

Shame and Illness: How Does the Visitor Respond?

A Collection of Clinical and Jewish Spiritual Care Resources for Bikur Cholim Volunteers

**Assembled by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW
Rabbinic Director,
Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, Inc.**

Please note:

- * This collection is not a comprehensive compilation of all the rich clinical material and Jewish traditions associated with Shame. It is, rather, a selection of some teachings that may assist us in responding to others with attentiveness, sensitivity, compassion, and relatedness.
- * Some texts may be right for some settings and inappropriate for others. What is right for a sermon may or may not be right for a Hessed Committee meeting or for a counseling session or a synagogue bulletin piece, etc.. These are certainly not all intended for discussion with people who are ill.
- * The Hebrew originals are not included herewith, which presents a challenge in several instances. And, of course, these are but excerpts of fuller texts and discussions...

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Rabbi Simcha Bunem of Pshiske (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

B'Tzelem Elokim/In the Image of God: Ten Jewish Excerpts/Quotes

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female He created them
Genesis 1:27

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

One person is equal to the whole creation. *Avot d'Rabbi Natan 31*

Human is preceded on the road by a company of angels who proclaim:
'Make way for the Image of the Holy Blessed One!'
Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, in Midrash T'hilim 55:19, about Psalms 17:7;

Man is the axis of the world and its foundation....
Though his body be small, his soul is larger than heaven and earth,
for through it he reaches even what is above them and the cause of them, the Creator Himself.
Sa'adia, b. Egypt 880, Emunot v'De'ot 4:1-2

One who sees...people with disfigured faces or limbs, recites the blessing,
"Blessed are You, Adonai our God, King of the Universe, who makes people different."
Rambam/Maimonides (1135-1204 CE), Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Berakhot 10:12, based on BT, Berakhot 58b.

Because of the divine image...man is superior even to the angels.
Judah Loew, Derekh HaHayyim, 1589

Ben Azzai quoted the verse, "This is the book of the generations of Adam," (*Genesis 5:1*) and said, "This is the greatest principle of the Torah.

Rabbi Akiva said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (*Leviticus 19:18*) is the greatest principle of the Torah. Do not say, 'Because I am despised, so may my neighbour be cursed with me.' If you act thus, said R. Tanhuma, know whom you despise, namely, a being made in the image of God.

Genesis/B'reishit Rabbh, B'reishit, 24:7

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.
-Rebbe Menahem Mendel Schneerson

The symbol of God is man, every man.
God created man in His image (*tselem*), in His likeness (*demut*)...
Human life is holy, holier even than the Scrolls of the Torah.
Abraham Joshua Heschel, "Symbolism and Jewish Faith" (1954)

Guilt and Shame: *A Comparison/Contrast*

From Ernest Kurtz, *Shame and Guilt* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2007), 2nd edition, page 5

GUILT

- can do keshura

SHAME

Results from:

A violation, a transgression
a fault of **doing**; the exercise
of power or control

A failure, a failing short, a
fault of **being**, the failure of
power or control

Concerned with:

A separate, discrete act,
some law or rule; one is
guilty **for** something.

The overall self; some ideal
or principle; one is ashamed
of self.

Results in:

Feeling of wrong-doing;
sense of wickedness; "**not**
Good"; fear of punishment

Feeling of inadequacy;
sense of worthlessness; "**no**
good"; "not good **enough**"
fear of abandonment.

"Feels like":

Pang.

Ache.

Repair by:

Opposite acts, "making
Amends"; can be quantified

As qualitative rather than
quantitative, requires:
New way of seeing (insight),
Change in **be**-ing (conversion)

Possible outcome:

Surmounting guilt can lead to
feelings of righteousness

Transcending shame opens
to a sense of identity and of
freedom-as-human

*In psychoanalytic
vocabulary:*

Has to do with superego

Has to do with ego ideal

Guilt Axis

- Concerned with each separate, discrete act
- Involves transgression of a specific code, violation of a specific taboo
- Involves an additive process; advance to healthy personality by deleting wrong acts and substituting right ones for them
- Involves competition, measurement on a scale, performing the acts prescribed as desirable
- Exposure of a specific misdemeanor, with emphasis on to whom exposed; exposure of something that should be hidden in a closet
- Concern about violation of social codes of cleanliness, politeness, and so on
- Feeling of wrong doing for a specific harmful act toward someone one loves
- Being a good, loyal friend, husband, wife, parent
- Trust built on the conception of no betrayal, no disloyal act, as a preliminary to giving affection
- Feelings of anger, jealousy, meanness for certain socially recognized causes
- Emphasis on decision-making; any decision is better than none
- Feeling of guilt toward someone who has denounced one for adequate or inadequate cause
- Emphasis on content of experience in work, leisure, personal relations
- Surmounting of guilt leads to righteousness

