fear, Panic (*Malakh HaMavet*/Angel of Death just around the corner)

Loneliness, Isolation (intensified by pandemic’s variants)

Numbness, Frozenness, Complacency, Just Getting By; also “Passing” and “Hiding”

Anxiety (social deterioration, troubles on all sides and of all kinds)

Despair (locked in downward spiral, drawn to throwing in the towel)

Awkwardness, reverting to “not reading the audience”

Confusion, Aimlessness (burden carried alone, shifting realities)

Impatience, Intolerance, Short-fusedness

Loss and Grief (actual and anticipated)

Besieged, Surrounded, Vulnerable (morphing disease itself a well as shifts in finances, job opportunities)

Depression (esp. with socially unacknowledged or unaddressed losses)

Anger, Rage (obscurity, unrecognized suffering, inequities, powerlessness)

Alienated, Suspicious, Judgmental (out of a need to assign blame in arriving at a usable narrative)

Guilt (self-blame for suffering)

Shame (“I haven’t risen to the needs of the moment”; “I’ve fallen short, again…”)

***…i.e., Prolonged Trauma***

**Managing During an Ongoing Pandemic: Ten Possibilities**

Keeping to a routine, set (and revise) a schedule

Integrating more, and/or more effective, self-care

Nurturing/Deepening relationships – family (quality time), friends, clergy, vendors, health care professionals, etc.

Responding to stressors differently (especially chronic ones)

Exploring and utilizing models of those who came before us

Renewing connections with Nature

Focusing on what we *can* control

Utilizing new creative tools for self-awareness – writing, visual arts (incl. scribbling), movement

Learning/Exploring new horizons – language, area of study, physical exercise,

Helping Others – directly or otherwise, through advocacy and education

**Destructive or Self-Defeating Behaviors that May Be a Legacy of An Ongoing Epidemic**

Overeating

Oversleeping

Overwatching TV

Stuck in “Exile to Cyberia” -- Overscreening

Over-shopping Online

(Other) Obsessive Behaviors

Neglect of Hygiene and/or of Mental Health

Self-Depriving Patterns

Isolating, Self-Defending; Loss of Friends

Entrenched Disappointments – Complaints (“unresponsive community”)

**Positive Behaviors that May be a Legacy of COVID 19**

Staying safe; evaluating risks and making informed choices

“Stepping back from the canvas”

Reconnecting to old friends, renewing (maybe repairing) relationships

Learning to shape one’s time and prioritize

Attending to neglected projects

Opening to new things – and even loving them (cooking, poetry, hiking…)

Launching personal new undertakings – online education, writing, exercise, new language

Remembering what is personally important – new appreciation of life

Living in the present, not always in future; not letting the mind spin

Finding and sharing the Good; *Hessed*/Acts of Lovingkindness, Generosity

Volunteering – giving of oneself

Spiritual Growth – gratitude, meaning, and purpose (Torah study, *niggunim,* prayer, meditation…)

**Helpful Traits, Attitudes, Feelings that Can be a Legacy of COVID 19**

Sense of personal strength and resilience (“If I can pull through this…”)

Incorporation/Integration of gratitude (“Today will bring its blessings,” “What went well today?”)

Mental Toughness (“I can shape how I respond to stressors”)

Curiosity -- about Historic Times of Vast Communal Suffering

**On PTGS: Post-Traumatic Growth Syndrome**

Ca. 10% of population will develop PTSD (US: 30+ million people) – nightmares, flashbacks, numbness

Ca. 80% will return to their baseline

Ca. 10% will be stronger – Post-Traumatic Growth Syndrome

What are you/we going to do to cause you/us to be better after the pandemic?

How will I/we feel about myself/ourselves?

How can we live at our best anyway? (*lamrot ha-kol v’af al pi khen)*

See American Psychological Association -- <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/11/growth-trauma>

and see: *What is Post-Pandemic Growth Syndrome? with Dr. Daniel Amen*

**What Bikur Cholim Visitees, in particular, May Need in Emerging from COVID 19**

A Voice (reclaimed, restored, renewed)

Retracing Steps (“What have I been through?” -- but need not review every gory detail)

Acknowledgment, Affirmation, Recognition (of fortitude, creativity, particular supports)

Fellow Travelers, Connection (esp. others who can “take” or understand deflated spirits)

Freedom, Choice (after restraint upon restraint)

Reassurance, Comfort (after isolation, pandemic itself, economy, world conflicts, etc.)

Meaning-making tools/triggers; Torah sparks

Restarting, Re-empowerment

Humor, Joy, Celebration

Creativity

Sense of the Awesome, the Big Picture

Understanding, Compassion, Forgiveness

Communal Grieving that Names Individual Losses (To COVID and otherwise)

Communal Expressions/Attestations of Gratitude to Helpers

Place to Explore Difficult Questions

Adjusting to/Recalibrating for the Post-COVID World: Possible **Tasks/Challenges**

Sorting through **Regrets**

For “selfishness” – solipsism

For new roads not taken

Postponed/Accumulated/Complicated **Grieving**

We have to integrate (postponed, avoided, inadequate) grieving for a broad range of losses

Loss of life – personal, communal, global

Loss of health – to COVID but also suspended treatments, medication problems, etc.

Loss of employment, or opportunities in a position maintained, Loss of camaraderie

Loss of savings

Loss of sense of security, ease

Loss of trust, faith

Loss of energy, motivation

Finding **Forgiveness**

Friends and family members who fell short

One’s own limits of time, energy, finances, compassion,

Identifying and then Using **Anger**

At God

At employers, government, companies, communities, synagogues

At difficult or disappointing family members and/or friends

At Self – for not using the time better, for poor self-care

Naming **Personal Resilience** that supported you through the Pandemic

Physical/Material, Emotional/Psychological, Cultural, Social/Familial, Cognitive, Sensual, and Spiritual

Not losing the **Gains**

Post-Traumatic Growth

Humanization of virtual contacts

Mobilization for racial justice

Confronting anti-Semitism

Writing, organizing

Stress-relief strategies/practices

Pursuing new (or old/frustrated) interests; Reinventing oneself

Expressing **Gratitude**

For help from family, friends, community

For inner resilience and resources

For survival and growth

For new directions and discoveries

**Sometimes Grief Becomes Complicated, Unresolved or Stuck**

Grief impacts each person differently and prolonged grieving is not unusual. For some, during the first few months it can seem as though the feelings of grief are overwhelming and forever change all aspects of life. While there is no set formula for how long it takes to move through the grieving process, it usually takes a year after the death of a loved one to move through a wide range of grief-associated emotions and begin to come to terms with the loss.   
  
Unfortunately, some individual's response to significant loss remains stuck in an unresolved and long-lasting state. Sometimes referred to as Complicated Grief, this extreme version of the normal feelings experienced during life passage can have many of the same symptoms as post-traumatic stress disorder, including survivor guilt, extreme agitation, intense sensitivity to stimulus, and intrusive (uncontrolled and unwanted) thoughts.   
  
