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THE SYNAGOGUE AS A CARING COMMUNITY:

POSSIBILITIES FOR PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL TRANSFORMATION.

Rabbi Richard F. Address

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For The Doctor of Ministry Degree

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Graduate Studies Program

New York City, New York

March, 1999

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with sincere appreciation that I thank the faculty of the Post-Graduate Center for Mental Health and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion who were part of the D.Min program. Their dedication, care and concern were extraordinary.

Likewise, a note of gratitude to the classmates with whom I had the pleasure of studying. The community that was created enhanced every aspect of the learning.

To Ann Akers a special note of appreciation for her support of my project as well as her gentle manner which allowed for difficult subjects to be dealt with in an atmosphere of open and honest conversation.

To Dr. Carol Ochs for her unique ability to open doors that allow for the discovery of new pathways to approach God.

Dr. Dr. Larry Hoffman, who helped create the vision of this project and who continues to inspire so many of our community to think in ways that open doors to personal and communal transformation.

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO ISSUES ADDRESSSED BY THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

"I am here," she said, "because when I was in need, someone from this congregation took the time to reach out to me. They helped me through a very tough time. I came to understand how important it is to be part of a community like this. By being involved I can give something back. I just don't want anyone else to be isolated and to feel alone." This comment, part of a discussion held during one of the workshops created for this project, came to symbolize what I hoped to find in the course of this study. My goal was to demonstrate that the development of programs known as "the synagogue as a caring community" could provide opportunities for personal and synagogue transformation.

A. A Society of Isolation.

Caring community programs seek to develop primary relationships between members of congregations. They may provide support for people who are in hospitals, who are bereaved, as well for people and families in crises. The rise in interest in such programs stems from the feelings of many within our community that, as individuals, they have lost worth and meaning within our secular culture. By operating as an extended spiritual family, the congregation can become a vibrant setting for the development of sacred personal relationships, which can create pathways to meaning and purpose, contributing to the transformation of both the individual and the congregation. Within the congregational setting people can find solutions to the tension between feelings of isolation that characterize our secular culture, and the need for relationships that produce

a sense of personal meaning and community. Three decades ago, Philip Slater correctly observed what would become the American culture of technologically infused isolation.

> It is easy to produce examples of the many ways in which Americans attempt to minimize, circumvent, or deny the interdependence upon which all human societies are based. We seek a private house, a private means of transportation, a private garden, a private laundry, self-service stores, and do-it-yourself skills of every kind. An enormous technology seems to have set itself the task of making it unnecessary for one human being ever to ask anything of another in the course of going about his daily business. Even within the family Americans are unique in their feeling that every member should have a separate room, and even a separate telephone, television, and car, when economically possible. We seek more and more privacy, and feel more and more alienated and lonely when we get it. What accidental contacts we do have, furthermore, seem more intrusive, not only because they are unsought but because they are unconnected with any familiar pattern of interdependence. (1)

Indicative of the tension between this society of isolation and the search for meaning within a community is the baby boom generation. As part of this study, I hope to explore how this generation, now entering its fifth decade may be impacting on synagogue life. This generation now occupies leadership positions in many of our synagogues and Jewish institutions. Equally important, many of this same generation seek to distance

themselves from these same synagogues and institutions. Born into a world of affluence, raised in a world of cultural revolution, they have created an adulthood that raised the values of personal autonomy and freedom to the level of idolatry. For many, there is now a realization that what may have been sacrificed was the spiritual. It is my belief that one of the reasons for the interest in caring-community programs is this generation's need to find personal meaning within sacred relationships in a framework of community.

New challenges to the place of the individual in society will require synagogues and other religious institutions to rethink their own vision. One contemporary observer wrote of these challenges that the goal of institutions like synagogues and churches is to produce a "changed human being. The non-profit institutions are human change agents. Their 'product' is a cured patient, a child that learns, a young man or woman grown into a self respecting adult; a changed human life altogether." (2) To that I would yet another product: a life that stands in relationship to others through a relationship with God. The development of a theologically based and relationship centered caring-community program does have a transforming effect on both individuals and congregational communities.

In a thought provoking and timely piece, Peter Drucker writes of this age of social, political, economic and institutional transformation, that it is an age often marked by self actualized, mobile and private communities (3). The symbol for our age may be the solitary individual huddled over a computer screen in search of a new community. Drucker alludes to a sense of alienation and isolation that seems so prevalent. He posits a disconnection between the human being's sense of self, meaning, and purpose, and technology, which often alienates and separates even as it is viewed as a means for

providing community and meaning. The synagogue and the church, it must be noted, are not places that seek to be anti-technological. They seek to take moments of personal and communal transition and transform them into moments of transcendence. This goes to the heart of these caring-community programs. It is a firm belief that helping people represents not another problem solving program, but an opportunity to experience what it means to be created in God's image and to be doing God's work. Ultimately, these programs allow for moments of individual meaning within a sacred context.

The desire to seek meaning within a sacred community is beginning to define our contemporary age. Robert Wuthnow observes the rampant searching on the part of many to create communities of caring. He sees an avenue for this search in the creation of small groups, often within larger community settings. It is no surprise to him that so much of the fervor within existing religious institutions rests within the creation of such groups. He notes that the growing strength of this small-group movement arises from two dominant characteristics of our world. First, "The fragmented lives that many of us lead provide an incentive to seek community in support groups." But in addition, "the religious traditions that are so much a part of American culture legitimate this quest by telling us that community is important, and, indeed, by leading us to believe that community is also the way to find spirituality and transcendence."(4) Wuthnow reminds us that the very foundation of the drive for community and for relationships with community rests within the religious quest of each individual. It is not unusual to see the development of a variety of small groups as part of the caring-community programs within the synagogue. They have become important mechanisms for strengthening the community as a whole, as well as vehicles for transmitting a renewed sense of one's relationship to God.

This spiritual element is key the program's success. "The quest for spirituality is the other objective that has animated much of the small group movement. A majority of all small group members say they joined because they wanted to deepen their faith. Nearly two thirds of all small groups have some connection to churches or synagogues."(5).

Dr. Tom Cole offers an interesting commentary regarding the contemporary tension stemming from our search for meaning within our culture of isolation.

> As T.S. Eliot once remarked, there are two kinds of problems in life. One kind requires the question, What are we going to do about it? And the other calls for different questions: What does it mean? How does one relate to it? The first kind of problem is like a puzzle that can be solved with appropriate technical resources and pragmatic responses. The second kind of problem is really a mystery rather than a puzzle. It poses a deeper range of challenges...Mysteries require meaning. Born of moral commitment and spiritual reflection, the experiences of meaning helps individuals to understand, accept, and imaginatively transform the unmanageable, ambiguous aspects of existence.(6)

One of Judaism's great strengths is its ability to help individuals to see themselves within the context of an overall historical and spiritual continuum. Communal prayer, rituals and celebrations provide a framework for the individual's place within a larger context. Indeed, Judaism assumes that individual meaning and purpose cannot be achieved without involvement within the community as a whole. This creative partnership has always been

central to our Jewish world-view. Now, however, the personal alienation of this pre-millennium age has deepened the need for meaning through community.

B. Privatized Religion

What Cole and others argue is that individual meaning cannot be found within the worship of science, technology and other modern Western constructs. There is still the matter of the soul and the soul's place within the world of meaning. Dr. Eugene Borowitz comments on this contemporary challenge as follows:

> We stopped relying on our traditional God to save us and instead put our faith in humanity's power to create justice. We now expected that education, cultural creativity, economic expansion, and political action—not observance of the Torah—would bring us to a messianic age. Ethics became our surrogate for *mitzvot*; the concert hall, bookstore and university replaced the *bet midrash*. Those who still talked of God largely meant an idea that unified their ever-expanding humanistic worldview. In sum, non-Orthodox American Jewish spirituality, in many ways typical of every modernized Jewry, now sought human fulfillment through Western culture rather than through the Written and Oral Law.(7)

Many of the members of the contemporary American Jewish community realize that journeys to meaning and purpose that are focused on the gods of secular Western culture, are journeys of vanity and emptiness. So new questions are being asked: questions not of

"how" to find meaning but "why" and "where"? The questions of: "why" was I born, and what is my purpose on this earth are the fundamental questions of religion. It is in the search for the answers to those questions that people seek to create relationships and communities. It is in the search for the means to provide these answers that now lead congregations to redefine themselves as communities that can embrace and validate postmodern Jews.

The reaction to the belief that personal and communal salvation can be found within the corpus of modern science and technology raises another aspect of the tensions that we see in this transitional age. Part of the allure of secularism is that it is often attractively packaged in science and technology. Many of the people involved in the project seminars noted their unease with the secular society in which they function. This has led to another type of tension, the attempt to secularize the spiritual. Wuthnow describes this benign type of secular spirituality in the following manner:

> It is more aptly conceived as an orientation that encourages a safe, domesticated version of the sacred. From a secular perspective, a divine being is one who is there for our own gratification, like a house pet, rather than one who demands obedience from us, is too powerful or mysterious for us to understand, or who challenges us to a life of service. When spirituality has been tamed, it can accommodate the demands of a secular society.(8)

When spirituality is "tamed" you have the beginnings of a religious community that is willing to accept passivity in life and relationships. It is what drives many from our

congregations today. It is the type of religious community that looks to the secular world for validation and fosters the development of what Peter Berger calls "a progressive bureaucratization of the religious institutions". (9)

Another of the results of this transition to the postmodern world is an emerging view of the world that reflects a much more personal, private, isolated and self-oriented focus. Much of this can be traced to the developing influence of the "baby boomer" generation, which is now old enough to assume positions of congregational membership and leadership. This is this generation that has been most effected by social and cultural transition. The sheer numbers of this generation cannot be debated. The impact on our culture of this generation as they have marched through society is a matter of record not speculation. This is a generation that prizes individuality over conformity, has been avid consumers of information and technology, are infused with a sense of entitlement, yet seems to see that their idealized past was better than the uncertain future. This is the generation that seems to still live more for the moment and, as they enter their fifth decade, seem quite willing to reinvent what it means to age. Likewise, this generation as it grows older and has to deal with their own family systems, seems to desire to do it their way. They want to spend more time with children and family, but do so in innovative ways.

> After all, Boomers invented new forms of family through divorce, live-in life styles, and his and her children. Most important, though, is that the new focus on the family does not portent a retreat to the home. Rather, Boomers will be looking for enriching experiences that can be

shared by the entire family in any setting, especially outside the home. And because Boomers will remain busy and time starved, they will want to make sure that the time they get to spend with their children is a celebration, not merely an accommodation.(10)

The impact of this generation on religious life is just now beginning to be observed and studied. Barry Kosmin and Seymour P. Lachman describe the boomer generation's potential as a major influence on this age of transition's religious life.

> One of the most important features of the religious outlook of the baby boomers is 'religious privatization', a concept that explains the cultural shift to individualism within this generation. It encourages personal needs and interests in the shaping of religious commitment and ideology. As a result, religious insight is increasingly based on personal experience and the church becomes a means of meeting personal objectives. When faith is a personal affair, ties to institutionalized religion are reduced.(11)

Read "synagogue" for "church" and the observation rings quite true for what we are now seeing within the life of many congregations. Gone is a sense of generational commitment to a community. Often, in its place is the oft-quoted "convenience store" mentality of community affiliation: I have a need, I fulfill that need, and I am gone. The "me" has replaced the "we" in how we identify within our community. The ground of meaning has become the individual instead of a part of a larger historical community and transcendent

Other. To paraphrase one contemporary prayer book, we should be careful what we worship, because we become what we worship.(12)

This development of a type of privatized religious belief and practice represents one of the greatest challenges to our religious institutions. It speaks to the heart of personal alienation and "tamed" spirituality. It is very much a characteristic of the baby boomer generation and it is this generation that will dominate the religious institutional world for at least one or maybe two decades. Caring community programs validate individual expressions of spiritual identity and practice to be validated through a prism of traditional practices and rituals. An individual's practice is thus seen within the context of a larger, historical community. The creation of personal designer religions can only weaken the communal fabric and extend the sense of personal isolation that defines so much of our world. Much of the baby boomer cohort appears to be a fertile ground for the development of a type of personal religious experience that is reflective of the generation. Wade Clark Roof notes that: " For many boomers this type of radically individualistic religion fits in very well with a complex, highly bureaucratized society. Beliefs remain contained in private life, where they reign supreme, and do not intrude into the broader social realms, where definitions of religious reality are contestable and can become disruptive." (13)

The need to see congregations as places in which caring communities can be developed stems in great part from this sense of tension between individuality and community. Social observers such as Roof, Dychwald, Kosmin and Lachman , and others, believe that much of it stems from the coming of age of the baby-boomer generation. Its journey is symbolic of much that is taking place within contemporary synagogue (and

church) life: a competitive tug-of-war between the need for personal expression and the need for community. This tension has produces opportunities for congregations to re-visit what they do and how they think. The dichotomy is bridged not by programming but by novel synagogue relationships that weave together the diverse threads of community into a unity of diversity. The idea of the congregation as an evolving *unity of diversity* appeals to our age of transition where an ever expanding variety of practices have become accepted as legitimate forms of religious expression. How we manage this transition will determine the religious landscape in coming years: what type of religious communities will comprise it? Will there be any religious communities at all?

That is why the baby-boomer generation merits so much attention. They are emerging from a growth process marked by relative affluence, economic strength and peace. They now confront their own aging, intergenerational dynamics and mortality. Raised within a culture that taught that every problem had a solution, many now embrace a rush to create meaning. At the heart of this searching is a profound need to establish relationships that add definition and substance to one's life. When this search is undertaken as part of a congregational caring-community program, it often results in a congregational search for systemic change within the congregation itself. These are changes that underscore the need for personal meaning within more intimate communal settings that send a message that the individual is cared for.

C. Opportunities for Congregations

This is a remarkably exciting time in congregational life. Transition and change seem to be cornerstones of the emerging age. As one recent community study noted:

> the trend toward religious involvement among American Jews

> is part of the larger religious resurgence in America. The conditions for religious renewal are generational, touching both Jews and non-Jews alike. Baby-boomers are exploring religious and spiritual paths that they feel may provide guidance to the personal and family dilemmas facing them as they enter middle age...The synagogue's role in generating community is also crucial to a generation of American Jews whose social and geographic mobility have distanced them from their extended families, friends, and social support networks.(14)

The development of caring, relationship-based programs of support speak, then, to the contemporary paradox of the need for autonomy and individualism as well as the need for personal meaning based upon community. The congregation can become a source where one can find a sense of self worth and personal validation. The congregation as an extended spiritual family is a valid image. Members seek a sense of personal well being and meaning within the congregational family just as they do within their families of origin. Finding one's way in one may not be too different from finding one's way in the other.

> Life takes form as individual beings that immediately reach out to create systems of relationships. These individuals and systems arise from two seemingly conflicting forces: the absolute need for individual freedom and the unequivocal need for relationships. In human society we struggle with the tension

between these two forces...Life's first imperative is that it must be free to create itself....Life's second great imperative propels individuals out from themselves to search for community.(15)

The manner in which congregations seek to harmonize this tension between individual validation and communal identity will determine the way in which the synagogue and the community will come to be known in coming years.

It is in this sense of innovation and challenge that this new age should be welcomed for it can allow for dramatic and spiritually challenging responses. In the face of a society of isolation, the synagogue has a unique opportunity to stand alone as a vehicle through which Jewish values are studied, transmitted and modeled. Indeed, given the statistics of the changing Jewish family, the synagogue may well be the only instrument within the Jewish community able to fulfill these tasks. There will be no Jewish continuity if Jews seek communities that speak only to the self. The synagogue's work is done as an extended spiritual family which links generations, beliefs, practices and points of view into a continually developing unity of diversities. It is the place where Jewish values can best be modeled as an ongoing affirmation of our covenantal relationship to God.