Shame Axis

- Concerned with the over-all self
- Involves falling short, failure to reach an ideal
- Involves a total response that includes insight, something more than can be reached by addition
- Involves acting in terms of the pervasive qualitative demands of oneself, more rigorous than external codes; each act partakes of the quality of the whole
- Exposure of the quick of the self, most of all to oneself; exposure of something that can never be hidden in a closet, is in the depths of the earth or in the open sunlight
- Concern about unalterable features of one's body, way of moving, clumsiness, and so on
- Feeling that one may have loved the wrong person, or may be inadequate for the person one loves
- Having an overflowing feeling for friend, husband, wife, children which makes goodness and loyalty a part of the whole experience with no need for separate emphasis
- Trust that is a process of discovery which gradually eliminates fear of exposure, which is not the result of an act of will but unfolds with the unfolding experience
- Inwardly deep feelings of anger, jealousy, meanness in outwardly slight situations known to oneself only
- Ability to live with some indecisiveness (multiple possibilities) even though it means living with some anxiety
- Feeling of shame toward some- one who trusts one if one is not meeting that trust
- Emphasis on quality of experience, not only on content
- Transcending of shame may lead to sense of identity, freedom

Differentiating Emotions on the Basis of the Use of the Self:

Fear, Joy, Disgust, Surprise, Anger, Sadness, and Interest have been called “**Primary Emotions**,” as they do not require Introspection or Self-Reference.

...whereas...

The elicitation of Jealousy, Envy, Empathy, Embarrassment, Shame, Pride and Guilt DO require Introspection or Self-Reference and have thus been termed “**Secondary Emotions**.” (NB: This absolutely does not mean that they are shallower, take a back seat, or are in any way less impactful!)

Adapted from Robert Plutchik, The Emotions: Facts, Theories, and a New Model (New York, Random House, 1962) pages 41-32

Shame is produced by events located in the head of the person experiencing it. While it is true that shame arises out of, and in large part is caused by, the loss of approval of a significant other, the source of the Shame is our thoughts about our selves. The stimulus eliciting the state is self-thought about the self.

H. B. Lewis, Shame and Guilt in Neurosis (New York: International Universities Press, 1971)

Face drawn of cover)

Phenomenological View of Shame: Four Features

Derived from Michael Lewis, Shame: The Exposed Self (New York: Free Press, 1995) page 34

1. Like a subatomic particle, one's knowledge of Shame is often limited to the trace it leaves – but the desire to hide or to disappear is often an overpowering component of the experience of Shame.
 2. Intense pain, discomfort, and anger (these distinguish Shame from Embarrassment and Shyness)
 3. The feeling that one is inadequate, no good, unworthy – a global statement of the Self by the Self in relation to the Self.
 4. Fusion of Subject and Object: we become the Object as well as the Subject of Shame.
- The ‘self system’ is caught in a bind in which the ability to act or to continue acting becomes extremely difficult. Shame disrupts activity as the self focuses completely on itself, and the result is confusion: inability to think clearly, inability to talk, and inability to act.

*self + telling self
it is unworthy*

A male student told me that he had recently had a big fight with his girlfriend. When he left her room, he could see that she was very upset. He did not stop to comfort her, but on the way back to his own room he began to think of her and her obvious suffering. He was so ashamed that he had left her feeling so miserable that he wanted to disappear.

Another student, a young woman, told me that in haste, without thinking, she had told her close friend that she did not look good in the dress she was wearing. She reported that her friend was obviously hurt by her thoughtless remark and that she, in turn, felt badly about what she had said. She then noted, “I must keep my mouth shut when Betty wears something horrible.”

Michael Lewis, Shame: The Exposed Self (New York: Free Press, 1995) page 34

In shame situations, the interrupt and focus is upon the Self, both as Object and as Subject. The Self becomes embroiled in the Self because the evaluation of the Self by the Self is total. There is no way out. The focus is not upon the individual's behavior, but upon the total Self. The individual who makes global attributions focuses upon herself, and not upon her action. Focusing inward, such a person is unable to act, and is driven from the field of action into hiding or disappearing.

Michael Lewis, Shame: The Exposed Self (New York: Free Press, 1995) page 72-3

Possible Expressions/Indicators of Shame, through the Body*

In no special order; Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW © 2009

Head hung

Stooped shoulders

Body 'caving in'

Blushing and/or Pallor

Eye contact avoided (and other ways of looking, such as peripheralizing; darting; generalizing...)

Inappropriate, distracting laughter

Exaggerated self-consciousness re: certain body part(s)

Marked need for space and distractions in conversational space

**These may also, of course, reflect Fear, Guilt, Sadness, etc.!*

A tanna recited before R. Nahman b. Isaac: He who publicly shames (lit., makes pale) his neighbor is as though he shed blood. Whereupon he remarked to him, 'You say well, because I have seen (such shaming), ruddiness departing and paleness supervening.

Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 58b

(The Rabbis) hold that disgrace is worse than physical pain...

Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 8b

On Shame

I think of the Inuit way: a wolf bone whittled to a point at both ends, coiled and frozen in blubber, left along the path of bears. The bear eats it and weakens slowly, over miles, over days, the bone twisting and slashing, killing from the inside out. Shame feels this way, swallowed and sharp, working its way deeper with each move to dislodge the pain, so that finally, we lie still, dying with blood in our mouths. We eat our stories and starve.