Typically, complicated grief is not rooted in inadequate coping after the death, but rather in the original relationship with the deceased or the manner in which they died. Some of the more typical situations include:  
  
*Sudden or traumatic death:*   
When someone dies in a sudden, shocking, or what seems a preventable way--for example, suicide, homicide, a fatal accident, fatal illness, or murder it can cause such an intense cluster of overwhelming feelings, including rage, guilt, shock, disbelief, or a desire for revenge that the release of further feelings associated with grief and the eventual acceptance of the loss become blocked.  
  
*Shame, embarrassment, or social stigma:*   
When death is related to a socially sensitive cause, such as suicide, homicide, or AIDS, some people react by feeling such overwhelming shame or confusion that they feel too unsure to express or even allow themselves to feel what the loss means for them.   
  
*Unresolved issues or unfinished business:*   
Sometimes death occurs when there are important issues that remain unresolved, for instance, a son or daughter who has not spoken to their parent for many years following a disagreement, or a spouse who dies during a time of crisis in the marriage. In such cases, when death deprives a person of ever being able to work through old issues, or eliminates the chance to tell someone how they really felt, an individual can become so focused on the unfinished aspects of the relationship that they feel incapable of moving through the many other reactions to their loss.

**What Complicated Grief Can "Look" Like**  
Indications that someone may be suffering with Complicated Grief vary with each individual and each situation, however, some of the ways it can look are listed below. When reading through these descriptions, it is important to remember that to be considered Complicated Grief, the person must have remained stuck in their feelings for a significant period of time (usually in excess of several months), unable to experience further emotional reactions of grief or to make adjustments to adapt to the reality of their loss:

* The individual has difficulty speaking of the deceased without experiencing renewed and intense grief.
* They constantly bring up themes of death and loss in even the most casual conversations.
* They have ongoing sleep problems sleeping too much or too little that persist for more than 6 weeks.
* They make sudden and radical changes in their lifestyle.
* They exhibit self-destructive behavior, for instance excessive drinking, substance abuse, or promiscuity.
* Without any real medical problems, they develop some of the same symptoms the deceased person experienced just before death.
* They avoid anyone or anything associated with the deceased, including friends, family, and previously shared activities.
* Even relatively minor events trigger an intense grief reaction.
* They have symptoms of depression, especially extreme and persistent feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and lowered self-esteem.
* Their ability to manage everyday responsibilities at work, school, or home is significantly impaired.

When grief remains unresolved, it can lead to other serious problems, including depression, anxiety disorders and even physical illnesses like heart trouble. Fortunately, for even the most severe cases, there is cause for hope. For those who find they are unable, for any reason, to come to terms with their loss, therapy can prove invaluable in moving through the grieving process and finally becoming able to come to terms with the full reality of the loss.

*From 4therapy.com network*

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On Disenfranchised Grief

Doka described the phenomenon of disenfranchised grief as “the grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not, or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported” (Kenneth J. Doka, *Disenfranchised Grief: Recognizing Hidden Sorrow*, Lexington, MA, Lexington Press, 1989, p. 4). In essence, society gives the survivor permission to grieve and sets the rules and defines not only who has the legitimate right to grieve, but where, when, and for how long. Doka explored three factors contributing to disenfranchised grief: (1) the loss is not recognized, as with prenatal deaths, abortions, or adoptions; (2) the griever is not recognized, for example, the mentally disabled or the elderly; and (3) the relationship is not recognized, as when the death is that of an ex-spouse, co-worker, or lover in an extramarital affair.

Excerpted from Sherry R. Schachter, “9/11: A Grief Therapist’s Journal”, Chapter 2 of *Living with Grief: Coping with Public Tragedy*, edited by Marcia Lattanzi-Licht and Kenneth Doka (Washington, DC: Hospice Foundation of America, 2003)

**Ten Spiritual Conflicts in Communal Disaster/Trauma**

Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW/Rabbinic Director, The Jewish Board

*(Please note*: The conflicts that are listed here are overlapping, not distinct, and in no order of experience or priority; and many people may not have/use these words for their challenge/s…)

**1…Trust vs. Distrust**

*Can I depend on anything, anyone, the Cosmos, God…? Is there any real trust?*

**2…Meaning/Role/Purpose vs. Emptiness/Void**

*What can it all be about, what can really ‘hold water’? What narrative, if any, works?*

**3…Order vs. Chaos**

*Is there really any system, any sequence, any causality in events?*

**4…Security/Protection vs. Vulnerability/Exposure**

*Is anyone safe, or are we all just targets, sitting ducks?*

**5…Independence/Self-Determination vs. Powerlessness/Total Neediness**

*What authentic choices do I have? Can my most considered, compliant behavior have any real of desired impact?*

**6…Direction vs. Aimlessness**

*What do I need to do now? Home must I act, respond, change?*

**7…Hope vs. Despair**

*How can tomorrow be any better? What comfort, joy, wholeness, light, or inspiration can there really be?*

**8…Concern /Omnipresence of the Ultimate vs. Abandonment/Hidden Countenance**

*Precisely when so many needed or sought Salvation, where was the Almighty?*

**9…*Hessed v’Rahamim*/Lovingkindness & Mercy vs. *Din* va*Onesh*/Strict Limits & Punishment**

*Where is the Compassion/Grace/Generous Spirit – all we have experienced is the Assault, the Destruction, the Noose?*

**10… Familiar, At-Home, Normal vs. Alienated, Aberrant, Unmoored**

*The whole equation seems to have changed; the Universe has shifted; the gap between myself and close ones is unbridgeable; I feel existentially isolated now….*

**Coping with Moral Injury**

**Moral injury** is an injury to an individual’s moral conscience resulting from an act of perceived moral transgression which produces profound emotional shame. (*WikiQuotes*)

Moral injury is present when

1. There has been a betrayal of what’s right
2. By someone who holds legitimate authority
3. In a high-stakes situation

*(Jonathan Shay, “Casualties,” Daedalus, vol. 140, no. 3, 2001, p.18*)

Moral injury results when soldiers violate their core moral beliefs, and in evaluating their behavior negatively, they feel they no longer live in a reliable, meaningful world, and can no longer be regarded as decent human beings.

*Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury After War (2012) p. xv*

With COVID 19: Moral injury has impacted a broad range of people, e.g.:

Bikur Cholim volunteers who were hog-tied in terms of how/what they could do

Family members of the ill, of the elderly in institutionalized care

Health care professionals –making life/death choices, apportioning care

Parents who could not adequately school their children, manage work and home, etc.

The immunocompromised who could not join in racial justice demonstrations

Clergy – seriously limited involvement with bereaved, troubled, stressed-out people

Teachers – who could not assess or ensure students’ growth

Essential workers, who, inadequately protected, unwittingly contributed to loved ones’ getting COVID

**Some Reactions Among Helpers Following Communal Disasters**

Just Some of the Possible Responses, In No Special Order, Often Combined….