The growing numbers of Jews who are turning to intensive experiences of study and spiritual searching represent the first waves of a people trying to break free from this society of isolation. They herald the need to see beyond the self, to re-vision the mission of the synagogue, and to re-visit the nature of community, and their call for change represents a religious revolution that is now challenging congregational systems and leaders. What people in the demonstration project workshops reported as well was that they were not seeking identification or affiliation just because it was "the thing to do

in order to have a specific life-cycle need met. Rather, they reported seeking a spiritual home that would encounter, challenge and support the whole person; a synagogue that would engage them intellectually and spiritually at all ages and at all stages of life. They responded to communities of inclusion and involvement and interaction where their needs are recognized and their talents utilized. In their secular world of corporate privatization and spiritual isolation, they wanted their synagogue to be a community of caring, compassion, involvement, challenge, risk and growth. It was to meet this challenge that the caring community programs were proposed.

D. Framing the Project

One of the challenges in developing the workshops was framing the project in terms of Jewish tradition. How would these programs differ from those being developed at local community centers or social service agencies? Indeed, the absence of such a distinction has been one of the criticisms leveled at these initiatives. Yet, congregations must send a message that they care about their members' lives. The synagogue represents an extended spiritual family operating within a world of choice. This sense of concern, as family members are concerned about other family members, operates within traditional Jewish values, however, and therein lies its uniqueness. Congregations see themselves as modeling the sacred, God, and their behavior as mirroring God's image. To introduce this idea, I reflected upon a traditional religious and ritual symbol; the prayer shawl or *tallit*, which signifies covenant between the people of Israel and God. The *tallit*, as prayer shawl, brings the worshiper in touch with God through a relationship of prayer. The *tallit*, used as the traditional marriage canopy (*chupah*), extends the image of the sacredness of the covenantal relationship beyond the

self. The *tallit* is an identifiable symbol to teach the Jewish values which underscore caring-community programs.

Four poles support the marriage canopy. I suggest that each pole represents a value, which helps define the program of caring within a congregation. The value of *dugma* , setting an example, is an excellent starting point. Participants in the workshops were asked what type of congregation they wished to create. Many respondents identified part of their motivation for becoming involved with caring-community programs as a wish to see their congregation as a place where concern and respect for individuals matters. They saw themselves as representatives of how God wanted people to act in relation to others and the community. Exemplifying Jewish values in one's life evokes the traditional idea that we are created *b'tzelem elohim*; "in God's image". If, as individuals we are to act in this way, how much the more so a congregation. Once again the analogy to the family seems relevant, for are we not urged to act in such a way so as to reflect respect and honor to our own family? By acting in such a way as to set a sacred example, we reflect our relationship to being a sacred creation. This visible representation of the idea of *tzelem elohim* emerged as a crucial element in the theological underpinning of the project.

Setting examples of living values also implies communicating those beliefs and values. This means teaching the textual foundations for the program. It also means that the need for communicating the basic values of the program becomes an essential element in the project's growth. A congregation that is not itself transformed as participants are, is a congregation that fails to reap the program's benefits. This is always a danger. Communication means leadership actively soliciting membership for ideas and

involvement. Setting an example means that everything that is done within the life of a congregation, from minutes to mailings, sets a tone of Jewish values and underscores the fact that we are in created in God's image. It means that we continue to ask as individuals, and thus as a community, how we can live our lives and conduct ourselves so that we model a sense of dignity and sanctity.

How do we set an example of appropriate behavior? We do so through the performance of sacred deeds: *mitzvot.* Through *mitzvot* we can act in God's image. This means modeling and mentoring the beliefs of our community. From visiting the sick to comforting the bereaved, to the wide variety of sacred acts that congregations create to serve as examples of sacred behavior; congregants are reminded that their *mitzvot* are reflections of their relationship with God. An aspect of this value goes to the heart of the system in which many congregations function. The desire to change that system becomes a prime motivating factor in many congregations' willingness to undertake the development of caring community programs. The doing of *mitzvot* are not the province of the "professional" alone: they are incumbent on every member. This "democratization of the *mitzvah*" flows from the value of *dugma,* in that simply doing *mitzvot*, tears down the barriers built by our culture of isolation. The goal is to create relationships within the synagogue community that teach people that by doing *mitzvot* it is possible to overcome one's own sense of isolation. This new kind of caring-community, thereby establishes a partnership between clergy and congregants; a "covenant" of caring. *It is for this reason that these programs require complete clergy support.*. What seems like a simple concept of a shared covenant of caring between clergy and laity often proves to be the greatest initial hurdle. When, however, clergy support the program and are enthusiastic in their

desire to teach the *mitzvah* of caring, there emerges a renewed energy and sense of purpose within the congregation.

In attempting to meet the challenges of this society in transition our congregations have to be open to how they themselves are changing and, thus, are open also to new possibilities of leadership and relational interaction. This leads to the third supporting element in the *chupah* image: *chayim* (life). The caring-congregation concept teaches that congregational families, like our families of origin, are always changing. Indeed, it is change and evolution that gives rise to some of the most exciting opportunities for personal and congregational growth. It is suggested that every five years a total re-examination of a congregation's membership take place so that changes in family and personal situations, residences, personal activities and practices can be measured, and appropriate programmatic responses may be developed or anticipated. People change, congregations evolve. In order to involve people we have to know who they are, where they are and what they need. This communal inventory allows a congregation to create new opportunities for *mitzvot.* For example; a congregation that sees through its periodic re-assessment growing numbers of members between the ages of 45 and 65, will want to develop responses to issues such as caring for aging parents, so-called "sandwich generation" concerns, as well as issues such as healthy aging and wellness. In developing such responses, individual congregants with expertise in such areas as gerontology, financial planning, and elder law can join with the clergy in creating short term and extended Jewish-value based programs of support and guidance. Likewise, the involvement of members who have "walked down this road" can send a message that the congregational community is responding to an important need. The message is sent that

there are resources available within the congregational family and that it is all part of a living sacred system of deeds and values that celebrate life and model the concept of being in God's image. Again, there is a connection of the self to the historical transcendent aspect of life; a connection that helps place the autonomous self within a sacred historical continuum. The individual can find meaning within a sacred community. Part of our responsibility, it seems, is the need to teach that we are not only for our self, but part of something greater against which we must measure our deeds and have our deeds measured. It is through these and similar methods that we model the fact that we need to create caring congregational communities by educating for reverence. By this I mean that in doing *mitzvot* (the deed) we set an appropriate *dugma* (example) by teaching and living a reverence for *chayim* (life).

There is no higher value within Judaism than reverence for life. An aspect of the caring-community program is the idea that life, *chayim,* needs to be viewed with reverence. This means not only the customary ritual aspects of life, but all of life. As programs develop, congregations are expanding their understanding that anything that takes place within the life of a congregant can and should be addressed within the life of the synagogue. One of ways this is being demonstrated is in the creation of new and powerful religious rituals. Since caring-community programs, by definition, touch the private moments in a person's life, volunteers and clergy develop new rituals that connect the sacred to every aspect of life. All life becomes and opportunity for strengthening, even establishing, the fourth component that holds our *chupah:* that of *k'dushah* (holiness). As congregations develop caring community programs, it is this last link that has provided some of the most vital and exciting programs. This reflects the search for a sacred aspect

of the self, a context within which the isolated self can find direction, meaning and purpose.

Across the congregational landscape and throughout the denominational structures many are reviewing the role of ritual and prayer. All aspects of life deserve recognition and reverence. It is not only birthdays and anniversaries, but anything that people experience merits a blessing or a prayer. A new job, a degree, a life transition, a miscarriage, a promotion, a retirement, the recovery from surgery, the acceptance of physical limitations, the move from the family home to a life care or nursing home, a change in a career. The list describing moments of personal and familial transition is endless and continually evolving. Should not all of those moments be sanctified and placed within a sacred context? As congregations respond to the sacred potential of all they do, they see the increasing role of traditional blessings and rituals. It is not unusual that as part of the discussions dealing with creating caring-community programs, congregational members have seen the need to turn again to traditional rituals that are prescribed for the sanctification of daily life. There is renewed interest in everything from re-inventing and re-interpreting festivals, to a desire to be more fluent in Hebrew and daily prayer. Many volunteers report that their interest in discovering these sacred aspects of their existence is directly a result of the fact that in their secular world, they rarely receive the sense that their life is part of anything greater than the moment. As our secular world continues to devalue the sacred aspect of life, our congregations need to emphasize its mystery.

The image then of the marriage canopy evolved as the introductory image used to introduce the concept of the caring community. It also served to illustrate the values that we wanted to address in the demonstration project seminars. The image of the

canopy, held together by the values of example *(dugma)*, sacred deeds *(mitzvot)* and celebrating life *(chayim)* are made whole by their being seen as values that lead to the bringing about of holiness *(k'dushah)* into the life of the individual and the congregational community. It is a system that validates the individual in his or her relationship with others, as the individual is validated through the prism of a sacred relationship with God. Within this system we can stay rooted yet continue to evolve. Within this system each generation, each individual and each congregation can grapple with the challenges of evolving and innovating a religious caring community that stands as an antidote to a society of isolation and privatization. Much of what is transpiring in the world of the synagogue and church community is a response to Abraham Joshua Heschel's call for the development of a sense of personal and communal integrity.

> The problem is the spirit of our age: denial of transcendence, the vapidity of values, emptiness of the heart, the decreased sensitivity to the imponderable quality of the spirit, the collapse of communication between the realm of tradition and the inner world of the individual. The central problem is that we do not know how to think, how to pray, how to cry, how to resist the deceptions of too many persuaders. There is no community of those who worry about integrity.(16)

What began as an idea to demonstrate the potential impact of caring community programs on the congregational system gradually, as the demonstration seminars showed, opened new avenues of discovery. These discoveries have important implications for our community. The seminars confirmed the need to develop

congregational communities that stress the development of strong personal relationships. Indeed, many of the participants continually reported that their involvement was based not on philosophy but on the importance of a personal relationship in a moment of personal crisis. It is at these moments that the importance of the community becomes especially evident and the power of the spiritual particularly manifest. Relationships created among the members of a congregation, supported and informed by their individual relationships with God and the tradition, help provide a sense of belonging, purpose and meaning to all who engage in caring-community work. Opportunities for transformation are often created as a result of becoming involved with caring-community programs. These opportunities arise out of a shared sense of purpose and an evolving partnership between individuals, the congregational community and God. Robert Bellah alludes to this when he writes: "Personal transformation among large numbers is essential, and it must not only be a transformation of consciousness but must also involve individual action. But individuals need the nurture of groups that carry a moral tradition reinforcing their own aspirations." (17)

Programs within congregations which teach and model aspects of caring and which are rooted in the theological foundations of our tradition, strengthen the relationships between individual members, between members and the congregation, and ultimately between the individual member and God. At their best. these relationships lead to a personal transformation, which spreads to the congregation as a whole.

CHAPTER 2

A DISCUSSION OF THEOLOGICAL AND CLINICAL PRINCIPLES

"Why are you here? What motivated you to become involved in this program?" Two dozen volunteers from Temple Sinai of Atlanta were seated before me in a semi-circle. One of them raised her hand to say that she came because, despite the growing number of programs that the congregation offered, there was no sense of community. She felt challenged by her friends to "do something". We probed a little further and discovered that her need for connection sprang from her own experience of loss, when synagogue members had supported and cared for her. Their concern impacted so profoundly on her that she wished to create a community that lived "care-fully", caring for each other.

This project resulted from the belief that the development of congregational based programs of caring and "inreach"could serve as an avenue of personal and congregational transformation. The idea rests on the belief that people seek meaningful and purpose- filled communities; they want to feel validated, affirmed, loved, needed and cared for.

A "theology of relationships" undergirds this project .This theology assumes that people need communities where they can find meaning and purpose. In this day and age the synagogue can play a major role in the development of these communities of meaning. The theology of relationships views the synagogue as an extended spiritual family reflecting an individual's experience within their own family. In many ways then, volunteering for congregational work reflects the view of the congregation as an idealized family and , the clergy, as idealized parent. At the heart of the project is the belief that a key motivating aspect of congregational life is the

desire to be a part of something greater than the self, creating relationships that personal meaning and reveal an interconnectedness for the self within community. Workshop respondents continually spoke of their desire to be there for others as others had been there for them. This desire led them to learn more about themselves and to become more aware of and appreciative of their faith. Their search for a sense of "self" had allowed them to attempt the transformation of a congregational culture by beginning with the transformation of themselves.

Congregations continually express the need for the creation of these types of connections. Gradually, but unavoidably, congregations understand the need for communities which are based on powerful personal relationships. They see Heschel's call for the creation of communities of integrity at the heart of what it means to be a spiritual community.

The establishment of these communities rests upon a relationship with God. This relationship is linked to the individual's volunteer experience which opens new pathways for personal spiritual growth. This is one of the most fundamental aspects of this program. It is, in its very nature, a private, personal and subjective aspect of transformation. Involvement in these programs allows people to experience a sense of God in fundamentally new ways.

The understanding of God , for many people, is a left-over remnant of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah , discarded or rejected from the death of a loved one, or even a vestige of childhood fantasy. There emerges instead, a new understanding that part of being in a community of faith, and acting out that faith in relationship with others, is the possibility of an evolving relationship with God. The current Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, Rabbi Jonathan Saks, echoes both Heschel and the power of allowing God in to our communal development:

The Enlightenment and the intellectual and social processes to which it

gave rise have had a devastating effect on the traditions which gave meaning and shape to life lived in community. They have focused relentlessly on two entities: the individual, detached from historical context, and the universal, politically realized in the secular state. They have left little space for the third essential component of our social ecology: particular and concrete communities of character, of which religions were and are the most potent example. (1).

Saks understands the need to see the congregation as an extended spiritual family, held together by the power of human relationships, a counter institution to secular culture. The congregational family then, is an expanding and inclusive spiritual community where "faith is not measured by acts of worship alone. It exists in the relationships we create and it lies deep in our moral commitments."(2)

The starting point of the theology of relationships is the opening chapter of Ecclesiastes that reminds us: "One generation goes, and another generation comes, But the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun sets--and returns to where it rises." (Ecclesiastes 1:4,5) This chapter is the perfect beginning for it reminds us that, despite the modern myth that we can control much of our existence, we control very little of it. The text tells us that we are part of a larger, gradually unfolding creation. The responses of volunteers echo this need to belong to something that transcends the self. As we said, this realization emerges after a personal crises where the value of being part of a community and its' relationships proves to be beneficial and affirming. In addition, people often come to these programs as their lives force themselves to confront their own mortality. They wish to become part of something meaningful that exists

outside of the self. This is often expressed by the desire to enter into a new, or more mature relationship with God. Whatever the key that unlocks the door to the pathway of transformation may be, there arises a fundamental understanding of the need to escape the transitory and the temporal. The essential value of a religious community is that it has the power to place the past, interpret the present, and frame the future in terms of a sense of shared values and traditions. The imagery of Ecclesiastes 1 provides a perfect canvass on which to create a personal journey of meaning through the creation of a community of relationships. Saks speaks clearly of the need to create communities of meaning in a society that worships at the alter of personal autonomy.