From Kim Barnes, Hungry for the World: A Memoir (NY: Villard, 2000)

*All quotes on this page are derived from
Michael Lewis, Shame: The Exposed Self (New York: Free Press, 1995)*

On Owning Shame and Substituting for Shame

.....The critical feature of all forms of dealing with acknowledged shame is that the sufferer must first 'own it' before giving it away.

.....Sadness and anger are the normal forms of emotions whose psychopathological forms are depression and rage.

.....No one likes to experience shame and we all try to dissipate the shame feeling once it occurs. Emotional substitution for shame, within limits, is an absolutely normal process. To feel sad or angry, when you are shamed, is a defensive process. From an adaptive point of view, however, it is important that we own at least some of our shame for at least some of the time. I point to this because shame serves a moral function, and perhaps others as well. Things that shame us should not be done, at least from our particular perspective. The intensity of the adverse experience serves to ensure that the thoughts, actions, or feelings that led to shame do not recur...

.....The consistent use of substitution or any other process that does not allow us to own shame, at least for a time, must be admitted as pathological.
(pages 72-3)

Depression and Anger in Relation to Each Other and to Shame

*Depression results from attributions of failure that are internal, having to do with the self's fault; global, having to do with the whole self; and stable, consistent over time....Depression is not a conversion of shame but an accompanying emotion....depression, rather than shame, is focused upon by the person. (page 143)

* The loss of the love object leads to the loss of self-esteem or shame, which, in turn, *can* lead to depression.
(page 148)

Distinguishing Anger and Rage....

Anger is a simple bodily response, whereas Rage is a process, moving from Shame to Rage in alternative spiral fashion. Anger feels justified, whereas in Rage one feels powerless. Injury is recognized in Anger, but injury is denied in Rage. Anger is conscious, whereas Rage, based on Shame substitution, is pushed from awareness. While Anger may be easily resolved, Rage, initiated by Shame, sets up a feeling trap in which Shame leads to Rage which, in turn, leads to Shame, etc. Anger is not displaced, whereas Rage is. Anger focuses on the actual cause, whereas Rage is a generalized response. Anger is an individual phenomenon, Rage is a social phenomenon. Anger results in few negative consequences, and Rage results in many....Anger is a restricted, focused response while Rage is not; and Anger has a specific object, while Rage tends to be diffused both in terms of its occurrence and in terms of its object. Finally, Anger appears bounded, that is, there is a way to resolve it; whereas Rage itself may be unbounded....
(page 153)

Universal Mechanisms of Shame

(NB – bold added by SYW)

Shame occurs when **standards are violated**, when **fault is attributed to self** (that self or part of self that is involved), and when **self rather than action** (or its part) **is focused upon**. The context and nature of the standards and the expression of shame may differ; however, the mechanism for eliciting shame remains intact.
(page 212)

Shame: Some Related Jewish Quotes, Excerpts, Teachings, and Stories

There is shame that brings sin and shame that brings honor.
Apocrypha, Ben Sira 4:21

*It's good to
be shameful*

R. Eleazar of Modin said: One who profanes things sacred, and one who slights the festivals, **and who causes his fellow-man's face to blanch in public**, and one who nullifies the covenant of Avraham Avinu, peace be upon him, and he who exhibits impudence towards the Torah, even though he has to his credit knowledge of the Torah and good deeds, he has not a share in the life of the world-to-come.
Pirke Avot 3:11

Rava b. Hinena the elder further said in the name of Rav: Whoever commits a transgression, and is filled with shame thereby, all his sins are forgiven him.
Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 12b

R. Johanan on concluding his prayer (*NB: the Amidah*) added the following:
"May it be Your will, HaShem our God,
to look upon our shame, and behold our evil plight,
and clothe Yourself in Your mercies, and cover Yourself in Your strength,
and wrap Yourself in Your lovingkindness, and gird Yourself with Your graciousness,
and may the attribute of Your kindness and gentleness come before You!"

R. Zera on concluding his prayer added the following:
"May it be Your will, HaShem our God,
that we sin not nor bring upon ourselves shame or disgrace before our fathers!"

....
Rav on concluding his prayer added the following:
"May it be Your will, HaShem our God, to grant us long life,
a life of peace, a life of good, a life of blessing,
a life of sustenance, a life of bodily vigour,
a life in which there is fear of sin,
a life free from shame and confusion, a life of riches and honor,
a life in which we may be filled with the love of Torah and the fear of heaven,
a life in which You shall fulfill all the desires of our heart for good!"

Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 12b

R. Johanan said in the name of R. Simeon b Yohai: It is better for a man that he should cast himself into a fiery furnace rather than put his fellow to shame in public.
Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 43b

Why is the Amidah recited in silence? In order not to shame those who confess.
Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 32a

Shamefacedness leads to sin-fearing. It is a good sign if a man is shamefaced. A man who is shamefaced will not easily sin, and the shameless man's ancestors never stood at Mt. Sinai. *Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 20a.*

"You shall surely reprove your neighbor and not suffer sin upon him (bring guilt upon him)." (*Leviticus 19:17*)
How do we know that if a man has rebuked his neighbor four and five times (without succeeding in turning him from sin), he should continue to reprove him? Because it says: "You shall surely reprove him." One might infer that the reproof should be carried so far as to change a man's face with shame. But it says, "You shall not bring guilt upon him."
Sifra 89a-89b

Jerusalem was destroyed because its people had no shame.