Gathered by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW © 2004

1. Compassion Fatigue, Exhaustion

2. Discounting, Downplaying, Rejecting

3. Numbness, Frozenness

4. Distraction, Checking Out

5. Impatience, Fidgeting

6. Despair, Hopelessness

7. Rage, Hostility, Aggression

8. Blaming the Victim

9. Depression, Paralyzing Sadness, Immobilizing Grief

10. Confusion, A Chaotic Sense of What’s Out There

11. Split, Alienated

12. Helpless, Frustrated

13. Confused, “Sloshing,” At Sea

14. Loss of Boundaries; “Enlistment” into the Conflicts/Struggles

15. Anxiety, Vigilance

16. Turning Inward; Self-Protection; Self-Absorption

17. Intellectualizing, Lecturing, Preaching

18. Becoming the Savior; Jumping to Fix It All

**Seven “Classical” Jewish Spiritual Responses to Communal Trauma**

*Gathered by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW; in no special order of importance nor prominence*

1. **Fasting** – as in *Esther 4:3*; sharing a common bond of vulnerability *and* vision, both turning inward and affirming communal strength; the “weakness before strength”
2. **Psalms** – as prayer, meditation, study, chanting, ritual, community, conversation….

For times of communal distress: 20, 28, 85, 86, 102, 130, 142

For help in troublesome times: 16, 20, 25, 26, 38, 54, 81, 85, 86, 87, 102, 130, 142

When the land of Israel is in danger: 83, 130, 142

1. ***Tz’dakah*** – Material/financial gifts to repair the world – particularly to restore justice and expand righteousness – “lifting the material to the level of the spiritual”
2. ***Hessed*** – Direct, interpersonal deeds of lovingkindness, caring, compassion
3. **Torah Study** – in traditional circles, *mishnayot*
4. **Memorials** – in particular, to inspire us and to carry on the values/deeds of the deceased
5. **Lamentations** – Book of *Eikhah* as well as medieval and more contemporary compositions.

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Weakness and Strength: A Teaching of the Koretzer

“Oftentimes apparent weakness denotes strength that is to come. At the moment of birth, no living creature is as weak and helpless as man, yet man grows up to be master of all life.

“The horse secures his rest through sleep while standing; the cattle rest while kneeling; only man is so weak that he must lie down with his entire body. This also denotes his superiority, since he rests his mind and nerves in this fashion, and awakens with renewed strength.

“We thus behold that there is frequently weakness before strength. We fast on Yom Kippur and on other days: to create weakness in order to attain the strength which follows it. It is preferable to become weak through fasting than through controversies and illness. But in any case, a man’s troubles though they weaken him for the moment oftentimes cause him to be stronger, both physically and mentally, than before.

“The man who is popular and influential needs to fast at regular intervals. He cannot remain masterful of spirit for a very long time without weakening it at interludes.

“A man who was constantly cheerful and in happy mood became very ill. The Rabbi commanded him to fast and he was cured. Thus, fasting became a substitute for sickness by lowering his exorbitant good cheer at times.

“Sometimes a singer cannot reach the higher notes. Another man comes to his aid and sings in a loud tone. This gives to the first man, also, the ability to raise his voice. It is a result of the communion of two spirits, wherein each becomes a partner in the other’s strength.

“Sometimes a man does not understand the theme of his study. But when he discusses it with a comrade, it suddenly becomes clear. This results, also, from the cleaving of two souls: it gives birth to new understanding and to new wisdom.”

*From* **Nofet Tzufim***, by Pinchas ben Avraham Abba Shapira of Koretz (born 1728; died 10th of Elul, 1791), a disciple of the Ba’al Shem Tov. (Published in Warsaw, 1929, pp 5-7). This teaching is reproduced in Louis I. Newman’s* Hasidic Anthology *(New York: Schocken pbk, 1963), pp 455-56.*

**The Challenges of Asking for, and/or Accepting, Help:**

If a (poor) man says, ‘I ought not be supported by others,’ then one should watch over him, and support him, giving him help as a loan, and then letting him regard the loan as a gift. This was Rabbi Me’ir’s opinion. But the Sages held that the help should be first given as a gift, and then that he should be told that it could be regarded as a loan. Rabbi Shimon said that he should be asked for a pledge, so as to preserve his self-respect. *Tosefta Pe’ah 4:12*

If a needy man refuses to accept charity, aid must be given him in the form of a loan, and no attempt should be made to collect it. *Yalkut Shimoni on Deuteronomy 15:7-11.*

The wife of Rabbi Naftali of Ropshitz\* said to him: “Your prayer was lengthy today. Have you succeeded in bringing it about that the wealthy should be more generous in their gifts to the poor?”

The Rabbi replied: “Half of my prayer I have accomplished: The poor are willing to accept them.”

*\*died 1827* *Ohel Naftali (published in Yiddish; Lemberg: Zeidman and Ausnit, 1912), page 29*

**Seven Guidelines of Helping People Ask for, and Accept, Help**

*Summary © Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW, August 2009*

**\* Outreach/Education/Exposure:** Regular, consistent promotion of services and programs (name and literature visible and prominent, even ubiquitous!) – “For Everybody in Need.”

**\* Testimonies/Normalizing/Destigmatizing:** Concrete stories/examples of *need-and-helpful-response* that make asking for/accepting help more and more familiar, routine, expected, and respected – through sermons, *divrei Torah*, bulletin pieces, courses, committee meetings, etc.

**\* Flexibility, Openness, Fluidity:** People need a variety of opportunities and channels in order to get help: Gifts, Loans, Shared Equipment, Business Transactions, Networking Connections, Service Bartering, Moral Support and Informal Encouragement, Help with Marketing, etc., etc. (“It was taught in the name of R. Joshua: ‘More than the householder does for the poor man does the poor man do for the householder’…”-- *Midrash Ruth Rabbah 5:9 on 2:18)*

**\* Required Helpfulness -- Key is Empowerment:** So many folks do not want to be (or be perceived to be) dependent – *and* it is an important part of people’s healing and growth for them to do for others. Utilizing their hard-won skills, and also developing new ones, can be a great blessing and an important aspect of growth and healing. (“Even a poor man who lives off *Tz’dakah* must perform acts of *Tz’dakah.”* -- *Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 7a)*

**\* Tactful, Judicious, Discreet, Compassionate Partnering:** Interpersonal stance of leaders and of the community is critical – accompanying words need to be sensitive and supportive. (Consider, e.g., metaphor of *Hashavat Aveidot*.)

**\* Building a Tolerance for Change and the Cyclical Nature of Socioeconomics:** Part of our human nature relies heavily on routine, predictability, and consistency – but social, political, and economic realities shift, sometimes rapidly. (“Poverty is a Wheel” – *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 151b*)

**\* The Ultimate Value, *and Imperfection*, of any Community:** The extended *mishpucha* of the Jewish community will do its best – and make some mistakes, as mortals.

**Jewish Spiritual Treatment Plans: Seven Grids**

*Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW © 2006*

-- “Who is the one who desires/is eager for life, who loves days, to see Good?

Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from deceitful speech.