> Certainly we have lost our sense of being part of a single moral community in which very different people are brought together under a canopy of shared values. It has become difficult to see ourselves as a part of a collective enterprise that preceded our birth, will persist after our death and which gives meaning to our struggles. Beyond producing and consuming, work and leisure, we find it hard to say what gives meaning to our lives. We have become inarticulate about the reasons for our choices, and the bonds between us, so important to understanding who we are, have become strained. We feel the need to liberate ourselves from our parents. We find it harder to imagine ourselves living on in our children. Each of our relationships, including marriage, has become provisional. The apartment we call the self has grown more self-contained and therefore lonelier.(3)

The creation of relationships that evolve into a community within a sacred tradition and

history, is central to our task. In creating these communities, we understand the need for openness to the role of and need for intimacy and love. This helps distinguish a relationship from an association. The closeness and openness to intimacy of feeling and expression is still a barrier that many congregations cannot overcome. They may show you a schedule filled with programs, yet, the programs provide no sense of connection or opportunities to establish continuing relationships. People come and go and rarely interact outside of the professed "need" to which the program responds. In the caring- community model the relationships that are developed go beyond the immediate to evoke the transcendence as exemplified by God. Again, it is this linkage to and relationship with God that shapes the definition of the relationships that evolve into community. Parker Palmer discusses this linkage in terms of "therapeutic" communities:

> This model makes intimacy the highest value in human relationships, because intimacy is regarded as the best therapy for the pain of disconnection. An intimate relationship goes beyond an implicit capacity for connectedness: in intimacy, we explicitly share our deeper natures with each other, in the belief that we can be fully known and the trust that we will be fully accepted. At its best, therapeutic community is characterized by one of the many forms of love: between spouses and lovers, between parent and child, between good friends.(4)

Palmer reflects the fundamental importance of establishing these "intimate relationships" which can lead to the establishment of "therapeutic communities". Overlay his model with the power of a fundamental relationship with God and it is easy to see the foundations for the possibilities of communities of caring within congregational life.

The fundamental relationship with God is a powerful image in the theology of relationships. This image is brought into sharp focus in Genesis 1 which reminds us that we have been created in the God's image (*b'tzelem elohim*). The very first relationships we have are with our parents and with God. We spend much, if not all, of our life trying to understand these relationships. How we manage to deal with this determines, to a large extent, what we are and who we become. This life-long journey of trying to be in God's image I call the "fixing or shaping of the self or the soul" (*tikkun ha-nefesh).* I think it rests at the heart of how we create our relationships and, thus, at the heart of how we structure and create our communities. I suggest that three major Jewish values, derived from the the three letters of the word *tzelem*, can be instructive in how one begins to model the idea of being *tzelem elohim.* The letters that make up the Hebrew word *tzelem* are *tzaddi, lamed*, and *mem*. (tz.l.m) They stand for the values of justice (*tz'dakah*), heart (*lev*) and sacred deed (*mitzvah).* These values serve as spiritual guidelines in the modeling of ourselves as being in God's image. They are basic to the development of the type of relationship-based communities I am discussing.

These values speak to the idea of seeing justice, worth and dignity in every person. As an act of God's creation individuals are unique. Jewish tradition is filled with references to our uniqueness and the understanding that our uniqueness is founded upon this powerful creation-based relationship with God. The value of justice also speaks to how each of us is to interact with others in the relationships that we create. We begin to model being in God's image by dealing with others with equity and respect.

The heart (*lev*) reminds us of intimacy or love. In many ways, the image of the heart counterbalances our purely cognitive function, calling us to establish relationships where we meet

people as they are. This affective aspect provides passion and brings transformation to relationships and communities. It speaks to the need to belong, to feel a part of something greater than or outside of one's self. It bridges and the performance of sacred deeds (*mitzvot*). It is the *mitzvah* that links us to others and thus to God. The *mitzvah* then is something more than just doing the right thing, it is a means through which we become a living symbol of God's creation and an exemplar of that sacred relationship. Again, I go back to the power of relationships in determining who we are and what we become. This idea begins with Genesis and the creation of the basic relationships of life. As Carol Ochs has written:

> Creation in Genesis continues by distinction and division, by separation and naming and by a call for creation to be fruitful and multiply. Distinction, division and separation remind us that we are finite, limited by the many different things that surround us, and in our creation as male and female we are simultaneously limited and completed by relationships. This is the intent in which we are called into being...we are created in God's image and we are created in relationships. (5)

Genesis 1 considers our relationship with God and others in terms of creation. Genesis 3 does so in terms of our own finitude. Genesis 3 is pivotal in the theology of relationships as it sets the stage for our need to seek relationships and build communities of meaning in response to the understanding that we will, at some point, die. This reality lies at the heart of religion. It gives rise to the distance between us and God in that God's first question to us in the Garden is, "where are you"? It is this question that we spend our lives trying to answer. It forces upon us what I call the "why" questions of existence: questions that arise from the reality of our own mortality, such

as "why was I born?" and "what is life's purpose"? When questions like these found their way into the demonstration workshops, volunteers said that their involvement with other members during moments of need helped focus their own spiritual searches. The relationships created by doing for others had important benefits for the volunteers.

Genesis 3 focuses our attention on our own search for answers to the purpose of life. Part of our own search for meaning is the understanding that we can never fulfill our desire to be one with God, to return to the mythical Garden or to re-unite with the primal mother. .In the face of eventual death and the reality of our own unique alone-ness, we seek out relationships to validate our being by offering love and acceptance. We can, however, answer God's question by creating relationships based on the concept of *tzelem.* Communities of caring provide the vehicle to answer the "where are you" call from God in a particular and positive way.

Ernst Becker echoes these thoughts when he refers to the need to create communities of caring to provide the self esteem that is a necessary condition of life. We seek this validation of the self because of the paradox of our existence, our being "individuality within finitude" (6). In caring-communities our congregational families can replicate the sense of self esteem, worth and value that we had as we grew up, or even provide that which we never had. The need to obtain this validation and sense of purpose and meaning is in direct reaction to the reality of death, the reality that drives our answer to God's question in the Garden. "The final terror of self consciousness is the knowledge of one's own death, which is the peculiar sentence on man alone in the animal kingdom. This is the meaning of the Garden of Eden myth and the rediscovery of modern psychology that death is man's peculiar and greatest anxiety."(7)

In the relationships we establish and the communities that we create we evolve the means

by which we can answer God's question of "where are you? When we recognize that everything we do is but another way we answer God's call in Genesis 3, then everything we do rises potentially to the level of the sacred. If we truly wish to be *tzelem elohim*, then we have to restructure the very focus of those "why" questions. We may have to risk asking questions in a different way, a way in which we re-emphasize the fundamental importance and sacred aspect of God's most precious gift to us: life itself. Viktor Frankl gives us an insight into this dialogue with self and God from the perspective of his unique Holocaust experience.

> What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn ourselves and, furthermore, we had to teach the despairing men, that it *did not matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from* us. We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life-daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk or meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks to which it constantly sets forth for each individual.(8)

Asking responsible questions involves risk. The volunteer training workshops that comprised the project raised the issue of risk as a necessary part of entering into a meaningful relationship with others. In visiting the sick or counseling the bereaved, we risk releasing emotions and feelings long thought buried. Likewise, congregational leadership must take risks to embark on a program that may change the congregation's culture. Yet, not to risk change or

growth promotes stagnation. Relationships, be they with God or with other people, must evolve, if for no other reason than we ourselves never remain the same. Daniel Gordis gives an interesting insight into the nature of our relationship with God when he notes that relationship does not imply certainty. It implies rather "gradual growth and learning with fits and starts, with periods of tremendous progress as well as deeply frustrating and painful times." (9) Gordis distinguishes "relationship" with God from "belief" in God. He emphasizes the organic and evolving nature of a relationship which stresses not "believe, and you will be saved", but "search, and you will find meaning". As if responding to the need for each of us to seek relationships of meaning he notes that Jewish tradition "decided long ago to focus not on essence, but on God's presence; Judaism seeks not God's truth, but God's closeness." (10)

This aspect of risk taking and growth, both personal and communal, emerges from Genesis 12 and God's call to Abraham to "go forth" to a place that is yet unknown. Life requires us to move, to grow, to change and to evolve. Another text, perhaps the best example of a Biblical story which points to the need for personal evolution, is Jacob's wrestling with the mysterious messenger or angel as depicted in Genesis 32. Jacob, alone, confronts the messenger, and emerges changed.

> Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he wrenched Jacob's hip at its socket, so that the socket of his hip was strained as he wrestled with him. Then he said: "Let me go for dawn is breaking." But he answered, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." Said the other, "What is your name?" He replied, "Jacob." Said he, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but

Israel, for you have striven with beings divine and human and have prevailed.

(Genesis 32:25-29)

Here is profound personal struggle as a necessary component of growth. It also underscores the fact that life never remains static. Jacob's struggle opens the door for the liberation of the soul to embrace the notion of change and growth. This is an important consideration in the notion of *tikkun ha-nefesh* which I alluded to earlier. Jacob's struggle, like our own, is a notion that is fraught with fear and not easily undertaken. Jacob sends everyone away and confronts (or is confronted by) his "angel" alone. He undergoes his name/identity change alone. He emerges from his alone-ness to establish a different level of relationship with his family, his self and his God. The transformation comes about only after Jacob is willing to engage in the wrestling. As a result, he becomes open to change. Only through our willingness to struggle with God and to confront the mystery of our own creation and purpose, can we hope to emerge transformed. This willingness or openness to wrestle with our "self" is very difficult. Its lack prevents many people, and congregations, from travelling the path of evolution and development. The status quo is often too comfortable and "safe". Jacob-like situations often emerge from the randomness of our life experiences that propel us to wrestle against our will. Often, the people who come to leadership positions in congregational caring programs are those who have done so as a result of a life situation. The resulting change has moved them to "give something back" to their community for they now see how important such work can be. The Jacob story reinforces the idea that in our relationship with our own soul/psyche, we need to be open to change and growth as symbolized by the text in Genesis 32.

The Jacob story sends a message as to the importance of being open to personal growth

and change. It asks us to risk wrestling with the self to emerge as changed human beings. Exodus chapter 3 asks the individual, and by extension the community, to open themselves to an evolving relationship with God. In God's reply to Moses's questions about the identity of the voice from the burning bush, the biblical author sets the stage for the idea that just as one's relationship with one's self should not be allowed to become static and stagnant, so too one's relationship with God must evolve. The phrase *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, ("I shall be what I shall be") provides another indication that in our desire to serve as a *tzelem elohim*, we need to be open to a continually evolving relationship with God. The tradition is filled with images that remind us that God is the God of generations and is open to the interpretation of each new generation. Likewise, God is open to the changes that we go through in our lives. We are different people and believe differently at ages thirteen, thirty-six, fifty-four or eighty-five. Wrestling at such times with our relationships with people and with God evokes a struggle with our evolving self as well, if the self is to function in the world as *tzelem*.

In training volunteers for caring-community programs, difficult personal theological issues emerged at this point. It is in the discussions about individual theological journeys that issues concerning openness to new relationships with God take place. Personal psychology and theology intersect here. While many see the value in "giving back to the congregation", barriers may arise in seeing a connection between their personal growth and relationship with God. In the volunteer training, opportunities must be provided for the discussion of personal experiences with and the understanding of the volunteer's relationship with God. This is essential if volunteers are to be effective in dealing with congregants who may be in crises and who may be asking theological questions. These discussions draw on life experience as volunteers relate their own

journey through crisis or transition, and how they thereby learned to see their relationship with God differently.

The experience of an evolving relationship with God is an important by-product of these caring community programs. It comes about, on some level, by the need to feel connected to others in a community, a desire that goes back to childhood and the basic structure of an individual's family relationships. There is a linkage between the development of relationships that people have as a child and their relationships, or perception of God. For Ana-Maria Rizzuto, "The God representation must have the same ceaseless potential for new meaning in the long process of life as the parental representations have for us until we die."(11) David Ariel sees in these parental representations, a cause for the inability of many to evolve in to a more mature relationship with God."Most of us hold an image of God in our minds as a personal being whom we expect to listen to us when we call to Him, who should reward us when we are good and punish us if we are bad. This is the childhood image of God as parent that many of us never outgrow because we rarely have the opportunity to examine our beliefs from an adult perspective." (12)

A congregation that treats its membership with a sense of respect for their life experiences and encourages the expression of those experiences through interaction with others, opens the possibilities for an evolving expression of faith and view of the self. The congregation, the extended spiritual family and the rabbi, as the idealized parental figure, can help people grow in their relationship with the self by creating a supporting and caring environment for an evolving relationship with God. A person's involvement in congregational caring-programs can thus reflect prior relationships with parents and families of origin. The connection is represented by the idea of

the congregation serving and modeling as an extended spiritual family. Within this "family" opportunities for transformation can take place. "The ultimate environment of man is always all the other human beings from our parents to our present friends transformed either into a God representation, a trusting feeling about the universe at large, or a conceptual re-elaboration about the Divinity."(13) The communal environment of the synagogue, symbolizing for many a re-interpretation of our own family community, allows for the development of feelings of validation and connection, enhanced and modeled in a positive and sacred manner. These feelings are based on the value and meaning derived from relationships and the benefits derived from those encounters. The feeling, or affective aspect of these programs are a motivating factor in their success. People have reported that their reward is how they feel as a result of their participation. Is it a representation of how they felt when they were rewarded by parental figures, either in reality or in fantasy, as a child? People receive deep and profound psychic rewards when they become invested in programs within their congregations. Involvement brings an openness to newer sensations of self, community and God. There is a change in the way people relate to their world. Shafranske notes that: :"The significance of our inquiry into God-representation therefore goes beyond the study of religion to an analysis of an individual's stance toward relational existence. Embedded within one's God-representation exists a personal statement of one's relationship with all of existence....God representations are viewed as highly personal expressions relevant not only to one's religiosity but also as statements of one's relationship within the universe of significant psychological objects." (14) The linkage that Shafranske makes between a person's representation of God and that person's relationship with all of existence, and thus the self, magnifies the importance of developing a theology of relationships in order to explore new

approaches to being "in God's image". This challenge is emphasized by Ariel from the perspective of faith.

> What are the relevant images of God that serve us today? All the images that we have of God are based on our idea of relationships. Too many of the images from the past are based on parental images of God that emphasize our dependence, inadequacy, and the need for protection. These images are inadequate for many of us today because our understanding of relationships has changed as we have grown and society has evolved. The conventional images of God that are prevalent in Judaism and that reflect a parent-child model are not spiritually compelling today. We can use a new imagery of God based on a mature understanding of relationships. We can replace the parent-child model for our relationship with God with a new model of father to adult and mother to adult. (15)

The texts of Genesis 32 and Exodus 3 point to the life long struggle to confront our relationships with self and God and how that struggle manifests itself in our relationship with the world at large. This dialectic of self, God and community is part of our life's journey and exists in a synergy whose components consist of our earliest experiences through our current life situations with an eye on who we wish to be. The theological foundation of the caring community programs always brings us back to the basic idea that we strive to live as an example of *tzelem elohim* and that the environment of our religious community serves as a core community, or family, that gives us opportunities to realize that goal. For us to grow and evolve and transform, the community that embraces us, be it family or extended spiritual family, needs also to embrace the sense of struggle, growth and evolution that is alluded to in the texts. Transformation of self can best take

place within an environment that sees such activity, either on a theological or psychological level, as a sacred and positive act. Healthy environments are open to risk, inclusivity of new ideas and the possibility that what may emerge as a result of the struggles may be substantively different. Spero notes that the development of a healthy concept of God and self may be intertwined from earliest experiences. Indeed, he sees the "precursor" of God concepts developing from these early life experiences. "This precursor religious object--which may debut as a teddy bear, mythic hero, or the hazy image of a grandfatherly face behind the clouds--will tend to be healthy if one's concurrent and overall object relational functioning is healthy: destructive if otherwise."(16)

Relationships, and thus communities that evolve and grow will be healthy if they are embraced by a fundamental relationship with God. This healthy relationship is reinforced through Leviticus 19, which reminds us that every relationship we experience, no matter what the context, has the potential to be sacred because of the fact that we, by definition, are with God. This grounding in God helps define everything which we experience. This elevates the "giving something back to the community" from the merely "good" to the "sacred". Why? Because, as we are reminded in the text, *ani adoni* ("I am God"). It is because of God that we honor not only ritual responsibilities, but we care for the sick, act justly in business, and repair society. The phrase, *ani adoni* translates into real life what it means to be in a sacred relationship with God. It reminds us that the challenge of being in that sacred relationship is full-time one, not just one day per week or several days a year. At all stages of growth the acts we do and the relationships we create are grounded in the sacred. An individual cares for the sick or consoles the bereaved because of being called by God (*ani adoni*). It is how we model the divine that makes us *tzelem elohim*.