Ulla b. Ishmael, in Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 119b

He who is shamed by his own conscience is greater than one who is shamed by others.

Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 15

R. Shimon b. Gamliel said: There never were in Israel greater days of joy than the fifteenth of Av and the Day of Atonement. On these days the daughters of Jerusalem used to walk out in white garments which they borrowed in order not to put to shame any one who had none....

Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 26b

R. Simeon b. Halafta took his leave from Rabbi. Said Rabbi to his son: "Go along with him that he may bless you." Said [the parting Rabbi] to him: "May it be [Heaven's] pleasure that you be not put to shame nor feel ashamed yourself." When he came to his father, he asked him: "What did he say to you?" He replied: "He made some commonplace remark to me." Said [Rabbi] to his son: "He blessed you with the blessing with which the Holy Blessed One blessed Israel twice over; for it is written: 'And you shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and shall praise the name of HaShem your God . . . And My people shall never be ashamed. And you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the HaShem your God, and there is none else; and My people shall never be ashamed.'" (NB: Joel 2:26-27; the same assurance repeated twice.)

Babylonian Talmud, Mo'ed Katan 9b

It once happened that Rabban Gamaliel addressed the members of his court and said: "Send me up seven —[scholars] early in the morning to the upper chamber to discuss whether the year shall have an additional month."

When he came in the morning and found eight, he asked: "Who is he who has come up without permission? Let him go down."

Thereupon, Samuel the Little arose and said: "It was I who came up without permission; my object was not to join in the intercalation, but because I felt the necessity of learning the practical application of the law"(i.e., to learn, not to take part.)

Rabban Gamaliel then answered: "Sit down, my son, sit down; you are worthy of intercalating all years [in need of such], but it is a decision of the Rabbis that it should be done only by those who have been specially appointed for the purpose."

But in reality it was not Samuel the Little [who was the uninvited member] but another; he only wished to save the intruder from humiliation.

Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 11a

The shame of him who is shamed by a man of perfection is greater than the shame of him who is shamed by an imperfect man.

Tosefta Bava Kamma, 9

MISHNAH. Just as there is overreaching in Buying and Selling, so is there wrong done by words. (Thus:) One must not ask another, "What is the price of this article?" if he has no intention of buying. If a man was a repentant (sinner), one must not say to him, "Remember your former deeds!" If he was a son of proselytes, one must not taunt him, "Remember the deeds of your ancestors!" because it is written, "You shall neither wrong a stranger, nor oppress him." (Exodus 22:20)

GEMARA. Our Rabbis taught: "You shall not therefore wrong one another" (Lev. 25:17) Scripture refers to verbal wrongs. You say, 'verbal wrongs'; but perhaps that is not so, monetary wrongs being meant? When it is said, "And if you sell anything to your neighbor, or acquire anything from your neighbor [you shall not wrong one another]," (Lev. 25:14; three verses earlier), monetary wrongs are already dealt with. Then to what can I refer, "you shall not therefore wrong each other?" To verbal wrongs. E.g., If a man is a penitent, one must not say to him, "Remember your former deeds." If he is the son of proselytes, he must not be taunted with, "Remember the deeds of your ancestors." If he is a proselyte and comes to study the Torah, one must not say to him, "Shall the mouth that ate unclean and forbidden food, abominable and creeping things, come to study the Torah which

was uttered by the mouth of Omnipotence!" If he is visited by suffering, afflicted with disease, or has buried his children, one must not speak to him as his companions spoke to Job, "Is not your fear [of God] your confidence, and your hope the integrity of your ways? Remember, I pray you, who ever perished, being innocent?" (*Job 4:6ff*) If asssdrivers sought grain from a person, he must not say to them, "Go to so and so who sells grain," knowing that he has never sold any. R. Judah said: One may also not feign interest in a purchase when he has no money, since this is known to the heart only ("*masur lalev*/entrusted to the heart"), and of everything known only to the heart it is written, "and you shall fear your God."

R. Johanan said on the authority of R. Simeon b. Yohai: Verbal wrong is more heinous than monetary wrong, because of the first it is written, "and you shall fear your God," but not of the second. R. Eleazar said: The one affects his [the victim's] person, the other [only] his money. R. Samuel b. Nahmani said: For the former restoration is possible, but not for the latter.

A tanna recited before R. Nahman b. Isaac: He who publicly shames (lit., makes pale) his neighbor is as though he shed blood. Whereupon he remarked to him, 'You say well, because I have seen (such shaming), ruddiness departing and paleness supervening.'

Abaye asked R. Dimi: What do people [most] carefully avoid in the West [sc. Palestine]? — He replied: Putting others to shame (lit., making faces white). For R. Hanina said: All descend into Gehenna, excepting three. 'All' — can you really think so! But say thus: All who descend into Gehenna [subsequently] reascend, excepting three, who descend but do not reascend, viz., He who commits adultery with a married woman, publicly shames his neighbor, or fastens an evil epithet [nickname] upon his neighbor. "Fastens an epithet" -- but that is putting to shame! [It means], Even when he is accustomed to the name (NB: *So that he experiences no humiliation, nevertheless it is very reprehensible when the intention is evil.*)

Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 58b-59a

He who honors himself through the shame of another will have no portion in the World-to-Come.
Jerusalem Talmud, Hagigah 2:1

For four reasons a person should reprove others only just before he dies:

1. So as not to have to reprove him again and again;
2. So that he should not feel shame in the presence of the reprover, whenever he should happen to see him;
3. So that he should feel nothing in his heart against the reprover; and
4. So that the reprover should part from him in peace, for reproof brings him unto peace.