Shun evil and do good,

Seek out amity/integrity, and pursue it.” (*Psalms 34:13-15*)

-- “God has told you, O human, what is good, what is required of you: to do justice, to love goodness, and walk humbly with your God.” (*Micah 6:8*)

-- “Simon the Just used to say: On three things does the world rest: on Torah, on *Avodah*/Divine service, and on *G'milut Hassadim*/Deeds of Lovingkindness (*Pirke Avot*/*Ethics of the Fathers 1:2*)

-- *T’shuvah* (return/repentance/response), *T’filah* (prayer/self-examination), and *Tz’dakah* (Justice through active,generous realignment of the material and the spiritual) avert the severity of the decree” (High Holiday liturgy)

-- Reb Nahman's *Tikkun HaKlali*/”Complete Remedy”:: *Mikvah* (Nature/Blessings); *Tz'dakah* (Elevating the Material to the Spiritual; fixing the world one piece at a time); *Sh'mot Hatzaddikim* (learning from those who have gone before) and *Tehillim*/Psalms.

-- Reaching Out, Reaching Up, Reaching In (= Relationship to Community, to

God, to Self)

-- Drawing on R. Mordecai Kaplan’s Ideas (*thanks to Rabbi Elisa Goldberg*):

*Behaving*: *Mitzvot*, lifecycle moments, holiday celebrations, *tz’dakah* …

*Belonging*: Community, culture, history…

*Believing*: Trust/Faith, meaning, theology…

*Being*: Transcendence, mindfulness, gratitude, presence, embodying…

***A Slow Dance in Time:* Grief and the Jewish Holiday Cycle**

*Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW © 2003*

What follows is an attempt to begin to chart the resources and challenges that the annual cycle of Jewish holidays may offer for those who are bereaved. Please note that some of these may well cut across *all* holidays -- for example, “candles” as a helpful ritual, or “loneliness” as a pitfall – so those important words, common to many holidays, may not be noted below. Also, this chart only includes *some* illustrative/suggestive words to point to *some* possibilities; different strokes for different Jewish folks! Finally, it includes only some of the more commonly observed markers in the communal Jewish year, omitting, for example, special *Shabbatot*, “minor” fast days, the very different *Rashei Hodesh* (New Moons), etc.

**Holiday Salient themes Some Helpful Particular Pitfalls;**

**and images Rituals/Words Possible challenges**

***Rosh HaShannah*** Review, Return Psalms, Prayers Self-Blaming

Rebirth Difficult/healing Overwhelmedness

Self-examination encounters with Despair, Isolation

Forgiveness family, friends Starting over when

Change Rabbinic Guidance you’re stuck

Life in the Balance *Tashlikh*

*Shofar*, Cards

***Yom Kippur*** Reconciliation At-one-ment Depletion, Depression

Life/Death Mercy; *Kitte*l Starkness

Belief you are/can be Massive assembly Denouement

forgiven Fasting; Cleansing Feeling low at a high

White; Clean slate *Yizkor*; Martyrology point

Needing less Poetry; Book of Jonah Alienated, fraudulent

Holiness Break-Fast Disenfranchised

***Sukkot*** Shelter Sukkah; Temporary “Rejoicing” Fullness/Vulnera- Dwelling; *Ushpizin* Decay

ability *Arba Minim* Fragility

Nature’s Maturing *Hoshannot* Circuits Inaccessibility In/security *Hag HeAsif*/Harvest

Hospitality *Kohelet*/Ecclesiastes

Intimacy with GodBeat the willows

Exposure/Shelter

Rootlessness/Home

Wandering/Return

Exile/Eternity

**Holiday Salient themes Some Helpful Particular Pitfalls;**

**and images Rituals/Words Possible challenges**

***Shemini Atzeret*** Assembly *Tefillat Geshem* Inability to dance

***& Simhat Torah*** Cycle of Torah/Life *Yizkor* Conflicting emotions

Torah Celebration *Aliyot* for Bereaved Isolation

Revelry Dancing in the streets

Completing; Starting over

***Hanukkah*** Lights in Darkness Candlelighting Apartness, Isolation

Survival;Victory *Latkes, Sufganiot* from Party mode

Autonomy/Identity Singing Clash of Inner/Outer

Rededication Gifts, Games Infantilizing

Values clarification Consumerism,

Victory of the Spirit Materialsim

Miracles… …Reality

Judaism publically

***Tu B’Shvat*** New Year for Trees\* ‘Tasting’ *Seder* Irrelevance, Stretch

Cosmic/Intentional Memorial Tree Distant/Abstract

Rebirthing Planting

Honi/Planting for Israel-focus

the future

Restoration of Rel.

to Nature

***Purim*** Victory *Megillah* reading Infantilization;

Self-mockery Masquerades Dissonance

Appearance vs. Parodies, Farce Inebriation

Reality  *Purim Torah* Threat, and actual,

Measure for Measure Festive *S’udah* death/destruction

Chance vs. Destiny *Mishloah Manot* Lack of boundaries;

Threat & Survival *Mattanot laEvyonim* nihilism

God’s Hidden Face Feel good, let loose

Living in exile (*Adloyada*); Noisemaking

***Passover*** Bondage & Liberation Cleansing, Changeover Empty chairs

Spring; Rebirth *Seder*(ritual, symbols*)* Family, Family*,*

Exodus; Redemption *Haggadah*/Telling our Family!

Hope; Renewal story asking our questions Food-centered

God more powerful Elijah (denial and

than Death Re-experiencing indulgence)

Outstretched Arm emergence Labor-intensive

Humility; Gratitude *Matzah* vs. *Hametz*

Searching… Search, nullify, burn

Future Redemption Hospitality; Needy

**Holiday Salient themes Some Helpful Particular Pitfalls;**

**and images Rituals/Words Possible challenges**

***Yom HaShoah*** Remembrance Silence Overburdening

Loss & Survival *El Maleh Rahamim;* unwitting disen-

*Kiddush Hashem* *Kaddish*; Psalmsfranchising of

Righteous Gentiles Names; Accounts immediate and

Jobian grappling personal loss/es

with God

***Yom HaZikkaron*** Remembrance Candles, cemeteries, “Bereavement

of those who Psalms, sp. *Yizkor,*  Overload”

died fighting *Kaddish, El Maleh*

for Israel Silence

***Yom HaAtzmaut*** National Rebirth Celebrations Dissonance

& Independence Psalms, *S’udah* Distance

& Redemption Poetry

& Strength

Doing for ourselves

Taking history in hand

“Reaping in joy”

***Shavuot*** Giving of Torah Intimate/intensive May seem ‘weak,’ Harvest; Torahstudy; ‘alien’ to many

First Fruits *Tikkun*

Revelation Entire Book of *Psalms*

Covenant *Yizkor*

Ongoing Sinai Natural decorations

Heavens open Eating dairy foods

To Prayer Book of *Ruth*

***Bein HaMtzarim/***

***Three weeks &*** Multiple losses Communal mourning; Devastating

***Tish’a B’Av*** Low points; inter/national *‘shiv’ah’*  layers of grief

Accumulated *Eikhah*/Lamentations ‘Impersonal’

Tragedies *Iyyov*/Job Summertime

End of Jewish *Kinot* – liturgical poems ‘clash’

Sovereignty of grief; sit on floor

Exile No greeting, no other

Prayers shut out Torah, no *tallit/tefillin*

by God (*Lam. 3:8*) Sweeping house in pm,

Yearning and . anticipating Messiah

mutual grieving also *naheim* paragraph

of God & Israel Lead-in to comfort

*\* The* ***Four Jewish New Years*** *are Nisan (the “first month”, in the Spring); Rosh HaShannah; Tu B’Shvat (arbor day; agricultural tithing); and Elul (for tithing animals)*

*Preface*: In our fragmented, heavily diagnosis-oriented systems, we often neglect to assess individuals’ and families’ innate or historical resources – and to help them name and access these as tools or supports in their healing. (Please note: It doesn’t really matter *how* you classify these – what matters most is that we notice and consider/identify them.) Someone may be very limited in one area and rich in another, and many people may never have considered/named their diverse resources, especially some more intangible ones. The questions noted below are simply suggestions – not a fixed formula!