The grounding of life with God, the values and beliefs of a tradition and our self development within a community point us to a final and important aspect of the theology of relationships. How we choose to enter into relationships and how we choose what defines those relationships determine how we live and what we become. Our being able to model *tzelem elohim* is based upon what we choose to do with the gift of life. Deuteronomy 30 reminds us that we are given choices in life, choices that will result in different outcomes with different sets of possibilities and responsibilities.

> I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life--if you and your offspring would live-- by loving the Lord your God, heeding His commands, and holding fast to Him. For thereby you shall have life and shall long endure upon the soil that the Lord you God swore to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give to them. (Deuteronomy 30:19,20)

We must "choose life" and not just for the hear and now, but for the lives and situations of those who come after us. The ability to enter into relationships of health, positive growth and potential transformation require choices that enhance and honor the concept of life. Individuals who make choices for life, our fundamental gift from God, and who translate those choices to the community at large, allow for sacred changes within the community. Caring-community programs create synagogue environments that underscore the choices that sanctify the value of life. They are synagogues that are defined by individuals who have chosen to evolve and grow and renew their relationships with their own self, their community and ultimately, their God.

The theology of relationships begins with the belief that we are part of something greater

than our self.(Ecclesiastes 1) Within this transcendent reality we undertake a search for meaning, beginning with the knowledge that we are created to be a living example of God. (Genesis 1). The mystery of creation stems from the fact that we, being in God's image (*tzelem*) exist fundamentally in relationship with our Creator. The expression of that relationship, and the basis for the creation of other relationships, is illustrated through the values of justice (*tz'dakah*), heart (*lev*) and sacred deed (*mitzvah*). Now we understand ourselves as religious beings. As such, we come to know that we are mortal, pursuing sacred relationships with God and others (Genesis 3). This reality, which is a basic part of our dawning consciousness, drives us to search for our own sense of meaning and purpose; our own answers to why we have been created. The knowledge that we are finite reminds us of our fragility and alone-ness and reinforces the basic need to connect with others in order to establish relationships and thus communities of meaning. To do so may, and often does, require us to move forward and take risks. The risk of growth and the need for faith to take those risks (Genesis 12) is a condition of healthy relationships.. The struggle in taking those risks often marks changes in one's own self. Yet, there is a need to face those struggles for it is through those moments of doubt and decision that healthy, positive change can take place. (Genesis 32). Likewise, as we dare to change and evolve in our relationship with our self, we evolve into a changing relationship with God. Indeed, opportunities for change and evolution develop together as a result of moments of transition and life experience. (Exodus 3). As we increasingly define ourselves as maturing and evolving individuals who exemplify *tzelem elohim*, we come to know that, in every aspect of our relationships and communities, the sacred rests at the foundation. Being in God's image means that all of life is nothing but relationship with God (Leviticus 19).We may then make life's choices embraced by that relationship , motivated to

reinforce our God-given dignity and sanctity. (Deuteronomy 30). Our relationship with ourselves, and with our fellow human beings in the community of caring, is ultimately based on how we choose to give meaning to the fact that we have been created in relationship with God, created as living examples of what is potentially sacred and transcendent.

The network of personal relationships that make up a congregation can evolve into a system that sees the congregation as an extended spiritual family. This is an idea that is still not universally accepted. In congregations where this concept is encouraged, there is a greater degree of openness, involvement and relationship support. There is a sense, as in a family of origin, that one does have a responsibility to take care of and support other members of the family. It is in these congregations that the introduction of change engenders possibility not passivity. The image of the congregation as an extended spiritual family supports the development of caring-community programs and nurtures the program's volunteers.

The view of the religious institution as an example of a family system is a key part of Friedman's approach to congregational life. "Religious institutions", he observes," not only function like families, they also contain families. Indeed, they often derive their very structure from families. Thus, emotional process in religious organizations not only mirrors emotional process in personal families, but also, both types of family systems plug into one another." (17) This view of the congregation as a family system also informs some of the analyses of the Alban Institute of Bethesda, MD. A recent Alban publication complements Friedman's beliefs. "A systems approach claims that any person or event stands in relationship to something. You cannot isolate anything and understand it. The parts function as they do because of the presence of the other parts. All parts interface with each other." (18) The attempt to see the congregation as an

inter-related network of faith-based relationships sends an important and powerful message to the members of such congregations. This is a message of belonging and inclusion which impacts a congregation's identity by allowing individuals to see themselves as part of larger community; a community that has as one of its missions, the care and support of its members. No one needs to feel left out. These concepts of inclusion, self worth and validation supply purpose to the community and meaningfulness to the people who make it up.

The changing of a congregational system reflects that element of risk-taking that was symbolized by Abraham's willingness to go forth into an unknown future as described in Genesis 12. The introduction of a caring-community program into the congregational system can initiate a congregational cultural shift, and should be done with deliberation, purpose, proper communication and adequate education. A sudden disruption to the balance of congregational life, even for the best of intentions, all too often creates tension and hostility. The importance of ordered and measured change within a system is noted by Parsons and Leas. "Transformational excess also creates a values gap between lay leaders and parishioners. Too much change, too many new programs, leave parishioners with the impression that what was done in the past is no longer valued. In time, parishioners feel themselves devalued and wonder if their understanding of the church's purpose is still valued." (19) The failure to work within the system as one attempts to change it is one of the leading contributors to the failure of caring community programs. Congregations attempt to overlay an idea upon an unprepared membership, instead of having the program emerge from within the system. As Parsons and Leas explain: "Multiple change efforts that are not grounded in the organizational life of the congregation produce chaos. Leaders and members in general burn out as they jump from one project to the next. People are not supported

adequately in their efforts to do ministry. New participants have to be recruited constantly to replace those leaving out of disagreement or fatigue." (20)

No one person can change the congregational system alone. Substantive congregational change emerges from a foundation of strong, caring and supportive relationships. The programs that evolve out of a network of these type of relationships usually succeed. Strong leadership understands that strength comes from the ability to empower others within a shared mission and vision. Strength does not come from the need to do everything and have everything revolve around one person (be it clergy or lay leader). One is reminded of the advice Jethro gives to Moses (Exodus 18) that to succeed he should delegate responsibility. "The thing you are doing is not right; you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone." (Exodus 18:17.18). Moses' frustration with his inability to accomplish his task is reflective of many leaders who feel a need to do everything themselves. "And Moses said to God, "Why have you dealt ill with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor, that you have laid the burden of all this people upon me?....I cannot carry all this people by myself, for it is too much for me" (Numbers 11: 11, 14). The "overfunctioning" Moses serves as an example, according to Friedman, of a family situation in which the parent or spouse laments the inability of others to accept responsibly.

> "The results in a congregational family are similar. It is never possible to make others responsible by trying to make them responsible, because the very act of trying to make others responsible is preempting their responsibility. What rarely occurs to those in the overfunctioning position is that in any type of family the rest of the system may be

underfunctioning as an adaptive response! In other words, it has

become a familial, homeostatic correction to an extreme position.(21)

As in a family, congregational balance is crucial to a system's ability to function. Change restructures the very nature of relationships that, even if unhealthy, structure meaning for individual members. Friedman discusses the importance of this sense of balance or homeostasis, at some length. Risk taking, wrestling and struggling for meaning pose challenges to individuals and congregations. Fear of changing is a great barrier, fear of not changing as a great motivator. Often, the introduction of caring-community programs are successfully initiated immediately surrounding a rabbinic transition or important congregational life cycle event (such as anniversary or new building). These provide natural windows for the re-examination of the congregation's mission and purpose. They provide unique opportunities to deal with the twin aspects of fear. As in personal life cycle events or crises, fear of moving forward is twinned with a fear of what will happen if everything remains static.

The congregational clergy are important to the success of the program. As idealized parent, clergy are a major force in the genesis and evolution of the caring community. Proper clergy leadership sets the tone and sends a message of empowerment within a faith context. The role of the clergy and the stance they take in the process the program's development mirrors their ability to practice what Friedman calls "leadership through self-differentiation." In this model leaders need to stay connected with the members of their "family" and focused on the organization's goal or mission. Clear self-definition and communication opens the door for members to grow in the sharing of goal-directed responsibility. A system operates ideally when everyone within the system knows his or her role. This is true for a family, or a congregation

acting as an extended spiritual family. Leader's avoid, above all, member's attempts to triangulate them so as to restore a previous sense of balance.

> The leader that accepts this model of leadership not only creates in God's image, he or she images God's model for creation...Leadership through self-differentiation thus puts the leader more on the side of the continuing evolution of our species than does leadership by charisma or consensus...Obviously, this is not a philosophy that opposes care and concern for others. The nature of the human phenomenon is that the more differentiated the self (i.e., the connected self), the more natural such care and concern becomes. It tends, however, to be a more objective care and concern for others when it is derived from an attitude that also maintains caring and concern for oneself. It is in this sense that being 'self-ish' in the the service of the family.
>
> And it is in this sense, most of all, that in any family, human or divine, the functioning of the members depends primarily on the functioning (which includes the thinking) of the being 'at the top'.(22).

In a different, but related vein, Parsons and Leas offer a view of the need for a similar sense of differentiation on the part of the congregational volunteer. This is like the child in the family who demands that everything be done his way and plays upon the parent enough so as to get his way. In a congregational system, like in a healthy family system, parents (clergy) develop the sense to know how and when to react to the needs of a specific person as distinct from the needs of the group. "Our very nature as human beings calls us to be in relations with others--a

part of community--integrated into a human collective beyond ourselves. But, our personal growth and maturity require that we differentiate ourselves from the community. At different points in our development, we may swing from one side of the polarity to the other, but it is in the tension between the two that we become fully human." (23) The changing of the balance of congregational life and the restructuring of roles and stances of clergy and congregant produce tension. This tension, when handled correctly, can be growth affirming and transformational on the part of both individuals and communities. "When congregations live between order and freedom, not allowing the excesses of either to dominate, an atmosphere is created in which different voices and approaches are honored. The tension becomes something life-giving, creative and renewing, as the internal society encourages the benefits of both order and freedom." (24)

The introduction of caring community programs represent a dramatic opportunity to change the life of a congregation by changing the nature of how individual congregants relate to each other and to the community. Steinke offers us a fascinating image of the congregation as a "spiritual ecosystem," in which the spiritual health of the congregation is the basis of evaluation. He asks congregations to examine the types of behavior and interactions that most support health and which most encourage an unhealthy or diseased environment. He encourages risk and struggle noting that healthy congregations are those that examine their needs and address them actively and responsibly unafraid of disturbing the status quo.

> Whenever humans interact, emotional and physical processes happen.
>
> Human interactions are full of information and are mutually influencing.
>
> With a systems approach, we 'see' the *interaction* that take place, the *information* that is exchanged, and the *influence* that is reciprocally reinforced....

> We will be looking at managing the health (wholeness) of a congregation. We will be conceiving of the congregation as a living system or organism-- a network of connection and contact. Thinking in terms of the whole organizes our understanding in a new way and shifts the way we approach and deal with life. What, then is "holistic" or "systemic" thinking? How can it inform and shape the way we manage life together in a congregation? The word *whole* implies that there are parts and the parts are connected. Wholeness is not to be confused with oneness. Wholeness is not about seamlessness; wholeness is not sameness. Wholeness means two or more parts are interconnected. No single element of the whole is thought of as functioning independently of the other components. Wholeness is relational. In wholeness differences are not eliminated; rather they become alive. The different parts interact and cooperate. Wholeness involves various parts coming together and interacting. (25)

The creation of caring-community programs are opportunities to initiate personal and congregational change that draw their strength from the creation of personal relationships within a faith-based community. It is through the development of these relationships that individuals may derive a sense of meaning and purpose which link them to both their evolving relationships with both God and the spiritual community that is defined by their synagogue. By establishing relationships within a congregational system that reflect our being created in God's image, there arises the potential for a congregation to transform its membership and thus, itself.

CHAPTER 3

A DESCRIPTION OF THE DEMONSTRATION WORKSHOPS: TEMPLE SINAI OF ATLANTA, GA. and TEMPLE BETH ZION OF BUFFALO, N.Y.

When implemented correctly within congregations, caring-community programs address an individual need for human connection, relationships and thus, community. Lost in our current secular, technological, mobile society is a sense of community that supports the creation of primary relationships. In the mid 1980's, one commentator correctly observed this growing cultural trend:

> People do not feel themselves to be an integral part of a community that offers significant primary relationships; they are thus much less likely to have helpful community supports available during stressful periods in their lives...With conscious effort, the synagogue can function as a community for its members; as such, it can strengthen both the institution of the synagogue and its membership by facilitating the establishment of inter-personal networks that help people to adjust. (1)

The establishment of inter-personal networks rests at the heart of the creation of synagogue- based caring programs. The belief that these programs can be transformative to both individuals and congregations formed the basis for the creation of the caring-community volunteer training workshops. Conversations were held with both lay and rabbinic leadership of Temple Sinai in Atlanta and Beth Zion in Buffalo. Both congregations indicated an interest in a session for volunteers. The two congregations represented two distinct congregational cultures

and were in different phases of caring-community program development. There was strong rabbinic support for both the caring-community program as well as the training workshop. The rabbis of the congregations attended the workshops and were active in their support of the program and the volunteers. Their attitudes sent the message to the laity that their involvement was a serious response to important human needs within the congregation, and had the potential to restructure the way individuals related to each other as well as to the synagogue. The rabbis made it clear that they saw themselves as part of a caring "team".

Temple Sinai has a membership of some 700 member units, while Beth Zion is over 1,000. Temple Sinai's desire to explore the program was based on a perceived need by the lay leadership, encouraged by a new assistant rabbi, with his senior's full support. Leadership felt that the congregation was changing. They wanted to reinvent the way the congregation responded to the needs of it's members, while creating support for its rabbis. Beth Zion's involvement with the program emerged as an outgrowth of a larger attempt on the part of the congregational to assess its future. This process began as a result of a new rabbi assuming the pulpit. One of his messages was the need to break with the past by creating new programs which would, over time, make the congregation responsive to the evolving needs of its members.

Prior to the actual workshops, I had several conversations with lay and rabbinic leaders. We talked through the goals of the sessions, the background of the volunteers, and the current perception of the program within the congregation.. Both congregations had made attempts at starting different types of programs. Sinai already had identified a core group of volunteers who they were calling Kesher ("contact"). They were people who wished to develop a support program that focused on hospital visitation. The program's chair reported great enthusiasm at the program's launching. She and her co-chair wanted some formal training and goal setting for the

volunteers. They hoped for a session that would explore some of the theological, psychological and programmatic implications of visiting the sick.

Beth Zion's program emerged from their work with the Synagogue 2000 project. Discussions on transformation through worship and ritual had led to a request for a more formal program of "inreach" to focus on visiting and caring for the sick. Beth Zion did have several examples of "caring" programs, but lacked volunteer training for the specific aspect of visiting the sick and wanted to ground the entire project in a fabric of Jewish values and beliefs. We agreed to create a training workshop for volunteers who would become the congregation's existing caring program, emphasizing the idea of hospital visitation and support for people who were ill.

In both congregations, the workshops were to include both the theological foundation and psychodynamic aspects of the caring-community program. The chairpeople of both programs also wanted to include ample time for discussion on what other congregations were doing in the area of caring-community programs. Each congregation was at a different place in its development, and displayed very different cultures, so each workshop was tailored to the particular congregation's needs. Each workshop was scheduled for about six hours in length. The Atlanta session started at 10:00 in the morning and concluded at about 4:00 in the afternoon. It was preceded by a dinner the night before with the chairs of the program. The Buffalo session went from 3:00 in the afternoon until 9:00 in the evening. It was followed by a breakfast meeting the following morning for the congregants who were charged with moving the program forward.