Sifre Deuteronomy, D'varim, # 2.

Many *mitzvot* are fulfilled only out of shame.

Bahya, Hovot haLevavot, 2.5 (1040 CE)

The chief of all the ten virtues is a sense of shame.

Ibn Gabirol, Mivhar HaP'ninim, # 48 (1050 CE)

Every mitzvah in the Torah -- whether '*aseh*/a positive one or *lo ta'aseh*/a negative one -- if a person transgressed one of them, whether intentionally or not intentionally, when he is doing Teshuvah and is returning from his sin, is required to confess before God, Blessed is He, as it says: "When a man or a woman shall commit any sin that people commit, to do a trespass against HaShem, and that person be guilty; then they shall confess their sin which they have done" (*D'varim*/Numbers 5:7): This is *vidui d'varim*/confession through words. Confession is a positive commandment. How does one confess? "Please, God -- I have sinned, I have committed iniquity, I have transgressed before You, and I have done this and this, and behold, I deeply regret what I have done, **I feel shame for my deeds** and I will never return to this misdeed again." That is the essence of the *vidui*/confession....

Maimonides (1135-1204) Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Teshuvah/Laws of Repentance 1:1

Be ashamed before God as you are before His creatures.

Hasdai, Ben HaMelekh v'HaNazir chapter 26 (1230 CE)

The world was created for the sake of those who are ashamed to do evil.

Tikkunei Zohar, Intr. 12b

Those who have no shame will not inherit the World-to-Come.

Zohar Hadash (edited by Moses ben Mordecai Zacuto, kabbalist and poet, in Venice, 1658) on Song of Songs, 67b

Shame is an iron fence against sin.

Orhot Tzadikim, chapter 3 (15th cty.)

1. He who shames another person becomes foolish and forgetful.
2. Rabbis who pay to secure positions deserve no respect. Their gowns are like the yoke of an ass.
3. It is better not to obey a commandment of the Torah than to shame an Israelite.
4. You are shamed when you have been guilty of rejoicing in a fellow man's tribulation.
5. Trustfulness will prevent shame.
6. He who robs the poor will be disgraced.
7. God punishes for contempt of lawful authority.
8. When you hear your friend telling an untruth, shame him not. Merely give him a hint.
9. He who feels shame does not sin easily.
10. Shaming another in public is like shedding his blood.

Reb Nahman of Bratslav (1772-1810), Sefer HaMiddot, pp. 35-6

Rabbi Zusya once came to an inn owned by a noted sinner of many years of evildoing. The story of his life and his chief offenses were known to him, but he could not call the offender to account in public, inasmuch as putting a man to shame before his neighbors is likened to murder in the Talmud (*Bava Metzia 58b*), nor did he care to rebuke him face to face in private. But he knew that his host was an eavesdropper, and this he turned to profitable use.

When he knew the innkeeper was listening at the keyhole, Rabbi Zusya interrupted himself in the midst of psalm-singing, and made a self-accusing outcry: "Zusya, you servant of evil, where are you going?!" And then he recited the innkeeper's many misdeeds as if they were his very own, weeping and beating his breast in token of contrition. The listener, terrified at seeing his deeds held up before him as if in a mirror, recoiled from the door, and from that day onward mended his life.

Related by Moses Tsvi Fuchs (Hungarian rabbi, 1843-1911)

Where there's no shame before men, there's no fear of God.

Yiddish Proverb

Jdaismon/Shame

Shame in Bikur Cholim: Some Helpful Texts to Revisit, with a Shame Lens...

(Note: All italics or underlines added, of course...)

Rabbi Helbo once fell ill. Thereupon Rabbi Kahana went and proclaimed: "Rabbi Helbo is ill!" But none visited him. He rebuked them [the scholars], saying,

"Did it not once happen that one of R. Akiba's disciples fell sick, and the Sages did not visit him? So R. Akiba himself entered [the disciple's house] to visit him, and because they swept and sprinkled the ground before him, he recovered. 'My master,' said the disciple, 'you have revived me!' Whereupon R. Akiba went forth and lectured: 'He who does not visit the sick is like a shedder of blood.'"

When R. Dimi came (from Palestine) he said: "Whoever visits the sick causes him to live, and whoever does not, causes him to die." How does one 'cause' this? Does this mean that whoever visits the sick will seek mercy (pray) that he may live, and whoever does not, will seek mercy (pray) that he should die? — 'that he should die!' can you really think so? But [it must mean:] He who does not visit the sick will not ask mercy (pray) neither that he should live nor die. (Note: Through the lack of prayers, which might have been accepted, he is said to cause the other's death.)