**Seven Dimensions of Resilience/Resources\***

*Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW © 2008-9*

**1. Physical/Material:**

*What bodily diseases or difficulties have you met/overcome before, and how?*

*Where/how are you currently able, strong and/or whole? Physically open and growing?*

*In the past, what physical blessings have served you well?*

*Is there an object or place that helps you feel grounded, serene, joyous, and/or peaceful?*

**2. Emotional/Psychological:**

*What are your emotional gifts – which emotions are you ‘good at’ or experienced with?*

*What emotional struggling have you done, with some success and growth?*

*To what positive emotions do you default (self-soothing, humor, self-assertion…)?*

*Right now, what emotional ‘muscles’ are highly developed, accessible, active – such as impatience, fear, relief, anger, curiosity, anxiety, gratitude, etc., etc.?*

**3. Cultural:**

*What characteristics of your culture – from your community of origin and/or current identifications – could serve you now, or as you move ahead?*

*Whether you like these or not, how might they be part of your useful ‘toolkit’?*

**4. Social/Familial:**

*What relationships do you have in your life that can be nurturing/helpful, in any way?*

*In the past, which relationships (family, friends, work, etc.) truly supported you when you needed help/suport? Which blessings did you inherit from your family or friendship circle?*

*Which relationships gave you lasting gifts – and what are these?*

*Which relationships could you nurture?*

**5. Cognitive:**

*What cognitive strengths do you bring to problem-solving in relation to your health?*

*In what academic subjects did you, or would you like to, shine?*

*When did a ‘different approach’ to thinking/learning contribute to your progress?*

*Can you recall an experience of reframing or ‘re-thinking’ that helped you?*

**6. Sensual:**

*Which of your senses have been particularly available, strong, impactful?*

*Are you oriented more to: Sight? Smell? Sound? Movement? Touch? Taste?*

*What have been your most sustaining experiences in Nature?*

**7. Spiritual:**

*How do you see yourself in this life, on this planet, in terms of purpose and identity?*

*Do you identify with certain spiritual images, stories, sayings, rituals?*

*How/Do you connect with a Higher Power, or The Big Picture, or Transcendence?*

*Have you dealt with something difficult and found meaning in it or through it?*

*\*Many thanks to Michael Harrison, Rechel Schoenfeld, Amy Berenson, and other colleagues who helped with this.*

**(What you might call) “Ten Jewish Resilience Teachings”**

**One Parent, One Power, One Mold: The Unique and Beyond-Value Nature of All**

Human was created as a single individual

to teach you that anyone who destroys a single soul is as though he destroyed an entire world,

and anyone who preserves a single soul is as though he preserved an entire world;

and to preserve peace/harmony among creatures,

so that one person not say to the next, “my father is greater than your father,”

or as some might say, “there are multiple powers in heaven.”

And to show the greatness of the Holy Blessed One,

for while a person stamps many coins from a single mold,

and all that are produced come out alike,

the King of Kings, the Holy Blessed One,

has stamped every person with the mold of the first Adam,

yet not one of them is like his fellow.

And so, each and every individual is obligated to say,

“For my sake was the world created….”

# *Mishnah Sanhedrin, 4:5*

**Repress and/or Express**

דאגה בלב איש ישחנה רבי אמי ורבי אסי, חד אמר: ישחנה מדעתו, וחד אמר: ישיחנה לאחרים

﻿﻿“Anxiety in the heart of a man weighs him down…”(*Proverbs 12:25*)

﻿R. Ammi and R. Assi [explained it differently]:

One said: One should force it down;

the other said: One should talk about it with others.\*

*Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 75a*

\*One connects the word *yashhenna* (bows/weighs him down) with the Hebrew *nassah*, “to remove”; the other with the Hebrew *suh*, “to speak”. (Note: The verse from Proverbs 12 ends with: “but a good word makes him glad.”)

**“And Suffering without Transgression….”**

In the *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 55b*, at the conclusion of a theological discussion that goes on for about a half a page, it states:

﻿ושמע מינה: יש מיתה בלא חטא, ויש יסורין בלא עון

"We see from this that there is death without sin ,and there is suffering without transgression.

**Paths to Healing**

Anger bottled up inside can lead to an explosion

while acknowledging emotions and understanding pain leads to healing.

*Rabbi Moshe b. Adrianopolis Alshikh (b. 1508, d. Damascus 1600), on Numbers 32:7-9, when Moshe upbraids the tribes of Gad and Reuven for their selfish disregard of Israel’s unity*

**Hand-to-Hand**

As one hand washes the other, so must one person help another.

*Leon of Modena, in Tzemah Tzedek, 1600*

**Shmutzik, A Bisseleh…**

If you want to help pull a friend out of the mire, don’t hesitate to get a little dirty.

*Ba’al Shem Tov (Israel ben Eliezer, 1700-1760)*

**Breaking the Power of the Evil Inclination and Re-finding a Pathway to God**

Share all your negative thoughts and feeling

-- those that oppose our holy Torah,

and are brought forth by the evil inclination –

with a spiritual mentor or trusted friend….

Do not leave out anything from these conversations

because of your shame or embarrassment.

By speaking about such things, by bringing them into the open,

you will break the power of the evil inclination,

so that it will not rise up against you at other times.

You will also retrieve the good counsel of your friend,

which is itself a wondrous treasure,

A pathway to God

*R. Elimeleh of Lizhensk (1717-1787) Tzetel HaKatan, # 13*

**Interdependence and Mutual Bonds**

Every people draws sustenance from others, from the heritage of the generations, from the achievements of the human spirit in all eras and all countries. Mutual dependence is a cosmic and eternal law. There is nothing in the world, large or small, from the invisible electron to the most massive bodies in infinite space, which has not bonds with its fellows or with unlike bodies. The whole of existence is an infinite chain of mutual bonds, and applies to the world of the spirit as well as to the world of matter.

*David Ben Gurion, Atlantic Monthly, November 1961*

**“Times for Transcendent Actions”**

People often perceive themselves in terms of their constraints as mortal beings.

Yet there are times that call for transcendent actions.

One must at times do more than one can possibly do,

for each mortal is endowed with a G\*dly soul,

and G\*d transcends mortal constraints.”