For both workshops, a study guide was created to introduce Jewish texts. The texts introduced the elements of the theology of relationships. Through the discussion of the texts and the sharing of personal vignettes on the part of the volunteers much of the psychodynamic aspects of the workshop emerged. Since the Temple Sinai of Atlanta program wished to deal

specifically with visitation and illness support, their workshop was tailored to introduce the Jewish approaches to the mitzvah of *bikkur cholim*, or "visiting the sick". The co-chairs and I wanted to insure that the volunteers had an opportunity to discuss some of the therapeutic aspects of caring for the sick. Since Temple Sinai was already involved in the program, we knew that some of the volunteers would bring recent experience to the training session. We decided to approach this by devoting part of the afternoon to a team-teaching session. A therapist from the congregation who was familiar with the program joined me for a session on the psychodynamics of illness and the role of prayer in working with someone who is ill.

The Buffalo workshop devoted more time to text study and the formulation of the theology of relationships. There was a greater need there to deal with the culture of the congregation. This synagogue is a product of the 19th century "classical" Reform movement. Its method of involvement was, and to a large extent still is, driven from the top down. There is a strong desire on the part of the current rabbinical and lay leadership to change the culture of the congregation to accept a more involving, self directed and "team" approach to leadership and volunteerism. The participants in the Buffalo workshop spent a greater amount of time in dealing with ideas and attitudes that reflected the way things were, as opposed to the way things could be. This was not the case in the Atlanta congregation. Temple Sinai's history dates from the recent growth of the Atlanta Jewish community. It's demographics and attitude is more open to risk taking and programmatic experimentation. The two workshops underscored the fact that different congregations produce different cultures, and thus different responses to opportunities for change. This fact reinforced the reality that in creating caring-community programs for congregations, the unique experience of each congregation, is different.

The Atlanta session began with a lengthy interchange regarding their motivation for

becoming involved with the program. This was followed by a discussion using the study guide to introduce relevant Jewish values and texts. For this congregation, I chose to introduce the theological component through selections from the prayer book that is used in Reform congregations. This was followed by a selection from Psalms (Psalm 119) and additional material on healing drawn from classical Jewish sources. The session after lunch featured the team approach of the therapist and myself which was followed by a dialogue on other possibilities of programming. The workshop concluded with a small ritual in which I tried to bring together various themes that were discussed during the day.

The Buffalo program differed somewhat in tone. After consulting with the rabbi and the chairperson of the day, we decided to create a second type of study guide. The theological component was taught by using the texts from the Bible not the prayer book. The additional textual component, which formed the basis of the second section of the workshop, dealt with texts on healing as well as visiting the sick. The texts generated a lot of interesting and valuable discussion. As the volunteers began to feel more comfortable with each other, the texts began to trigger stories and personal reflections that were valuable in illustrating the meaning of the texts. They also helped reinforce the message that relationships are crucial in the establishment of personal meaning and in the life of a community. Many of the volunteers at the Beth Zion workshop were long time members. Their experiences, over many generations, of building their community was important information to those who were newer to the congregation.

As in Atlanta, I was interested in finding out what motivated the volunteers to think about getting involved in the program. Whereas at Temple Sinai we began with an informal discussion on this topic; at Beth Zion, I asked those in attendance to fill out a brief questionnaire that asked them answer a few questions dealing with their motivation for becoming involved with the caring-

community program. The Buffalo workshop concluded with a discussion of how other congregations were implementing the program.

It is very difficult to quickly assess the results of the workshops since these programs involve the restructuring of a large part of a synagogue system. They take time to develop. Also, as each congregation is different, progress is relative to the entire congregational system. The Atlanta congregation sought to move quickly to expand the number of volunteers and to enhance their program. The Buffalo congregation, decided to move more slowly and reassess their needs and congregational demographics. Both congregations affirmed their desire to move forward with the development of the program. Both congregations will do so at their own speed and within their own system. The Temple Sinai workshop was held in late summer of 1998. The Beth Zion session was held in mid-October of 1998. In mid-winter 1999 I began a follow-up with both congregations to determine what had emerged as a result of the training sessions. As will be discussed in chapter 4, the follow-up to the two workshops produced two different results.

The best measuring rod for assessing the outcomes of the project will be the nature of change in the congregational system that emerges over the course of several years. The immediate, short term means of assessing the impact of the program is to see if the congregations, as a result of the initial programs, have moved forward in the development of caring commonties and have institutionalized these programs as part of a changing congregational spiritual and programmatic system.

CHAPTER 4

THE RESULTS OF WORKSHOPS CONDUCTED AT TEMPLE SINAI, ATLANTA, GA. AND TEMPLE BETH ZION, BUFFALO, N.Y.

A tradition exists in Judaism that calls for the recitation of a blessing before one begins to study sacred texts. One translation of the Hebrew gives thanks to God for the gift of the Torah and for the ability to "immerse ourselves in its words". A colleague , Rabbi Lawrence Jackofsky of Dallas, Texas, interprets the Hebrew word *la'asok* ("to immerse") to mean that we give thanks for the opportunity to engage in a relationship with the text.(1) It was in the spirit of developing a relationship with the text of the synagogue as a community, that I began both workshops. Both workshops began with this prayer. I intended to send a message that what we were about to do was part of how we build a community and thus model our relationship with God. The use of sacred texts focused the volunteers on this concept and served as a perfect vehicle for the introduction of Jewish values of caring and care-giving.

A. TEMPLE SINAI OF ATLANTA

Temple Sinai is a seven hundred member family congregation in suburban Atlanta, Georgia. They began what they were calling their Kesher program at the request of the rabbinic staff. During the months prior to my visit, a small core group of volunteers initiated an effort to support the congregation's two rabbis in the area of hospital visitation and follow up. The committee's chairperson and I spoke of the need to provide some training on the theological foundations of visiting the sick and the role that the volunteers could play in helping to change

how the congregation viewed taking care of its own members. It is important to remember that in this case, we began with a committed core group of people and the support of the two rabbis. Indeed, the two rabbis were present during the entire day-long seminar. This made a dramatic impression on the volunteers and helped solidify the rabbi-volunteer relationship in the sense that volunteers saw this as a program of major importance to the life of the congregation.

The desire to be involved in caring for others was the stated purpose that moved some twenty volunteers to come to the synagogue on a Sunday morning in August. For this session, I wanted to begin with some discussion about what had motivated these people to be involved with this program. People's stories are often the most powerful way to introduce a topic. Rather than hand out a piece of paper to be filled in and then read back, I asked people to consider answering the question of what motivated them. I was interested in understanding what drove these individuals to volunteer for what often is a very personal experience. Was it something in their own life experience that moved them in this direction? Or was it a feeling that this was one of many valuable programs that were worthy of time?

The group that studied with me that day was diverse as to age and life experience. Not everyone of the almost two dozen in attendance knew each other. Every one of the volunteers in attendance was a women. This gender inequity is a topic that needs future exploration. What is evident in much of my caring-community work is a noticeable absence of involvement on the part of men. This is not only true within the context of much of the caring-community work, but seems to be a growing trend within synagogue life in general.

Before I asked for responses to the "why are you here?" question, we shared some general thoughts on the perception of the need for the creation of the Kesher program within the Temple

Sinai family. There was agreement as to the need to re-establish a sense of community within the synagogue. Temple Sinai was a product of the success of the Jewish community of Atlanta. A lack of a feeling of communal identity reflected the general cultural feeling of isolation. No greater sense of isolation was present than when a person was experiencing crises or illness. These were moments that provided the possibility of creating intense, personal, sacred relationships. This was especially true in an area like suburban Atlanta. Temple Sinai had grown rapidly over recent years and many members had little, if any, family support. This is another significant factor in the successful development of the program. Congregations with a higher level of mobility within their membership have an easier time of identifying the need for, and developing an initial program of inreach.

The first portion of the workshop revolved around the responses to the initial "why are you here?" question. Few were shy in telling their story. Responses were quick, passionate and moved in a direction that was surprising, gratifying and inspirational. The people spoke of a need to feel connected to one another within the community called Temple Sinai. They noted the need to re-define what that community meant. One of the ways they chose to do so was to "give something back" to the community. This attitude was frequently prompted by personal experience in which people identified with others within the congregation who were alone, in a crisis, or ill. The volunteers saw the need for the congregational community to reach out to others, as others had reached out to them.

A young woman had come out of a need for something "passionate" to happen. She saw the congregation as an extension of her family at home, where her role was to provide the means to a "better" family. So, she added, she saw her role in the Kesher program the same way;

creating a better congregational family. Through this work, she said, "I get something back".

Another woman said that living through her father's death raised her awareness of others facing situations with no support. She likened the feeling to being in the aftermath of a tornado; left feeling helpless and in need of so much. This prompted someone else to say that after leading a "charmed life" she started loosing relatives, but was lucky in that she received so much support. She concluded by saying: "Now that I am so much more aware, it is time to give something back."

Personal life experiences were usually pivotal in the recognition of the possibility of involvement. A volunteer said "something just happens in your life that motivates you." In her case it was the death of her parents and one of her children. When the program was first discussed she viewed it as "wonderful work" and was delighted to get involved on the "ground floor". She re-inforced the need for such work as she spoke of the lack of close-knit communities in today's world.

Personal experience became a major theme, endlessly sustained it seemed, as one statement led to another in an introductory hour that was both sustaining and inspirational. Another of the volunteers, for example, recalled working in a hospital and dealing recently with a series of deaths caused by types of cancer in younger women. She wished, she said, to "give something back especially after so many others helped fill me up with so much when I was feeling so depleted." A woman echoed this as she remembered the outpouring of support from the congregation after the death of her child from cancer. The power of personal presence persisted as something that touched people in a basic way.

Motivation was often based on the personal relationship they felt with the rabbi. When the

rabbi called them personally, or wrote to them directly, they felt as if they were selected to become part of something special. One woman stated emphatically that she was there directly as a result of the senior rabbi's personal invitation which made her feel especially "chosen." The volunteers noted also that they saw something very spiritual in their work. One of them, a therapist who specializes in cases of personal illness and despair, remarked that her professional life had moved her to question where God was in face of so much suffering and pain. This opened the path to a brief exchange that emphasized how people do not control as much of life as we think, rather. we are all in God's hands. I was fascinated to see the discussion move from the sense of "giving something back" to express gratitude for previous kindness, to "giving something back" to encounter the mystery of God. Through the course of this discussion (scheduled to take thirty minutes, but which lasted a little over sixty) the group was moved to see what is was doing as more than mere programming; they were doing God's work. They responded well to a quotation with which I closed this first part of the workshop: "Life is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived."(2)

One of the mysteries within congregational life is why these caring-community programs succeed at one point and fail at another. As we prepared to move to the second stage of the workshop, someone noted that "caring-community" was not a new idea at Temple Sinai, having ben tried unsuccessfully some eight to ten years earlier. When asked "why now?", the rabbi and a former congregational president responded that the needs are now differed, the congregation was different and the leadership, (lay and rabbinic), was now "ready" for the program. As the congregation matured, the natural life experiences that make up a community of hundreds and hundreds of souls force change. Death and bereavement, divorces, re-marriages, transitions,

longevity and more raise the need for a more inner-directed and relationship based awareness. This conversation formed a perfect bridge to the introduction of the second part of the morning session: the attempt to link the personal stories to sacred texts and the introduction of the theology of relationships as the foundation for the work that the volunteers were doing.

The focus of the committee's work was in visiting the sick, and I invited the group to confront some familiar prayers. They had set the stage for the discussion of prayer as a bridge between us and God and I was planning to return to this concept in one of the afternoon sessions discussing the use of prayer as a "healing" medium. To facilitate this section of the workshop I prepared a study guide (see Appendix 1) that served as our teaching text for the remainder of the day. We began with four prayers drawn from the weekday service, each one examining a different aspect of our relationship with God and the translation of that relationship, via our personal involvement, to relationships with real men and women. Because so much of the focus of the program of Temple Sinai was related to health issues, we began with the prayer that gives thanks to God for having made our bodies such a miraculously balanced network of veins, arteries and organs. If one of the them were to fail in some way, says the prayer, then "we would lack the strength to stand in life before You." (3) In giving thanks for the gift of this life and body, we are reminded that God is the source of both strength and health.

The discussion that followed the prayer focused on the miracle of life and the body and the mystery that informs our relationship with God. This was especially relevant given the concluding moments of the initial discussion of the workshop. We looked at the idea that we all stand in relationship to each other as part of something larger than ourselves. This inter-relationship drives us to reach out to each other in community, a thought that continued in the next prayer. This

prayer introduces the basic *mitzvot* (sacred deeds) on which a caring community is founded. It is a foundation that emphasizes personal involvement in the lives of others like; visiting the sick, celebrating marriage, providing hospitality to strangers and consoling the bereaved. It provides a prescription of how to translate our relationship with God to everyday life. I chose the prayer book precisely because of the power of prayer to provide a strong theological foundation for the work of "caring."

Two additional prayers reinforced this message. One spoke of God's gift of the soul. This opened the group to a discussion of the myth of control. This discussion alluded to elements from the first section of the workshop when participants had recalled the randomness of life and the challenges to faith that random events cause. There was a feeling, even an affirmation, of a "life force" operating in the universe about which we can never really know and certainly never hope to control. The discussion evolved to an understanding that our task is to manage the living of this life, for as long as we have this life, and to celebrate that life by caring for each other.

The last prayer that we discussed was a prayer for health. This prayer also sparked some discussion regarding the random nature of life, sickness and health. The prayer asks, "Heal us, O God, and we shall be healed [grant] perfect healing for all our infirmities".(4) I invited the group to look at the word that was translated as "infirmities" and to speak, from their experience, regarding what that could mean. Not surprisingly, they identified infirmities as many things, often caused by elements totally out of our control. They could be physical or psychological; a genetic disorder or an inability to deal with stress, even a general life situation that renders a person helpless. People's life experiences opened them to understanding this prayer in a variety of ways. These same experiences let them see healing not just as cure, but as part of their evolving

relationship with God. Their involvement in a program of caring, drawn from their experiences and based on their relationship with God, could allow such healing to take place.

One of the vehicles for healing is prayer, particularly Psalms, which I illustrated with Psalm 119. Some of the volunteers said they were searching for texts that they could use when visiting people from the temple. Drawing on some material from several current books (5) we read through much of the Psalm pointing out how the verses can relate to so many real-life situations that the volunteers may encounter when dealing with people who are in distress. What emerged was an openness to seeing prayer (and Psalms in particular) as potential instruments for spiritual growth: something they could use in their work with other congregants. The greater the connection on the part of the volunteer to a particular prayer or passage, the greater was their understanding of the role that sacred texts play in establishing powerful personal relationships.

I closed the morning session using the prayer shawl (*tallit*) image and relating it to values that stemmed from our morning's discussions. The group grasped the symbolism of the prayer shawl easily when viewed as a marriage canopy, that links people to God and to each other. For this group, I selected three values that define our relationships: *tzelem* (being in the image of God), *lev* (heart), *mitzvah* (deed). We can be in God's image, I said, by seeking relationships based on a caring heart. We translate those relationships into the world through doing sacred deeds. Yet, the *tallit* (prayer shawl) cannot stand without a vital fourth component of this message: all we do is done in relationship with *adonai* (God). Otherwise, what we do is incomplete.

The focus of the workshop shifted slightly when we resumed after lunch. One of day's goals was a discussion on what the volunteer may expect to encounter during visits to the

hospital or people's homes. We wanted to explore not only how the Jewish tradition views this *mitzvah*, but also explore the psychodynamics of illness and the role of the visitor. The committee and I discussed how best to deal with this aspect of the day and concluded that I would co-facilitate this segment with a local psychiatrist. Dr. Larry Baker and I took the next time block to talk about how each of our approaches could support the work of the group. This approach helped give some variety to the workshop and served to underscore certain common themes within both approaches. Dr. Baker took the group through his own study guide on the "Psychological Aspects of Illness and of Helping." (see Appendix 2). A major theme of Dr. Baker's approach was the need for the volunteer to take care of themselves as they were caring for someone else. We engaged the group in a discussion of the subjects of transference and counter-transference as they relate to visiting the sick, illness and recovery. This was an important part of the workshop in that it helped focus the participant's awareness to recognize that powerful psychological forces may be at work as they carry out the *mitzvah*. This discussion also underscored the need for strong and experienced caring-community committee leadership who sees, as part of their responsibility, the need to continually monitor the work of the volunteers.