Raba on the first day of his illness said, "Do not reveal this to anyone, lest it affect my fortune." But afterward, he said (to his servants), 'Go, proclaim my illness in the market place, so that whoever is my enemy may rejoice.....(quoting here from Proverbs 24, 17ff) while he who cares/loves me will ask mercy (pray) for me.

Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 39b-40a

When visiting the sick one should not sit on a bed or on a chair or on a bench nor in any high place (i.e., higher than the patient) nor above the head of his bed, but one should wrap oneself up (NB: *mit'ateif*, i.e., cloak oneself in a way connoting focus/purpose, as in prayer) and sit below the head of the bed and request divine mercy on the patient's behalf (*um'vakkesh alav rahamim*) and (only then) leave.

Maimonides, 1135-1204 CE; Mishneh Torah: Hilkhos Aveilut/The Laws of Mourning, Chapter 14, Section VI

When a person becomes ill, it is a *mitzvah* for every person to visit, for we find that the Holy Blessed One visits the sick, as our Sages of Blessed Memory (*Talmud, Bava Metzia 86b*) explained the verse (*Genesis 18:1*) "And God appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre..." teaching us that God came to visit Abraham when he was sick.

Relatives and friends who are accustomed to visit this individual often should go to visit as soon as they hear of the illness. But strangers/casual acquaintances should not visit immediately but should wait until three days have passed so as not to deter his chances of recovery by labelling him a 'sick person.' — *

If, however, one became suddenly ill, even strangers should visit him immediately.

Even a 'great' man should visit a less 'important' person, even many times a day.

He who visits the sick frequently is praiseworthy, providing he should not become troublesome to the one who is ill...

Kitzur Shulhan Arukh, 1800's; Chapter 193/1

The essence of the *mitzvah* to visit the sick is to attend to the needs of the patient, to see to what has to be done for him/her, and to ensure the ease/comfort/pleasure of his/her company (make him/her at peace with family and friends) also to consider his/her condition and to pray for mercy on his/her behalf. If you visited a sick person and did not pray for mercy, you have not fulfilled the *mitzvah*...

Kitzur Shulhan Arukh, Chapter 193/3

I. The Rabbi Helping Others Who Carry Shame: Empathy, Experience, and Reframing...

A man without foreknowledge or guilty intent, had desecrated the Shabbat, inasmuch as his cart had broken down on the road, and he did not (though running afoot and out of breath) reach the town ahead of the "Coming of the Bride." The youthful Rabbi Michael -- he who afterwards became known to fame as the Zlotzover -- punished him with hard and long-continued severities.

Under these inflictions, the sinner, after a while, began to suffer in health. When report of the visit of the BeShT to the neighboring countryside reached his ears, he took courage, narrated his sin to the Master, and asked him to impose a fine. This the BeShT did, bidding him give a pound of candles to the House of Prayer. At this light penalty, the offended wondered not a little, fearful of Rabbi Michael's disapproval. But the Master said: "Do my bidding and tell Rabbi Michael to come to me at Chvostov where I will tarry over the next Shabbat."

A wheel of Rabbi Michael's cart broke on the road to Chvostov and he had to do his errand afoot. He sought hard to make good speed, but hasten as he might, he did not reach his goal before sundown. As he reached the threshold of the Master, behold, there stood the Master, with cup lifted up high to make Kiddush. The BeShT turned to the visitor, standing on the threshold in contemplation, and said: "Good Shabbes, sinner; your hand, before you sinned, was heavy upon other sinners, but henceforth it will be light, for you have tasted of their inward pain and outward shame. Therefore, Good Shabbes to you, and a hearty welcome!"

From Die Chassidischen Buecher by Martin Buber (German; Hellerau, 1928) pp. 326-7

A Hassid entered the synagogue of Rabbi Wolf Zbarazer (*died 1800*) one Shabbat afternoon, took his seat among the crowd, and began to eat radishes, loudly smacking his lips. Other Hasidim whispered him to stop, inasmuch as the noise might disturb the Rabbi's meditations, but he continued his chewing. Rabbi Wolf heard the whispering and observed that the Hassid grew red of countenance. He spoke aloud: "I feel a craving for radishes. Has anyone radishes?"

Thus the Hassid was enabled to draw to himself the envy rather than the contempt of the Hassidim.
Sefer HaDorot HeHadash, published by E. I. Stand in Lemberg, 1865, chapter 4

II. How to – or not to – help a person who is indigent: Spiritual Advocacy

A poor man came to the Radviller Rebbe (*R. Isaac, d. 1825*) and complained of his poverty. The Radviller had no money to give him, but, in lieu of a donation, he comforted him with the words of the verse (*Proverbs 3:12*): "Ki et asher ye-eh-hav HaShem yokhiah/For whom HaShem loves, He corrects."

His father, the Zlotzover Maggid (*R. Yehiel Michael, disciple of the BeShT, d. 1781*), witnessed this and said to this son: "Truly this is an unworthy way to aid the indigent. The verse should be understood thus: 'For he that loves HaShem, shall argue* with Him.' He should plead: 'Why should You cause a man to put himself to shame by begging aid, when it is in Your power, O God, to vouchsafe him his necessities in an honorable fashion?'"