*– R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994),*

*known as “the Lubavitcher Rebbe” (or just “the Rebbe” among his followers),*

*was a prominent Hasidic rabbi, the seventh and last Rebbe of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.*

**On Holding Hands**

I was sitting on a beach one summer day, watching two children, a boy and a girl, playing in the sand. They were hard at work building an elaborate sandcastle by the water’s edge, with gates and towers and moats and internal passages. Just when they had nearly finished their project, a big wave came and knocked it down, reducing it to a heap of wet sand. I expected the children to burst into tears, devastated by what had happened to all their hard work. But they surprised me. Instead, they ran up the shore away from the water, laughing and holding hands, and sat down to build another castle. I realized that they had taught me an important lesson. All the things in our lives, all the complicated structures we spend so much time and energy creating, are built on sand. Only our relationships to other people endure. Sooner or later, the wave will come along and knock down what we have worked so hard to build up. When that happens, only the person who has somebody’s hand to hold will be able to laugh.

*Harold Kushner, When All You’ve Ever Wanted Isn’t Enough*

**Just Seven Jewish Quotes Somehow Related to Hope**

## Painfully Selected by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW, December 2002

Do not regard yourself as wholly evil so that you give up hope of improvement.   
You are not beyond redemption: exaggerate neither your virtues nor your faults.  
When I have a low opinion of myself, any meanness I am guilty of does not seem surprising or outrageous to me. *Rambam/Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon/Maimonides, 1135-1204*

Miracles sometimes occur, but you have to work terribly hard for them. *Chaim Weizman*

A religious man is a person who holds God and man in one thought at one time, at all times, who suffers harm done to others, whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair. *Abraham Joshua Heschel, Man is Not Alone*

From the Jewish heritage, I have derived my world outlook, a God-centered interpretation of reality in the light of which man the individual is clothed with dignity, and the career of humanity with cosmic meaning and hope; a humane morality, elevated in its aspirations yet sensibly realistic; a system of rituals which interpenetrates my daily routines and invests them with poetry and intimations of the divine. *Rabbi Milton Steinberg, Basic Judaism*

There is a plan to this universe. There is a high intelligence, maybe even a purpose, but it’s given to us on the installment plan…I would say that man is not born to know God but to search for God. The search is in itself a way of serving God. If we search for God and we are good to human beings, we are doing more or less our job. I could never believe in this business that evolution did it all….Modern man is inclined to feel that there is no purpose to the universe, no sense even. There were atoms and they combined and combined, and this is how the universe came out. This to me is sheer nonsense. It is as if one would say there is a printing shop in heaven and letters were dropped down to earth and the result is Homer, de Maupassant, and the Bible. I just don’t believe in this kind of nonsense.

*Isaac Bashevis Singer, Conversations*

Life without hope is hopeless. If we could not hope for a second chance when life inflicts a severe defeat on us, if we could not hope for strength when we have been betrayed, if we could not hope for healing when we have been bruised, if we could not hope for eternity when the winter of our lives drives home the inescapable fact of our mortality – if in all these trials hope did not sustain us, then the burden of life would become insufferable.

“Hope,” it has been said, “is the promissory note of life on which the principal never matures, but which pays compound interest to those who render their best services each day.”

According to an old parable, on one summer night two frogs fell into a bucket of milk. The first frog, realizing the hopelessness of his situation, promptly gave up and drowned. The second frog began thrashing about furiously with all his might. The following morning the farmer was surprised to find his bucket of milk turned to butter and there was a frog sitting on the top of it.

Let us cling stubbornly to our hopes. They keep us alive. *Rabbi Sidney Greenberg*

More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly. *Woody Allen*

**18 Ideas for Sustaining Connections in the Congregation During/ ‘After’ COVID**

Arrange Zoom *hevrutah* (or small-group) study of a word, *pasuk*, section, or issue from the weekly *parashah* – each is given the ‘challenge’ on Sunday and then contribute to a discussion on Shabbat

Joint ‘out of the box’ exploration/research of curious/lingering questions of interest to congregants, e.g.:

*Commentaries/Midrashim on Moshe’s wives. When/where is Jesus quoted in the Talmud?*

*How have Jews (or how has Judaism) dealt with suffering/communal calamities over the centuries?*

Join in Healing Activities in Nature – planting, pruning, cleaning, harvesting, playing, birding, photographing, drawing, making (and stocking!) birdfeeders

Movement instruction to Music on Zoom

Organize cooking, carpentry, ceramics, sewing or knitting, children’s books, toys, etc. -- for refugees, the needy, survivors of domestic violence, etc.

Inspire, guide, and share creative writing and visual art (e.g., collage) related to the Pandemic (or not!)

Coordinate reading of stories over Zoom/phone to children, homebound people,

Launch the preparation of contributions for a community “Gomel Quilt” pieces, to be assembled when the Pandemic passes from acute to chronic challenge

In small groups, share aphorisms, quotes, book excerpts, poetry than can bring inspiration and help

sustain motivation; edit and publish these when Pandemic subsides

“Good Enough” (Jewish?) Humor Exchange (can be done in categories, such as ‘synagogues,’ ‘family life,’

‘marriage,’ ‘a rabbi, a priest, and a minister,’ etc.)

Adapt game shows (Jeopardy, Password, To Tell the Truth, etc.) with Jewish content (History, Holidays, Liturgy, Zionism, Yiddishisms, etc.) adapted to Zoom – have an M.C./Host, participants, and audience

Guided Jewish meditations

Psalms series – could be Psalms in liturgy; for particular holidays, situations, or occasions; or concerning “timely themes (such as “Complaint and Gratitude,” “Distress and Trust,” etc.)

Have people share “things you don’t know about me,” or “stories about my family you may not know”

Life Stories Interviews – e.g., High School students interview Seniors, American-born members interview immigrants, aspiring young writers interview established authors, etc.

Celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, achievements, etc. (could include tributes and/or roasts, original prayers, remarks from unexpected figures, etc.)

Random Acts of Cardness: Craft homemade cards for people in the armed services, neighbors, family members, folks in nursing homes or hospice care, healthcare professionals or unsung essential workers

**A Random Listing of Jewish Spiritual Resources**

*in no special order*

*Note: These 18 categories are far from distinct, but, rather, overlap substantially!*

Community, Fellowship

Torah Study (Bible in general, weekly Torah portion, special *sugyot* from the Talmud, classical commentaries, Midrashic texts, etc.)

Ethical treatises, ethical wills; *Mussar* ethical self-betterment literature

Prayer – fixed and spontaneous; for study as well as devotion

Ritual, traditional and innovative

Ritual objects – for handling, reflection, storytelling

Psalms

Poetry (from Bible through medieval through contemporary….)

*Tikkun Olam*/Repairing the World

Natural Resources, as/with blessings

Food, as/with blessings

Songs, Chants, *Niggunim*/Wordless Melodies

Wise Sayings

Stories from throughout the Jewish library – Biblical, Talmudic/Midrashic, medieval folk literature, Hassidic parables, Yiddish folktales, contemporary secular and religious narrative, your own stories

Humor

Meditation, Silence, Breathing

Movement, Dance

Memory

Healing Trips to Israel (Added December 2005)

*© Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW 2006*

**How To Study Mishnah**

So how can you jump into the Mishnah and experience it for yourself? It is, after all, an intimidating text. Here are a few recommendations.