I built on Dr. Baker's theme by emphasizing the need for seeing one's self as being created in the image of God. We returned to the ideas of the theology of relationships and spoke of the need to take care of our self in such a way that we can best minister to others. In this way I sought to again introduce the idea of *tikkun ha-nefesh* (the repair of the self) as a necessary starting point for creating sound and meaningful relationships. This reflection by both of us on the need for a person to possess a healthy soul/psyche when engaged in hospital visitation programs has a direct practical application. Some of the most significant difficulties in the development of

such programs have taken place when an individual, visiting a fellow congregant in a hospital or a home, replays his own illness or hospital experience. This, obviously, gets in the way of healing the person in need of comfort, thereby frustrating both parties. We used this idea to note that successful programs that dealt with hospital visitation and associated support services required the on-going presence of a strong committee chair who could continue to evaluate the volunteer's performance. We discussed the often stressful nature of visiting people who are seriously ill and what that may trigger in our own souls. The earlier discussions on the need for support in the face of events that were out of our control gained greater relevance. People understood the intimate and powerful role that they, as visitors and supporters, could play. They understood the value of their role and the fact that they were carrying out a sacred act. They also understood the need to keep their role in the proper perspective and to see themselves as part of a larger spiritual healing team.

The notion of the spiritual aspect of the volunteer's role opened us to a discussion on the power of prayer and how we may wish to use prayer as part of a healing process. The discussion included a dialogue on the question of whether involvement in religious activity (for example: regular worship, rituals and affiliation with a religious institution) has a positive impact on healing. I invited the group to reflect on their own view of prayer and on moments when they found prayer to be helpful. This led to a general discussion regarding the efficacy of prayer as a healing medium, including the growing body of books, articles and research that are currently looking at the question of whether religious people fare better when dealing with serious illness.(6) This discussion on the role of prayer extended the schedule so that instead of doing some small group work designed to process some of the ideas of the day, we went immediately to

a segment that dealt with ways in which visitation programs were operating in other Reform congregations.

The last part of the workshop dealt with the practical aspect of how to take what was discussed during the day and put it into practice within the community of Temple Sinai. For this segment, the committee chairs helped guide the group through a variety of options. They agreed upon the need to continue to communicate their work with the congregation and to educate it as to their presence. They also agreed that they could sense that the core group could begin to soon experience some burn-out or attrition. To me, this showed maturity on the part of the leadership as well as the group in general. While all were highly motivated, they understood the need to consider how to begin developing the next generation of volunteers for the program. They made this a priority for this year.

I wanted to conclude this workshop with something different. I had spoken with the committee chairs about their openness to concluding with a small ritual that would attempt to tie together some of the day's themes. This idea was met with an easy acceptance and so, as we were about to conclude, I asked everyone to come closer to a small table. On the table was a cup of water and two candles. I asked them to look at the back page of the study guide and we read several of the selections from the works of the Hasidic master, Rav Nahman of Bratslav. The two candles were then lit and I asked them to consider the candles as representing some of the value diads that we had discussed; *tikkun olom* and *tikkun ha-nefesh* (repair of the world and repair of the self), *r'fuat ha-nefesh* and *r'fuat ha-guf* (healing of the soul and healing of the body), *bikkur cholim* and *g'milut chasadim* (visiting the sick and deeds of loving kindness). I reminded them of the power of the relationships created in the carrying out of these values and of the essential link

between each of us and, ultimately, God. Then, I took the water and poured a little on each hand and rubbed the hands together in a washing motion. I asked them to consider this as symbolic of the cleansing sense of renewal and personal growth that can come from bringing a sense of sacred relationship to the living of Jewish values within a community of caring.

I tried this ritual for two reasons. First, I wanted to formally close the day with prayer. The ritual seemed like a fitting end to an intense day in which a large amount of personal information was shared. To me the ritual spoke to the ideas that were present in the prayer texts we studied; a relationships with God, a celebration of life's mystery and a willingness to be open to life and relationships. I saw the water as a visible symbol of the idea of *tikkun ha-nefesh*: the beginning of the renewal of the self through the *mitzvot*. Second, I wanted to demonstrate the possibilities of using ritual as part of their work in the program. As the ritual was about to begin, I admitted my own hesitancy to end the day in this manner. I was wrestling with the creation of new ritual, I said, but the struggle was energizing, because it forced me to better focus my teaching. Maybe ritual could be equally powerful for them and for those they visit.

B.TEMPLE BETH ZION OF BUFFALO

Beth Zion is a congregation of some fourteen hundred member units in Buffalo, N.Y. It is a congregation that is some one hundred and fifty years old with a strong multi-generational congregant base. For several years, the congregation has sponsored caring-community type programs to deal with issues surrounding bereavement support. These groups are all part of initiatives begun by a new rabbi who was engaged about six years ago who began trying to change the culture of the congregation. The senior rabbi, in an attempt to bring a sense of purpose and focus to his ideas, began working with one of the groups that focus on the area of synagogue

change and transformation. It was through this group that a need was expressed to create a workshop to train volunteers for a program in hospital visitation and visiting the sick.

The chairperson of this new task force and I had several conversations regarding the structure and goal of the workshop. Those attending were people who had expressed an interest in developing a visitation effort, as well as some who were already working in other aspects of the congregation's program. We agreed to focus the first part of the workshop on the theological and psychodynamic aspect of caregiving and save the practical applications of the program until part two. After juggling several options and schedules, we fixed on a late afternoon through early evening session to be held on a Sunday in October. I agreed to meet with the chairperson for lunch and we agreed to hold a follow-up meeting for key members of the group Monday morning. In addition, I had several conversations with the senior rabbi of the congregation. These discussions were especially helpful in building on what the chairperson had discussed regarding the mood of the congregation. The culture of Beth Zion proved to be quite different than that of Temple Sinai. The entire structure of the Buffalo meeting was more formal. Due to a large attendance, the session was moved from an open space with moveable seats, to the synagogue board room. This is a long rectangular room with a large wood table. There is precious little room to move around and the move to the new space gave the session a much more formal feel. The group that arrived did represent a cross section of age and experience, although it did appear to be a little older. They were more formally dressed and, in contrast to the Atlanta group, were about one third male. As with the Atlanta program, I prepared a study guide (see Appendix 3). I decided to expand the guide from the one I prepared for Atlanta reflecting a decision to teach this workshop in a slightly different manner.

In order to underscore the fact that the workshop is ultimately about our connection to the Holy, we began as in Atlanta, with the blessing for study. I immediately handed out a one page flyer which contained three questions. This was an expansion of how I started the Atlanta session. Instead of asking the volunteers to reflect and respond to the question of "why are you here?", I decided to ask those in attendance to take several minutes at the outset of the meeting to answer three question. The first was: "What motivated you to become a volunteer in Beth Zion? Why are you involved?" The second question asked as to how the volunteer understood the notion of covenant and the third question asked as to their understanding of being in a relationship with another person and with God. Instead of immediatly asking for the responses, I asked the volunteers to keep the flyers until they were collected. I was interested to see if this approach would make any difference in the nature of the teaching that was about to begin. This was a group that, on the surface, had a greater familiarity with each other. What I did find was that not having a brief discussion on how people viewed their motivation for involvement **did** change the learning environment. Whereas in Atlanta, there appeared to be a greater openness amongst the volunteers, the Buffalo evening proceeded in a much more formal manner. I am fully aware that there were many other factors operating in Buffalo that were distinct and different from those that were present in Atlanta. I suggest only that there seems to be merit in beginning such training sessions, or perhaps any session where people meet around a new issue for learning and training, with some opportunity for personal reflection and reaction regarding the subject matter.

The responses to the questionnaire did not differ substantively from the verbal responses in Atlanta. Because it was more formal, in that it was written and handed back, there was a lack of immediacy and emotion that can only be received from direct spoken communication. The

overwhelming majority of those who responded to the "why are you here?" question mentioned that they felt the need to give something back to the community of Beth Zion. Many mentioned that they, and their families, had been members of Beth Zion for a long time and knew that this was a way in which the community could be continued. For several who responded, and not everyone did, there was a sense that this caring-community program was a good fit for their volunteer needs. Not untypical was the following: "My family have always taken an active role in TBZ. Now, I'm retired and feel I have some time to give to TBZ. I'm a trained health care professional; caring community seemed to fit."

Few of those who responded mentioned that their motivation was a result of a personal crises to which the congregation responded. In fact, only one of those who responded mentioned that a significant life crises had played a part in their signing up for the workshop. There was also only one response that alluded to the control issue. This individual wrote: "During times when we find ourselves helpless, in other words, when conditions beyond our control leave us with no choice but to accept what happens. These times charge me with a strong desire to do something about things I can do something about, when the occasion presents itself." The way this response was written was very typical of almost all of the answer in that, it seemed to me to lack some of the emotion and personal investment that had been verbalized in Atlanta. No doubt some of this can be traced to the differences in the two congregational cultures as well as how the caring-community program itself is evolving. I suggest that the different responses to the opening question point to the belief that there is a greater chance that participants will be meaningfully connected with each other when we begin by asking people to share a personal reflection on the issue at hand. The process allows volunteers to examine their own feelings about the work of the

program and quickly opens pathways of trust and empathy within the group. In spite of this different approach for the beginning of the workshop, there remained a consistent feeling regarding the need for individual congregants to become involved with fellow congregants in moments of crises. As one of the attendees wrote: "I feel that members can enrich each other's lives by expressing caring and support for one another. In doing so, together we can build a genuine community."

The first significant time block of the afternoon was devoted to the introduction of the theology of relationships model as a basis for the caring-community program. For Beth Zion's workshop, I began with the discussion of the Biblical texts that I use to form that concept. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, this approach revolves around several texts which are used to teach the relationship we have with God and how we can use certain values to inform how we relate to others. The key concept is drawn from the belief that we are created in God's image and thus, the core of the teaching for this part of the workshop was based on the drawing out of the concept of *tzelem* (image/likeness).

The teaching of the texts gave rise to challenging, interesting and engaging dialogue. The group gradually became comfortable with the attempt to build a structure for their work based on their understanding of basic Jewish texts. As often happens in teaching from primary texts, there was an appreciation for the fact that so much of what the participants had experienced in their own lives was found within the texts that formed the study guide. It was also helpful and beneficial for the volunteers to have the senior rabbi of the congregation present for the entire afternoon and evening. Once again, this added a sense of importance to the work and helped re-reinforce the idea that all who were there were part of a caring "team".

The first part of the workshop concluded with a repetition of the segment from the Atlanta session that focused on selections from the prayer book. These proved to be a good way to close the more formal part of the day. The themes of the prayers, as was discussed earlier, introduced certain ideas and values that will be useful in a program that is focused on visiting the sick and dealing with illness. The prayers also helped underscore the idea of the value and sacred nature of relationships, especially as they relate to health and healing.

Following the dinner break, we re-convened for a concluding two hour block. The goal of this session was to look at the specific application of Jewish tradition to issues of visiting the sick. Turning again to the study guide, we examined various selections from Jewish liturgy that were relevant. We looked at Psalm 119, as well as additional prayers and readings and discussed some of the programmatic possibilities that could emerge from these sections. In both Buffalo and Atlanta, the groups spoke of their interest in having the congregation expand the existing Healing services which were held at each congregation held on a regular basis. There was an interest in exploring the role of how prayer could be beneficial not only for the people being prayer for, but for the person, or community doing the praying. Beth Zion, like Temple Sinai and the majority of all congregations include healing prayers within the regular worship service. What other possibilities could be tried which might involve greater numbers of congregants? This led to a discussion regarding the possibility of developing small groups of congregants who would be responsible for praying for other members of the community. These prayer circles, common in the Christian tradition, are still relatively unknown within the contemporary Jewish community. What was most interesting to take from these discussions was the fact that among the people from both congregations who attended the workshops, there was a willingness to consider this idea. There

was almost no feeling expressed that "we cannot do that because the Christians do". Rather, there was a feeling that since it seems to be working for them, it would be a good idea to look at the practice for us. I suggest that these feelings are important for the Jewish community to consider. They may represent either a further blurring of the lines between suburban mainstream Jews and Christians in the United States, or a greater awareness on the part of some in the Jewish community to look at what is successful and relationship centered within another religious tradition with an eye to adapting it to ours.

For the final segment of the workshop, we looked at some additional texts, taken from Jewish tradition, that spoke to the value of visiting the sick. Once again the texts proved to be an excellent catalyst for discussion and reflection. Much of that discussion and reflection dealt with the psychological components embodied in the *mitzvah* of visiting the sick. As we did during this section in the Atlanta workshop, we went through some of the psychological issues relating to the person and family that we visit. The presence of several therapists within the group helped place the psychological elements of the discussion in a larger context. They helped reinforce the value of caring for others and the power of personal relationships as tools for the development of self esteem, and as necessary components for discovering pathways to personal meaning and purpose.

At the conclusion of the workshop, I summarized the day, tying together the themes introduced through the discussions of the texts, the prayers and the programmatic ideas. It was all related to the primacy of relationships between the members of Beth Zion and, ultimately, with God. The majority of the participants in this workshop had long standing ties to the congregation. They had no trouble seeing the need for a concentrated and sincere program that would help bring a greater sense of family and community to Beth Zion. Most who attended said that they felt the

temple was changing and that they feared a loss of connection to the congregation.

We did not end the Beth Zion with a ritual. I decided to see if having no concluding ritual would change any of the feeling of the workshop. My evaluation of that is to note that by the time we had spent almost six hours in study and dialogue, the group would have accepted a concluding ritual of some sort. This was a mistake on my part and there was a wonderful opportunity missed.

Early the next morning, I did meet with the key chairpersons of the Beth Zion caring-community program as well as the senior rabbi. We spent almost two hours going over the events of the previous day, discussing how the ideas that were generated could be implemented within the larger Beth Zion program. One of the concerns that came from that breakfast meeting was just how ready the existing structure was to begin the visitation program. The Beth Zion committee was struggling to deal with the existing programs and looking for increased support from within the congregation which would allow for the program's growth. This struggle was compounded by the inability on the part of two of the key committee members to move forward on the program due to personal family issues, as well as some concern on the part of leadership in general regarding the tenure of the existing senior rabbi. This latter concern will become a major factor since the senior rabbi, under whose watch many of the change oriented and relationship based programs were introduced, has announced plans to leave the congregation as of the summer of 1999. The senior rabbi, however, has committed himself to the continuation of the program and intends to bring together the lay chairpeople in February or March of 1999 to re-ignite the initiative.

By contrast, Temple Sinai has moved forward in the development of their hospital

visitation program and, building on the success of the existing group of volunteers, has announced plans to hold a training session for an additional group of congregants. The committee chairs of the Sinai program, empowered by their own work, have agreed to act as consultants to at least one other Atlanta area congregation who is seeking to develop a similar program.

These two demonstration workshops represented a beginning of what is a long process of personal and congregational change. There are many variables that go in to the development of a successful program. Success is often measured in different ways, depending on the context of a particular congregation's own communal journey. Despite the two very different conclusions to these training workshops, the desire on the part of the congregation's leadership to change the way in which congregants interact remains constant. Building a responsive and caring synagogue community rests at the foundation of both congregations. Dr. David S. Ariel writes of this need for congregations to create a sense of intimacy within a spiritual home: "We look for groups that provide us with a community of shared concerns, that make us feel connected to others, and that give expression to our deepest feelings. While congregations often provide valuable services to their members, many of us still do not feel at home in our synagogues."(7) The process of building this home is a long and involved one, and it is in the next chapter that we look at some of the long term implications of this construction.