**The root of Yokhiah may be understood as "correcting, reproofing, arguing, admonishing, punishing."*

From Ateret haTzaddikim, published by A. Kahan (published in Yiddish, Warsaw, 1924) pp. 18-19

III. Preventing Amkha from the Experience of Shame: The Leader's Self-Monitoring

It was the habit of Rabbi David Talner (*disciple of the Czernobiler; d. 1882*) to spend half an hour early each morning reading his mail in his private room. An intimate asked why he did this before prayers the first thing of the day. The Rabbi answered: "I wish to commence the day aright. As you know, the more important a man is, the harder are his struggles against his evil thoughts*, since the Satan strives hardest to tempt him. Hence when I look over my letters and read in the salutation that I am called a *Tzaddik*, a Leader, a Holy Man, and the like, I pray to HaShem: 'You and I know that I do not merit these titles of honor. But since so many good men believe them in all sincerity, I beseech You to aid me to avoid the snares of Satan, so that these men may not feel shame!'"

**see the end of BT Sukkah 52a*

From Fun Rebin's Hauf by D. L. Mekler (Yiddish, New York, 1931) ii. p. 23

IV. An Upside to Shame -- The Difference of Public Shame vs. Not Being 'Shameless'

R. Eleazar of Modin said:

One who profanes things sacred, and one who slights the festivals,
and who causes his fellow-man's face to blanch in public,
and one who nullifies the covenant of Avraham Avinu, peace be upon him,
and he who exhibits impudence towards the Torah,
even though he has to his credit knowledge of the Torah and good deeds,
he has not a share in the life of the world-to-come.

Pirke Avot 3:11

He who deprives another of his belongings or he who shames another, will find his prayers unheard.

Reb Nahman of Bratzlav (1771-1810) in Sefer HaMidot (published in Warsaw, 1912, pp. 162-7

But/And....

"Shamefacedness causes fear of sin."

Reb Nahman of Bratzlav (1771-1810) in Sefer HaMidot (published in Warsaw, 1912), pp. 73-75

V. Implicit in the Pain of Financial Struggle....An 'Inherent' Dimension of T'shuvah

The Vorker (*d.* 1898) was listening to the complaints of the Hasidim regarding their meager livelihood. His friend, Rabbi Feivel Gritzer, remarked: "No one complains about his low-spirited estate."

"They need not shame themselves by explicitly admitting their offenses," replied the Vorker. "Does not the Tanna tell us: 'Because my deeds are poor, my livelihood is poor.' (NB: This is a paraphrase of Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar's statement in BT Kiddushin 82b) Hence, when they complain of their livelihood, by implication they confess their sins."

From Derekh Tzaddikim, by A. Yellin (published in Hebrew, Warsaw, 1912) p. 54

VI. Lifting Ones Head Up: The Self-Affirmation of the Image of God

"*Ha-lo im tei-tiv s'eit*/If you do well, lift your head up" (*God speaking to Kayyin in Genesis 4:7*)

(NB: Often translated, "If you do well, shall it not be lifted up?" or "If you do well, shall you not be accepted?")

At times, the *Yetzer haRa* (Evil Inclination) entices a man away from the right path by showing him how inferior he really is. The book, *Akedat Yitzhak*,* section 67, states that a man is obliged to look at his better qualities, not his worst. Hence the verse says, "If you want to do well, lift your head up." In order to be a good man, one has to lift oneself up and say, 'Behold, I am a portion of God on high!'

*by Isaac Arama (1460?-1545), Spanish bible commentator and philosopher

From Yismah Moshe, Hasidic book of homilies published in Lemberg (1848-61) of Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum of Ujhely (1759-1841), disciple of the Seer of Lublin and great leader of Hungarian Hasidim. His great-grandson, Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum (1890-1979) was the leader of the Satmar Hasidic community in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York.

VII. The Prayer Dimension/"God's Task"

Said the Belzer (*R. Shalom Rokeach, d.* 1855):

"At the end of the Yom Kippur Amidah we say: 'I stand before You as a vessel full of shame and confusion.' We implore thereby that the Lord may wash away our shame and impurity as easily as one may cleanse a vessel full of unclean substances.

From Dover Shalom, by A. S. B. Michelson (published in Hebrew, Prezemyśl, 1910) p. 106

Shame in the Shul: 18 Strategies

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

NOTE:

- * *These are not equal, not prioritized, not 100% distinct, not universally applicable...*
- * *Not all of these are right for every individual, every community, every season/year...*
- * *Consider/Assess what is most suitable to the culture of your context...but also imagine what new directions are possible*
- * *For programs that may establish/raise expectations, evaluate their appropriateness and potential/plan for continuity*
- * *These ideas are meant to trigger and catalyze more ideas!*