**1. Enroll in this**[**Introduction to Mishnah class**](https://darshanyeshiva.org/intro-to-the-mishnah-lex-rofes/)**, available through**[**Darshan Yeshiva**](https://darshanyeshiva.org/)**.**

These seven short podcasts (one introductory, and one for each book of the Mishnah), provide a general taste of what the Mishnah has to offer. This should help give you some confidence to feel ready to jump into the text yourself. (Other Jewish course providers, both online and bricks-and-mortar, also sometimes offer introductory Mishnah classes. You may want to inquire at local synagogues, Jewish community centers and universities.)

**2. Listen to free**[**#YourTorah podcasts**](https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/yourtorah/id1297027145?mt=2)**produced by JOFA UK.**

These 18-minute podcasts, each taught by a female scholar, are designed to give an overview of each tractate of the Mishnah. The podcasts include “Why Study Mishnah” and “What Is Mishnah.”

**3. Choose one tractate of the Mishnah that particularly interests you, such as B’rachot (on blessings), Pesachim (on Passover), or Kiddushin (on marriage).**

Then purchase the volume of the [Kehati Mishnah](http://amzn.to/2gHmCFi" \t "_blank)(Hebrew-English edition) that contains that tractate. Or [download it for free](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/kehati/id1059791961?mt=8) to read on an iOS mobile device. The Kehati translation is the only one we know of that provides detailed explanatory notes for beginners. While it lacks explanatory notes, [Sefaria](http://www.sefaria.org/texts/Mishnah" \t "_blank) contains the entire [Mishnah in translation](http://www.sefaria.org/texts/Mishnah) for free. In addition to being affordable, an advantage of reading on Sefaria is that the site hyperlinks to numerous other related Jewish texts.

**4. Find a study partner.**

This person might be located in your neighborhood, but he or she  could also be a friend from afar, with whom you can study via Skype or another video-conferencing platform. Some programs, such as [Project Zug](https://www.projectzug.org/) (a partnership of [Mechon Hadar](https://www.mechonhadar.org/" \t "_blank) and [Panim](http://www.panim.org.il/), two nondenominational Jewish educational institutions) and [Partners In Torah](http://www.partnersintorah.org/) (an Orthodox outreach program), will help you find a knowledgeable partner/tutor. Study together, and slowly! There will be elements of the text that seem confusing. Work through them as best as you can, and as you progress through a few chapters, certain elements will become easier to understand.

**5. Embrace both the challenge and the reward.**

This text is a hidden gem of the Jewish tradition. Wishing you nothing but joy as you journey your way through it!

FROM **MY JEWISH LEARNING**:

https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/why-the-mishnah-is-the-best-jewish-book-youve-never-read/?utm\_source=mjl\_maropost&utm\_campaign=MJL&utm\_medium=email

**Required Helpfulness**

Individuals having to contend with stressful and dangerous situations may sometimes experience enduring positive changes in their lives when they are required to perform actions that significantly help others in their personal times of need. Rachman (1979\*) refers to this phenomenon as “required helpfulness.” It was originally observed among the citizens of war-torn Britain during World War II. Doctors found that after aerial bombardments, citizens who served the immediate needs of others, to essentially protect the safety and well-being of others, experienced fewer than anticipated adverse psychological reactions from the trauma of the aerial assaults. One observer even noted that individuals who were of poor mental health prior to the air raids were actually faring much better following the raids if they had a personally satisfying job to perform that others saw as socially necessary….

The phenomenon of required helpfulness has also been tested experimentally. Researchers asked a group of individuals who were very fearful of snakes to help other individuals with similar fears. By modeling effective coping strategies, the helpers actually experienced a reduction in their own fear responses…

From Mark Katz, On Playing a Poor Hand Well (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997)

\*S. Rachman, “The concept of required helpfulness,” Behavior Research and Therapy, 17 (1979), pages 1-6.

**Helping One Another**

As one hand washes the other, so must one person help another.

*Leon of Modena, in Tzemah Tzedek, 1600*

If you want to help pull a friend out of the mire, don’t hesitate to get a little dirty.

*Ba’al Shem Tov (Israel ben Eliezer, 1700-1760)*

The Lord will help – only: Help me, Lord, until the Lord will help!

*Yiddish Proverb*

None of us has solid ground under his feet; each of us is only held up the neighborly hands holding him by the scruff, with the result that we are each held up by the next man, and often, indeed most of the time, hold each other up mutually.

*Franz Rosenzweig, in a letter written to his future sister-in-law*

Judaism is less about believing and more about belonging. It is less about what we owe God and more about what we owe each other, because we believe God cares more about how we treat each other than He does about our theology.

### *Rabbi Harold S. Kushner, To Life!*



“***Black Also Has Many Shades***” Art Workshop led by Tamar Hazut, MA

with the Jewish Board’s 9/11 Group in Jerusalem, Israel, December 2005

Meeting at Peter’s Bench/October 28, 2004

Better to lease one garden and cultivate it, than to lease many and neglect them.

# *Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah, 4:6*

The Holy Blessed One led Adam through the Garden of Eden, and said:

“I created all My beautiful and glorious works for your sake.

Take heed not to corrupt and destroy My world!”

# *Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah, 7:13*

Because of the thorns, uproot not a garden! *Al-Harizi, Tahkemoni, 13th century, Chapter 1*

The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature. As long as this exists, and it certainly always will, I know that then there will always be comfort for every sorrow, whatever the circumstances may be. And I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles.

-- *Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl, 1947*

I know that God loves beauty, for He allows it to flourish everywhere, even in unexpected places. In the woods He has scattered all kinds of wild flowers. In a ruin wrought by men, who have cut down beautiful trees and left the brush in disorder, the Creator has caused the ungainly sight to be covered over with a verdant growth: raspberry bushes have come up and new trees are growing. It is He who made the sunrise and the sunset, the towering mountains, and the sharp drop of the lowlands. He made the birds with the infinite variety of their plumage, and He wrought a child’s smile.

I know, too, that God loves beauty, because He placed the love of beauty in the human heart. He inspired the vision of artists, from whose soul the beauty of the world evokes the resonance of a new beauty, of their own creating. And even those who are not so deeply inspired know instinctively how to choose the beautiful and shun the ugly. *Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser (1907-1984)*

We know ourselves to be made from this earth. We know this earth is made from our bodies. For we see ourselves. And we are nature. We are nature seeing nature. We are nature with a concept of nature. Nature weeping. Nature speaking of nature to nature.

# *Susan Griffin, Women and Nature, 1980*

As I kneel to put the seeds in

careful as stitching, I am in love.

You are the bed we all sleep on.

You are the food we eat, the food

we ate, the food we will become.

We are walking trees rooted in you.

*Marge Piercy, “The Common Living Dirt,” in Stone, Paper, Knife, 1983*

When you see a beautiful plant, pronounce the blessing:

”Praised be the One who creates beautiful things.”