CHAPTER 5

A GENERAL DISCUSSION ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT WORKSHOPS

A. Changing Congregations: Changing Individuals

Successful caring-community programs rest upon a foundation of personal relationships. These relationships serve as the vehicle through which individuals, and thus congregations, can evolve. The basic relationship that defines this process is the one which links God to mankind. Because of the uniqueness of our individual existence, each of us seeks to answer God's question, "Where are you?". Living out our own answer to that question translates our relationship with God into living experience. There is, then, this constantly evolving flow of life that unites the relationships between God, the self and the world. None of these elements can be an end in itself. They are interrelated and dependent on each other as the way in which the sacred informs both self and society. As Buber wrote: "To begin with oneself, but not to end with oneself; to start from oneself, but not to aim at oneself; to comprehend oneself, but not to be pre-occupied with oneself."(1) The individual becomes the link between God and the world and thus can change while being and agent for change at the same time. The synagogue based caring programs that form the basis of this project facilitate this dual transformation.

Many of the caring-community programs began out of a desire to involve a greater segment of a congregation's membership in direct support of the clergy. Given the increased demands being made on them, it was not unusual for clergy to seek a method to broaden the responsibility of doing sacred work, that is, to "democratize the *mitzvah*". In addition, congregational leadership, both lay and clergy, began to understand that the realities of modern life were acting as a deterrent to the ideal of the synagogue as an interconnected community of

faith. What emerged, was more than just a new program. In both Buffalo and Atlanta it became clear that helping congregants during crises triggered deep feelings and raised powerful emotions. A feeling of personal involvement enhanced the volunteer's sense of self worth. My project demonstrates the hypothesis that congregational change can be built on seeing how individual members care for and support each other.

One of the powerful lessons that grew from these workshops is that people do want to feel connected with other people and do want to feel that they are part of something beyond themselves. My work in these programs has convinced me that much of this drive for connection is rooted in the desire to respond to our current secular culture of isolation. As people age, especially as the baby boom generation ages, the realities of one's own spiritual isolation and personal mortality drive people to seek relationships and community. If, as Ecclesiastes reminds us: "one generation passes away and another generation comes, and the earth abides forever" (Ecclesiastes 1:4), then caring-community programs provide for individuals to make a statement that they are part of something beyond themselves. The modeling of this behavior, *mitzvot*, gives volunteers a greater sense of self worth, meaning and purpose. This underscores the idea discussed earlier, that a pathway to answering God's "where are you?" question is in the modeling of behavior that represents each of us as being *tzelem elohim*, in God's image.

By volunteering for a caring-community program of their synagogue, people understood themselves to be living out the idea of covenant. The individuals in Buffalo who responded to the written questions were clear in their belief that by becoming involved they would be doing something sacred. They understood that this was part of what being in a relationship with God required. The individuals in Atlanta echoed these sentiments verbally. Having experienced doing some of the work of visiting the sick, they had a better understanding that their actions went

beyond just "doing the right thing." Being involved with and caring for other people is a profoundly spiritual experience which opens avenues of understanding to the self that have often been overlooked. These volunteers seemed to welcome the opportunity for involvement and, in the case of the Atlanta congregation, thrived on the experience.

This leads to an important caveat in designing and monitoring these programs. They require consistency of leadership and volunteer oversight. The more successful programs have a committee chair or lay leader who has accepts long term responsibility for them. Consistent monitoring is invaluable because when lay people become personally involved around issues of illness and loss, long hidden feelings are often triggered within both the person being visited and within the visitor. It is essential for all concerned, that opportunities be created in which the volunteer has the chance to work with the program's leader, or another qualified member of the team, so that any problematic feelings or behavior may be discussed. Often, when a problem does occur, the volunteer in question is asked to do something else within the program's structure, an administrative task, perhaps. Likewise, the intense nature of some of this work may lead to a high degree of volunteer burn out. Congregations thus need ongoing training for new volunteers who can step in when others leave. It is also no surprise that many of the more successful programs have had committee chairs or program coordinators in place for many years. There is value to the consistency of leadership as well as on-going communication and oversight.

This concept of consistency can also be extended to include a sense of mission. The Atlanta congregation's success can be attributed, in some measure, to the fact that it has remained consistent in its' goals. It began as a project to assist the rabbis in visiting the sick. It has remained true to that vision. Temple Sinai has, so far, managed to avoid a common problem that plagues many synagogues. Sometimes congregations will feel empowered by a first rush of success and

try and do too much too soon. They develop a wide ranging program with little coordination and little follow-up. Some programs that look good on paper, really struggle with a lack of focus and mission which cause a higher degree of volunteer turnover and frustration on the part of clergy and lay leadership. This is often a recipe for a program's demise. When there are personnel changes, such as the rabbi leaving or key leadership dropping out, the energy that was present at the program's beginning is often depleted. There is value in allowing a program to slowly evolve. Time should be taken to assess the needs of a community and then to create meaningful programmatic responses, taking into account the total congregational system.

How the system of the congregation functions has proven to be both instructive and beneficial. In the Atlanta and the Buffalo experiences, there was a good deal of preliminary work done to understand what type of program would best fit the congregation. The history, worship and religious style of each congregation reflects the culture of the community. If a synagogue is an extended spiritual family, then some attention must be paid to how the components of the family interact and how they will accept a change in the way the congregation sees and conducts itself. This is often hard work, but necessary to avoid frustration and failure. Nothing is worse than getting a group of volunteers energized only to have the enthusiasm vanish when the program is not well received. That is why months of preparatory communication and congregational education are so important. People must be assured as well of complete confidentiality. If someone is visited by another member of the congregation, the content of that visit must be understood to be confidential. While this would seem to be self evident, it needs to be raised within the training workshops. One of the cornerstone of this program's success is the idea of trust. Likewise, the presence of another lay person in a caring role has also proven to be

difficult for congregations who think only of their clergy in those roles. Many congregants will not wish to be visited by anyone else. From the clergy's perspective too, handing over some of the responsibility for visiting the sick may be difficult. No true congregational program of "inreach" can succeed without work to change the way both congregant and clergy see their roles within the congregational system. It takes significant amounts of time to educate all concerned as to the value of the new program, to foster a sense of trust, to establish personal relationships and to change a congregational system of relationships.

This program also demonstrates the need for the leadership to engage in an honest evaluation of who they are as a community. In this sense, there is a very real connection between the spiritual and psychic health of a person and that of a congregation. Part of the theology of relationships is the understanding that, in choosing how we answer God's question of "where are you?" we choose to model certain types of behavior. Hopefully, it is behavior that gives meaning and definition to what it means to be created in God's image. Choosing behavior is an on-going process that constitutes the contents of an individual's life journey. Likewise for a congregation, which also must make choices as to the types of behaviors that will define who they are. Caring-community programs can help congregations choose the types of behaviors (programs) that best define them as reflecting what God asks. This too is an evolving process. Congregations, comprised of constantly changing individuals, are themselves constantly changing. This fluidity allows for a necessary periodic re-evaluation of a congregation's mission. It is, in essence, an evaluation of the congregational system itself. By better understanding who we are and how we relate to the values and beliefs of our faith, we gain better understanding as to how to relate those values and beliefs to the world. So too, with congregations.

It is important to keep in mind that successful programs also need training components for volunteers. These sessions guide the volunteers through the Jewish foundation for their work, the overall mission and goal of the program and introduce related issues, like the psychodynamics of illness, while allowing opportunities for volunteers to express any concerns that may arise which would prevent them from being active in the program.

The workshops conducted in Atlanta and Buffalo thus demonstrated the potential for personal, and thus congregational growth. Personal involvement with other members brought a heightened sense of worth, meaning and purpose, especially when volunteers sensed that they were doing sacred work, responding to a relationship with God through the doing of *mitzvot*. They viewed the synagogue as the perfect venue for their volunteer activity because of their own personal experiences, which had already begun their journey to personal transformation. The synagogue, then, became the vehicle through which meaning could be gained and purpose could be achieved. This personal sense of meaning and purpose was only strengthened as more relationships were established. Again, many in these workshops were clear in their belief that volunteering within the context of the synagogue helped give definition to their own sense of struggle for this was a community of faith which rested on a foundation of beliefs, traditions and values that had lasted for centuries. They knew that they were drawing on a transcendent tradition. Finally, what emerged was the recognition that every program needs to find its own pace of development. A key to that pace of development is the congregational system itself. Congregations must understand that the meaningful caring programs exist within the context of a holistic congregational system; a system that, for its own health, needs to be examined with regularity.

B. Confirming Data From Other Congregations

Both Temple Sinai and Beth Zion are at the beginning phases of the creation of a program. To give some dimension to their struggles, I want to turn to a brief look at several other congregations whose programs are more developed. Their experience is, I feel, valuable in helping to place the Atlanta and Buffalo workshops in some perspective. Many congregations have had the benefit of having had the program up and running for several years and their experiences can be illustrative to the general thesis that such programs can be transformative to both individual and congregations.

What strikes you first when you review the work of many of the congregations is the need for patience. It takes time to develop personal relationships and even greater time to establish a relationship based program within a congregational system. For over a decade, Beth-El of Great Neck, N.Y. has watched their caring-community program grow. From an initial organizational meeting, Beth-El now boast a Caring Community Board which oversees a program that has over two dozen elements. These range from writing cards and letters for occasions of joy and sadness, to personal involvement with congregants who are sick, bereaved or dealing with other issues of crises or loss. The minutes of the Board reflect the frustrations of any organization. Yet, it also reflects the expansion of the idea that this is a synagogue which is committed to changing the way its people interact with each other.

Beginning in the late 1980's, Temple Shalom of Chevy Chase, MD has been an active participant in what they chose to call their Mitzvah Corps. This program evolved as a rabbi driven initiative and has benefited from the long time devotion of several lay volunteers. These volunteers, along with the rabbi, created a cadre of well trained dedicated laypeople who, over the

course of time, developed a multi-faceted program of caring. Like other successful models, a key component was the ability of volunteers to become personally involved with other members. Confidentiality, proper training and volunteer evaluation remained a major concern. A summary document produced by the Mitzvah Corps after its first few years of existence offered this evaluation:

> "The congregation clearly favored and got very excited about this new program. It fit in very well with the congregational family mind-set which already had deep roots in the Temple. The benefits of it began to bring in very positive feedback. Mitzvah Corps has covered the bases for our members providing a caring presence in numerous highly sensitive, highly charged situations; to giving warranted financial advice; helping someone get long-term disability benefits; creating the Temple Shalom Blood Drive program, wherein the entire membership is covered by those who give; helping the infirm and the shut-in and the bereaved in hundreds of ways." (2)

Temple Har Zion in Thornhill, Ontario, Canada is another example of how the caring-community program evolves. This congregation's program began with an assessment of the needs of the community and focused initially on matching people who had experienced serious illness or other life challenging events with similar individuals within the congregation. At the root of this idea was the belief that congregations have the responsibility to take care of their own (again, the image of an extended spiritual family) and that in moments of despair and crisis it may be wise to offer a person the chance to talk to another member of the "family" who had "been there". Over 80 people are currently enrolled in this experience bank according to congregational spokesperson

Harriette Rosen. She reports that these personal contacts are well received and help send a message of concern and caring. The program is also linked with two other temple programs, as well as men's and women's affinity groups. The intra-synagogue communication helps create support for people who have experienced death and other types of loss. Like many of the congregations, the initial successes have enabled the congregations to consider expanding the program.

As I noted before, it is helpful to have continuity in staff and leadership positions when creating this program. The lack of continuity can sometimes lead to frustration. Congregation Ner Tamid of Las Vegas, Nevada has encountered such frustration. Their rabbi wrote of his attempts over the past two years to establish the program of his congregation:

> Part of what has impeded my goal, however, has been the transition of lay leadership and staff. I have had two chairs of this committee and three different program directors. So this lack of continuity also hurt. I haven't given up and feel that over time, we will continue to improve our program and affect the culture of our Congregational community.(3)

Some congregations, like Beth-El or Temple Israel of Memphis, have assigned a staff member, such as an assistant rabbi or cantor, to oversee the project. Other congregations, like Har Zion and Temple Shalom, the two congregations in the demonstration project, and the majority of others, use dedicated lay people. For a few, there is a non clergy staff member charged with overseeing the caring initiatives. These program directors or directors of family life education are a growing phenomenon within our synagogue world. Annette Fish is the program director of B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City, MO. Within recent years, B'nai Jehudah has developed a significant

program known as the Friendly Visitor program. It concentrates on volunteers visiting people who are sick or confined to nursing homes of other facilities. Annette reports that 350-400 members of the congregation have been direct recipients of the work of the program. In preparing for the writing of this document, I asked her to comment on her perception of the caring-community program's impact on B'nai Jehudah.

> "I do believe the Caring committee has been beneficial to the culture of B'nai Jehudah and instrumental in helping to transform or change the individuals involved in the program. We have had approximately 200 volunteers involved in some aspect of the caring committee over the past couple of years; visiting residents in Jewish nursing homes, making bereavement and post hospital follow-up calls, providing home hospitality to other members during the holidays, visiting shut-ins and providing occasional transportation...For example, not only do Jewish nursing home residents appreciate a holiday gift bag and visit by one of our volunteers, the families of the Jewish resident are also deeply touched by this outreach. Those who receive hospital follow-up and bereavement telephone calls become aware of this special service provided by the congregation and are grateful that a member of the congregation "cares" at this time of their lives. As in all of these activities, an opportunity is provided for members to become better acquainted with one another and feel better connected to a congregation that cares, one about the other. And, thus we build, a "caring community" of Jews. (4)

One additional example. Brith Kodesh of Rochester, N.Y. is an example of how the

program continues to evolve. It is also illustrative of several of the key issues that grew out of the demonstration workshops. Brith Kodesh's caring-community program was begun immediately after the installation of their new senior rabbi. As part of his mission, he saw the need to transform a congregational culture that had become fixed and accepting of the status quo. The rabbi received the help of a therapist from the community who agreed to accept the responsibility of developing the congregation's new caring-community program. Realizing that the culture of the congregation would not tolerate rapid change imposed from above, Brith Kodesh's committee took their time. They developed focus groups, informal discussions, and a caring-community weekend where a wide variety of programmatic options were discussed and visioned. Brith Kodesh approached the development of the program, according to committee chairperson Barbara Braverman: "From the perspective of cultural change and community development, the process we established included: assessing the needs of the congregation, developing a mission statement, developing a plan for implementation and assessing the impact of our work." (5) The mission statement called on the temple to be a "welcoming and inclusive temple family with strong Jewish values that foster caring relationships and involvement." (6) What emerged after two years is a program that has sought to energize the existing committees within the temple by having them re-think their own mission and re-evaluate how they communicate with the membership. A valuable summary of the current state of the program was provided by the Temple's senior rabbi:

> "The Caring Community concept provided me a way to transition and change the congregational culture and climate, as an integral part of my transition as the new rabbi of the congregation...Though we have had a long standing series of

support programs: bereavement groups, mitzvah corps, meals on wheels, hospital visits, etc., our Caring Community program became more centered on culture than program. We have analyzed all of the contact points between temple and congregants to see what messages are projected and to find ways to influence the levels of trust and satisfaction congregants had with temple interactions. To that end we have accomplished a great deal in making people feel welcomed and connected. Caring Community has provided us a vehicle to humanize and personalize temple culture." (7)

Slowly, other congregations too are becoming aware of the need to look at the issues of how they respond to membership, be it in times of crises or calm, and how they model the values for which they stand. Often, the gulf between what is preached and what is practiced is larger than expected. Often, also, when congregations do determine why people dropout or become less involved, they find a feeling on the part of the disaffected that some basic need for personal contact and support was missing. It is clear from my own study and from the other caring-community congregational programs cited here that people want and need connection and will seek them out if they are available.

3. Christian Parallels

Such concentrated programmatic attempts to develop more personal, relationship based programs of caring remain a relatively new enterprise within the North American Jewish community. The development is somewhat older and more advanced within some sectors of the Christian community. Evidence there re-inforced my desire in the demonstration workshops to focus on theneed for, and power of, a theological foundation for programs of caring.