1. Not-so-random Acts of *Hessed*
Invitations for Shabbat dinner, or just coffee, or even to watch a DVD
Surprise, useful gifts/services
2. New volunteer roles, service opportunities
e.g., Haftarah, Mensch Squad, baking in synagogue kitchen, long-delayed volunteer projects (such as carpentry, library organizing, etc.)
3. Expanded acknowledgement/appreciation of volunteers in the shul
From the pulpit, in synagogue bulletin, with special Kiddush in honor, etc.
4. Dedicated Torah study: Either 'as usual' or groups exploring topics as:
HaZaL on Parnassah...Issues in Mutual Help...
5. Healing Circles
Integrating *T'hillim*, Structured/Limited Sharing, *Niggunim*, *Divrei Torah*
6. Sharing Recent Stories of *Hessed*
Creative examples of compassion and community (recent/local)
7. Drawing on Testimonies of Ancestors – how they made it through difficult transitions
8. Nature: Going Out as well as Bringing It In
For spiritual renewal and reconnecting, a la Reb Nahman
As experience/expression of *B'rakhot*
9. Special Prayers for *Parnassah*
Traditional as well as *Tekhines* and Contemporary/Personal Petitions
Compilation of original prayers from Community?
10. Creative Writing and Other Expressive Arts
Both directed and open-ended
e.g., Spiritual Autobiography; *Mas'ei Journeys*

11. New Dimensions to Holidays
 - Sukkot Potluck Dinner...
 - Hanukkah Homemade-Gift Exchange
 - Expand Purim *Mishloah Manot/Matanot laEvyonim*...
 - Pesah Food Cooperative...
 - Tu B'Shvat Cuttings Exchange...
 - Shavuot Cheese Baskets
12. Pure "Checking-In" Calls
 - Phone Trees
13. Publicize/Promote UJA-Federation Connect-to-Care Initiative in a dozen ways!
14. *Pitgam HaShavua/Weekly Wisdom*
 - Digestible, diverse, relevant, helpful:
 - Lo Alekha HaM'lakha Ligmor*
 - Eizehu Ashir? HaSameah b'helko*
 - Im Ein Ani Li, Mi Li*
 - Etc. etc.
15. Professional Nutritional Guidance
 - Integrating health and Jewish principles, with budget in mind
16. *Sh'mirat haGuf*:
 - Exercise, Stretching, Yoga, Breathing, Somatic Therapy through the shul
17. Liturgical Exploration and Expression
 - Commentaries on/Tunes for
 - Harahaman hu y'farn'seinu b'khavod*
 - Yismah Moshe b'matnat helko*
 - Potei'ah et yadekha u-masbia l'khol hai ratzon*
18. *Tz'dakah*
 - Kupah/Tamhui models*
 - Includes new congregational Economic Emergency Fund
 - Banks/Barter for:
 - Food
 - Untouched, usable medical supplies (e.g., fr/deceased)
 - Babysitting, rides, laundry, etc.

The School of R. Ishmael taught:
 If the Repulsive One* meets you, drag him to the Beit HaMidrash**
 If he is of stone, he will dissolve;
 if he is iron, he'll be shattered.
 *the Evil Inclination
 **The House of Study; i.e., overcome it by your application to study.
School of Yishmael, Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 52b

What is stigmatized in the contemporary Jewish world?*

Some Possibilities

Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW © 2008

Not in order of intensity, importance, or suffering

Not having children
Depression
Mental Illness
Suicide of a near/dear one
Obesity, or even just overweightedness
Skin problems
Poverty
Unemployment
Employment that is not 'professional' or otherwise lucrative and/or high status
Having children pursuing non-professional jobs
Not being married
Dressing in a decidedly unfashionable and idiosyncratic way
Jews by Choice, and those that choose them
Jews of color
People whose children aren't married
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Individuals, and all things connected to them
Single parents by choice

**Certainly we all know individuals and groups within the Jewish community who do not hold these stigmatizing feelings or ideas, but consider how extensive they are in general, from a bird's eye view. And, of course, many if not all of these are shared by many in the general culture, alas.*

This list is not in any order of preponderance, priority, or any other hierarchy.

Shame: A Selected Reading List

Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW July 2009

Ernest Kurtz, **Shame and Guilt** (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2007, second edition/revised, pbk.; only 55 pages)

Michael Lewis, **Shame: The Exposed Self** (New York: The Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 1992; pbk., 1995)

Helen Merrell Lynd, **On Shame and the Search for Identity** (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1958)

Andrew P. Morrison, **Shame: The Underside of Narcissism** (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1989)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds. **Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader** (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995)

Supermarket Prayer

Last week in the supermarket
at an unlikely hour
I saw a woman I know.
She tried to avoid me
pretended not to remember me
but I had unwittingly trapped her
blocked escape in the tuna fish aisle.

I just wanted to say hello
My cruelty was inadvertent
but up close I saw
her hair was in disarray
and dirty, her face
without its careful mask
of lipstick, blusher, shadow.
She was wearing a ratty old jacket
the discard of her husband
or perhaps her teenaged son.
Nine thirty, on a Tuesday morning,
dressed like that –
suddenly I knew she was out of work
and ashamed. And coming undone
there in the tuna fish aisle.

I tried as best I could
to help her cover her nakedness
but all that day and the next
she haunted me.
How strange, I thought,
how strange and how sad
that she could feel threatened, judged,
shamed by me.

The rabbis say
when you bring color to someone's face
it's as if you shed their blood.
Forgive me.
May you be restored to your full self
soon, speedily, in our day.
And let us say amen.

From Merle Feld, A Spiritual Life