*Tosefta B’rakhot*

**10 Healing Activities in Nature, with Lines from Psalms/*Tehillim* as *Kavvanot***

With candle-lighting: *Ki Ata ta’ir neiri, Adonai, Elohai, ya-giah hosh-ki.*

It is You who lights my candle; Adonai, my God, illumines the darkness. *(Psalms 18:29)*

With planting seeds or nurturing plants:

*V’haya k’etz sha-tul al pal-gei mayyim,*

*Asher piryo yi-ten b’ito, V’a-leihu lo yi-bol,*

*V’khol a-sherr ya’aseh yatz-liah.*

Like a tree planted alongside streams of water,

which will yield its fruit in season, whose foliage will not fade,

and all it undertakes succeeds. *(Psalms 1:3)*

With stroking a pet: *Tov Adonai lakol, v’rahamav al kol ma’asav*

Adonai extends Goodness to all; Adonai’s Compassion reaches all creatures. *(Psalms 145:9)*

With breathing slowly: *Kol ha-n’shama t’hallel Yah; Kol ha-n’shama t’hallel Yah;*

Let every breath praise *Yah*/God, Let every breath praise *Yah*/God! *(Psalms 150:6, twice)*

With walking:

*Horeini Adonai darkeh-kha, A’halekh ba’amitehkha*

*Ya-heid l’va-vi l’yir-ah sh’meh-kha.*

Teach me, Adonai, Your Way, I will walk in Your truth;

Make my heart one/whole, in awe of Your Name. *(Psalms 86:11)*

With walking through the woods:

*Ya’aloz saddai v’khol asher bo, Az y’ra-n-nu kol atzei ya’ar!*

Let the fields and everything in them exult; All the trees of the forest will shout for joy!

*(Psalms 96:12)*

With watching clouds roll by:

*Ha-sha-mayim sha-mayim lA-donai -- V’ha-aretz na-than liv-nei a-dahm.*

### The heavens belong to Adonai -- but the earth Adonai gave to humankind. *(Psalms 115: 16)*

#### With enjoying bodies of water

*Asherr lo ha-yam v’Hu a-sa-hu,*

*V’ya-beh-shet yadav yatzaru.*

God’s is the sea, God made it;

The land – God’s Hands fashioned. *(Psalms 95:5)*

With joining in sunrises or sunsets:

*Mi-mizrah sheh-mesh ahd m’vo-o*

*M’hu-lal shem Adonai!*

From the east, where the sun rises, to where it sets

Adonai’s Name is praised! (*Psalms 113: 3*)

When handling or exploring rocks:

*Even ma’asu ha-bonim ha-y’ta l’rosh pinah.*

The stone rejected by the builders became the chief cornerstone! (*Psalms 118:22*)

***Al Ti-ra/*Do Not Be Afraid**

*(Proverbs 3:25; Isaiah 8:10, 46:4))*

**Al ti-ra mi-pa-had pit-om**

**U-mi-sho-at r'sha-im ki ta-vo.**

**"U-tzu ei-tza v'tu-far**

**Dahb-ru da-var v'lo ya-kum**

**Ki i-ma-nu El."**

**V'ad zik-nah, A-ni Hu;**

**V'ad sei-vah, A-ni ess-bol!**

**A-ni a-si-ti, va-a-ni eh-sa,**

**Va-a-ni ess-bol va-a-ma-leit!**

*Don't be afraid of sudden terror,*

*Nor of the calamity that comes to the wicked.*

*"Devise your evil plots -- they will fail!*

*Lay out your wicked plans -- they are doomed!*

*God is with us!"*

*Even to your old age, I am the same;*

*When you are grey-headed, still I will sustain you!*

*I have made you, and I will bear you;*

*I will sustain you and I will save you!*

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**Ey-leh-kha: To You I Call**

*(Psalms 30: 9 and 11)*

**Ey-leh-ka, Ha-shem, ek-ra,**

*(To You, God, I call,)*

**v'el A-doh-nai et-ha-nahn:**

*(and to Adonai I appeal:)*

**Sh'ma Ha-shem, v'ha-ney-nee,**

*(Hear, God, and have compassion on me,)*

**Ha-shem, heh-yey oh-zer lee.**

*(God -- be my Help.)*

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***Lo-ira*: I do not fear**

*(Psalm 3:7-8)*

**Lo i-ra mei-ri-v'voht ahm**

**a-sherr sa-viv, sa-viv, ))x2**

**sha-tu a-lai.**

**Ku-ma, HaShem, v’Ho-shi-ei-ni!**

*I do not fear the thousands of people*

*that have set upon me, all around.*

*Rise up, Adonai! Save me, my God!*

Ten Quotes from Pirke Avot\*

Simon the Just…used to say,

“Upon three things the world stands:

On Torah, on (Divine) Service, and on Deeds of Lovingkindness.” *Pirke Avot 1:2*

Hillel used to say:  
”If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

And if I am only for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?” *Pirke Avot 1:14*

Simeon, the son of Rabban Gamliel, said:

“I was brought up all my life among the Sages,

and I have found nothing as good for the body as silence,

and it is not the study/explication that is the essence – but the practice/doing,

and whoever is profuse of words occasions sin.” *Pirke Avot 1:17*

Rabban Simeon, son of Gamliel, said,

“On three things the world stands: On Judgment, on Truth, and on Peace…”

*Pirke Avot 1:18*

Rabbi Yose said:  
”Let your friend’s property be as precious to you as your own;

Give yourself to studying the Torah, for it does not come to you by inheritance;

and let all your deeds be done in the name of Heaven.” *Pirke Avot 2:12*

He (Rabbi Tarfon) also used to say,

“It is not your obligation to complete the task,

but neither are you at liberty to desist from it entirely…” *Pirke Avot 2:16*

Another teaching of Rabbi Akiva:

“Everything is foreseen, yet free will is granted;

By goodness is the universe judged, yet all depends on the preponderance of (good) deeds.” *Pirke Avot 3:1*

Ben Zoma said,

“Who is wise? The one who learns from all people…

“Who is mighty? The one who subdues the evil inclination…

“Who is rich? The who who rejoices in his portion….

“Who is honored? The one who honors other human beings….” *Pirke Avot 4:1*

Rabbi Jacob used to say,

“Better is one hour of *t’shuvah* (returning/repentance) and good deeds in this world

than the whole life of the world-to-come

and better is one hour of spiritual bliss in the world-to-come

than all the life of this world!” *Pirke Avot 4:17*

Rabbi (Meir) said,  
”Look not at the flask but at what is therein;

There may be a new flask full of old wine, and an old flask wherein is not even new wine.”

# *Pirke Avot 4:20*

*\* Pirke Avot*, lit. “Chapters of the Fathers,” is the only nonlegal tractate of the Mishnah, included toward the end of *Nezikin*, the fourth of the six “orders” of the Mishnah (which is the codification of the Oral Law, based on biblical passages, recorded by Rabbi Judah HaNassi in 200 BCE, the end of 400-600 years of exegesis/teaching.). A brief, very accessible book, it is comprised of six chapters filled with practical insights, moral advice, and spiritual sayings of ancient sages. These quotes were selected, translated, and arranged by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW © 2002