I looked at two examples of how the Christian community approaches the aspect of congregational based caring and support. The Alban Institute of Bethesda works full time in creating programs and resources which support the work of churches and clergy. In 1994, the Alban Institute published a ten session document entitled "Developing the Caring Community: A 10-week Course in Pastoral care Ministry for Laity." The introduction to this extensive training manual outlines many of the principles that I encountered within the synagogue world. The need for such a program emerged from the recognition that the demands of contemporary life may prove overwhelming and that many people within the church remain unhelped. As demands on clergy increase, their time and energy flags, and a cadre of lay people need to be trained to assist in the sacred work of the church. Alban's training design focuses Christian values. The training sought develop a core group of committed people who would serve as a compliment to the ordained clergy. The following, drawn from the manual's introduction, sets out a clear sense of what this program is all about. Take away the Christian references and replace them Jewish equivalents, and you have a representative example of any synagogue's approach.

> "Not wishing to diminish the role of ordered ministry in pastoral care, but to broaden that ministry, this seminar raises the priority of caring and seeks to develop the skills of concerned and loving laity to respond to and initiate encounters with fellow congregants, friends, neighbors and acquaintances as an expression of God's love in the world. By virtue of their daily opportunities to be in direct contact with persons who are hurting, they can offer a listening ear, a helping hand, good counsel, and a ministry of referral to those in need. In addition, I believe that lay Christians will only be faithful to their calling as

Christians by undertaking formally and informally the caring ministry which has been placed upon each one of us, clergy and lay, by the scriptures, to help to "carry on another's burdens."(Galatians 6:2)" (8)

Active participation in a caring ministry is equated with faithfulness to one's calling as a Christian. One models proper Christian behavior by doing acts of caring and kindness. As in Judaism, the doing of the sacred deed defines one's religious identity.

While the Alban Institute lists the caring community outline as part of its multi-faceted offerings, The Stephen Ministries of St. Louis, in it by serving laity and clergy across denominations. They run seven-day Leader's Training Courses in various locations across the United States, and provide on-going follow-up that contains a system of professional resource and referral support for congregations who enroll in the program. The Stephen Ministries program, too, derives from a realization that the needs of people are too great for clergy to handle alone. In such a situation, lay participation becomes a sacred response to Christ's calling. A summary of the program is provided in Appendix #4. A powerful statement of the need for congregation's to respond to the burgeoning needs of their members is detailed in an informational pamphlet entitled: "Christ Caring for People Through People." Under a heading "Are These Needs Being Met?" they write:

Everyone goes through periods of difficulty or crises at times. having someone who cares enough to listen can ease these experiences of confusion, stress or loneliness. No problem is too small or insignificant to receive care. If the need is significant enough to affect a person's ability to live a full and abundant life in Jesus Christ, it is important for the church to care in *effective, intentional,*

and appropriate ways. How does your congregation go about identifying and responding to the needs of such people? (9)

This program is grounded in a strong theological foundation. The fifty hours of training that make up the week long program are firmly rooted in the belief that those who participate in the caring ministry are doing the work of Jesus Christ. They remind the prospective congregation that they are "both outreach and nurture, words of care and deeds of love, ministry that touches the depths of the soul while it serves the physical, emotional and relational needs of the individual...it is *Christ-centered*--grounded in the truth revealed in the Bible. The Stephen Series is rooted in and issues from the faith and life of the Christian Church." (10)

The new paradigm church, or "mega-church" as it is popularly known, provides yet another example of a caring ministry program modeled after the spirit and life of Jesus Christ. At Willow Creek Community Church of Illinois, for example, leadership set out consciously to create a program that would invite the unchurched into their community of faith. The leadership developed a seven-step strategy which was based upon an intensive study of those in the community who did not attend church. Interestingly, the analyses concluded that the unchurched could only be brought back in to the church when "believers built a *relationship of integrity* with them. A relationship of integrity was one built on honesty and authentic concern for the other person. Every believer at Willow Creek was strongly challenged to build that kind of relationship with unchurched people. In addition to merely challenging the believers, Willow Creek provided training to empower them to fulfill the challenge." (11) In targeting the "unchurched", Willow Creek developed a large and active community of believers who came to understand that a key to their own church's evolution was in the development of these relationships of integrity. To

heighten the challenge, the program made as one of its' major concerns, the recruitment of men. The feeling on the part of leadership was that if men could be successfully recruited in to church membership, the women would follow close at hand. "The reason for targeting males and designing a service to speak and appeal to men, was that males typically were more difficult to reach with the gospel message and were tougher in their demands upon the church...Therefore, if a service for seekers reached men, it should reach women as well." (12)

Like the other examples we have looked at, Willow Creek's mission was firmly rooted in faith. It's seven-step strategy was guided by four philosophical principles:

1. Every believer has the responsibility of being witness in one's faith and relationship with God.

2.The needs of the seeker differ from those of the believer.

3.Believers must respect the individual's process of a faith decision and the journey one must travel to maturity in their relationship with God.

4.Every believer is a minister, gifted by God for the benefit of all in the church. (13)

The notion that every member of the church community is also a minister of the Gospel's message emerged clearly at Preston Woods Baptist Church in Dallas. From the moment you walk in, through the two morning services, to the wide array of programmatic opportunities (literally from cradle to grave) that exist in the community, one message is communicated: welcome and care. A cadre of greeters and staff envelope everyone. They communicate the feeling that the church is glad that you have chosen to be with them. The literature available speaks to the concern for every person and there are support programs and opportunities for involvement for

every issue that might impact or person or family.

Preston Woods is a large church. The day I was there, in mid July with temperatures in Dallas never below 103 degrees, there were some eight thousand worshipers for the two services. Yet, there was a message of intimacy and caring. New members were welcomed into the church community in a public affirmation and prayer circle at the conclusion of the service. A two page list was printed that noted people in the hospital for whom prayers were needed. As distinct from many synagogues, the prayer for illness lists contained some addresses and, more often than not, the diagnosis of the illness that placed the individual in the hospital. This was all made public to encourage the congregation to pray on behalf of the people who were ill and to communicate with them and their families.

Every aspect of life was represented within the church's programmatic offerings: day care for children and seniors, singles, about to married, newly married, divorced, unwed mothers, people dealing with loss and bereavement, and a new program, the "Rebuilder's Class" to focus on second marriages and blended families. Again, all of this was based on the acting out of Christian faith. It was clear that every member of the Preston Woods community was expected to be this messenger of the church's mission.

Examining these developments within the Christian community have re-inforce my belief that parallel Jewish programs are essential. Churches, no less than synagogues remain one of the most viable vehicles through which the struggle for meaning can unfold. The power of developing personal relationships that support a person in that search has never been more necessary. The need for a strong foundation of faith has never been more important.

The project has shown that meaningful cultural and personal change is possible once a

congregation becomes committed to visioning a future that places people and relationships at the center of its focus. That visioning takes time, effort, patience, commitment and a strong sense, on the part of both lay and clergy, and must reflect the acting out of the fundamental relationship we have with God. This transformation is not limited to congregations of any one size. It is the commitment on the part of the community to engage in change that makes the difference.

Perhaps, the greatest lesson learned from this project is the reinforcement of the idea of the power of individuals to impact on one another. These programs provide the opportunity for people to be engaged in a fundamental way with other people within their community. The power of those relationships, built on faith and a commitment to model the values of a religious community, can be transformative to all concerned. The success of these programs are drawn from the sacred potential that exists within each and every human being. This is basic to every religious faith. It is a truth that informs what we do and how we act. It is expressed in the belief that we are "in God's image." To the question of why develop a program of caring within a church or synagogue we need only return to that basic text in Genesis. Ultimately, these programs are about how we see our own selves and how we understand our relationships with the self, with God and with the world at large.

Caring-community programs allow us to act out our answer to God's question of "Where are you?" In the end, this project teaches the value of the individual working to bring about change from a transcendent religious tradition. There may be no better way for an individual to know what that tradition means for themselves than when they encounter another human being in relationship. David Ariel lovingly reminds us:

The most difficult challenge we face is to recognize the divine spark within our-

selves and within others. Yet, if we truly believe that everything ultimately derives from the mystery of God, we must accept the fact that everything has the spark of the divine within. This statement is more than an explanation of how things come to be. It is actually the theory that makes self-understanding a religious duty. To know ourselves, our true selves, and to listen to the true voice within, is to trace the stages back to where the soul, our consciousness, our inner divine voice comes from. As a medieval Jewish philosopher, Shem Tov ibn Falaquera, said, "If you know yourself, you know God." (14)

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CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY

a study guide for volunteer training

workshop--Temple Sinai *Kesher* program

Rabbi Richard F. Address
UAHC
August 1998

FOR THE BODY

אשר יצר

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת־הָאָדָם
בְּחָכְמָה, וּבָרָא בוֹ נְקָבִים נְקָבִים, חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים. גָּלוּי
וְיָדוּעַ לִפְנֵי כִסֵּא כְבוֹדֶךָ, שֶׁאִם יִפָּתֵחַ אֶחָד מֵהֶם, אוֹ
יִסָּתֵם אֶחָד מֵהֶם, אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִתְקַיֵּם וְלַעֲמוֹד לְפָנֶיךָ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, רוֹפֵא כָל־בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe. With divine wisdom You have made our bodies, combining veins, arteries, and vital organs into a finely balanced network.

Were one of them to fail, O wondrous Maker and Sustainer of life, —how well we are aware!—we would lack the strength to stand in life before You.

Source of our health and strength, we give You thanks and praise.

FOR TORAH

לעסוק בדברי תורה

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe: You hallow us with the gift of Torah and command us to immerse ourselves in its words.

HEALTH

רפואה

רְפָאֵנוּ יי וְנֵרָפֵא, הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ וְנִוָּשֵׁעָה, וְהַעֲלֵה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה
לְכָל־מַכּוֹתֵינוּ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, רוֹפֵא הַחוֹלִים.

Heal us, O God, and we shall be healed; save us, and we shall be saved; grant us a perfect healing for all our infirmities.

(A personal prayer for one who is ill may be added here.)

We praise You, O God, Healer of the sick.

אֵלּוּ דְבָרִים שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם שִׁעוּר:
כִּבּוּד אָב וָאֵם,
וּגְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים,
וְהַשְׁכָּמַת בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ
שַׁחֲרִית וְעַרְבִית,
וְהַכְנָסַת אוֹרְחִים,
וּבִקּוּר חוֹלִים,
וְהַכְנָסַת כַּלָּה,
וּלְוָיַת הַמֵּת,
וְעִיּוּן תְּפִלָּה,
וַהֲבָאַת שָׁלוֹם בֵּין אָדָם
לַחֲבֵרוֹ.
וְתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֶגֶד כֻּלָּם.

These are duties whose worth cannot be measured:
honoring one's father and mother,
acts of love and kindness,
diligent pursuit of knowledge and wisdom,
hospitality to strangers,
visiting the sick,
celebrating with bride and groom,
consoling the bereaved,
praying with sincerity,
and making peace where there is strife.
And the study of Torah leads to them all.

FOR THE SOUL

אֱלֹהַי נְשָׁמָה שֶׁנָּתַתָּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא! אַתָּה בְרָאתָהּ, אַתָּה
יְצַרְתָּהּ, אַתָּה נְפַחְתָּהּ בִּי, וְאַתָּה מְשַׁמְּרָהּ בְּקִרְבִּי. כָּל־זְמַן
שֶׁהַנְּשָׁמָה בְּקִרְבִּי, מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהַי וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי
וְאִמּוֹתַי, רִבּוֹן כָּל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים, אֲדוֹן כָּל־הַנְּשָׁמוֹת.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ נֶפֶשׁ כָּל־חָי וְרוּחַ כָּל־בְּשַׂר־אִישׁ.

The soul that You have given me, O God, is pure! You created and formed it, breathed it into me, and within me You sustain it. So long as I have breath, therefore, I will give thanks to You, my God and the God of all ages, Source of all being, loving Guide of every human spirit.

119

א Happy are those whose way is blameless,
who follow the teaching of the LORD.
2Happy are those who observe His decrees,
who turn to Him wholeheartedly.
3They have done no wrong,
but have followed His ways.
4You have commanded that Your precepts
be kept diligently.
5Would that my ways were firm
in keeping Your laws;
6then I would not be ashamed
when I regard all Your commandments.
7I will praise You with a sincere heart
as I learn Your just rules.
8I will keep Your laws:
do not utterly forsake me.

ב 9How can a young man keep his way pure?—
by holding to Your word.
10I have turned to You with all my heart;
do not let me stray from Your commandments.
11In my heart I treasure Your promise:
therefore I do not sin against You.
12Blessed are You, O LORD:
train me in Your laws.
13With my lips I rehearse
all the rules You proclaimed.
14I rejoice over the way of Your decrees
as over all riches.
15I study Your precepts;
I regard Your ways;
16I take delight in Your laws;
I will not neglect Your word.

ג 17Deal kindly with Your servant,
that I may live to keep Your word.

18Open my eyes, that I may perceive
the wonders of Your teaching.
19I am only a sojourner in the land;
do not hide Your commandments from me.
20My soul is consumed with longing
for Your rules at all times.
21You blast the accursed insolent ones
who stray from Your commandments.
22Take away from me taunt and abuse,
because I observe Your decrees.
23Though princes meet and speak against me,
Your servant studies Your laws.
24For Your decrees are my delight,
my intimate companions.

ד

25My soul clings to the dust;
revive me in accordance with Your word.
26I have declared my way, and You have answered me;
train me in Your laws.
27Make me understand the way of Your precepts,
that I may study Your wondrous acts.
28I am racked with grief;
sustain me in accordance with Your word.
29Remove all false ways from me;
favor me with Your teaching.
30I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I have set Your rules before me.
31I cling to Your decrees;
O LORD, do not put me to shame.
32I eagerly pursue Your commandments,
for You broaden my understanding.

ה

33Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your laws;
I will observe them [a]to the utmost.[a]
34Give me understanding, that I may observe Your teaching
and keep it wholeheartedly.
35Lead me in the path of Your commandments,
for that is my concern.

[a-a] *Meaning of Heb. uncertain.*

36Turn my heart to Your decrees
and not to love of gain.
37Avert my eyes from seeing falsehood;
by Your ways preserve me.
38Fulfill Your promise to Your servant,
which is for those who worship You.
39Remove the taunt that I dread,
for Your rules are good.
40See, I have longed for Your precepts;
by Your righteousness preserve me.

ו 41May Your steadfast love reach me, O LORD,
Your deliverance, as You have promised.
42I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I have put my trust in Your word.
43Do not utterly take the truth away from my mouth,
for I have put my hope in Your rules.
44I will always obey Your teaching,
forever and ever.
45I will walk about at ease,
for I have turned to Your precepts.
46I will speak of Your decrees,
and not be ashamed in the presence of kings.
47I will delight in Your commandments,
which I love.
48I reach out for Your commandments, which I love;
I study Your laws.

ז 49Remember Your word to Your servant
through which You have given me hope.
50This is my comfort in my affliction,
that Your promise has preserved me.
51Though the arrogant have cruelly mocked me,
I have not swerved from Your teaching.
52I remember Your rules of old, O LORD,
and find comfort in them.
53I am seized with rage
because of the wicked who forsake Your teaching.

54 Your laws are [b]a source of strength to me[b]
wherever I may dwell.
55 I remember Your name at night, O LORD,
and obey Your teaching.
56 This has been my lot,
for I have observed Your precepts.

ח 57 The LORD is my portion;
I have resolved to keep Your words.
58 I have implored You with all my heart;
have mercy on me, in accordance with Your promise.
59 I have considered my ways,
and have turned back to Your decrees.
60 I have hurried and not delayed
to keep Your commandments.
61 Though the bonds of the wicked are coiled round me,
I have not neglected Your teaching.
62 I arise at midnight to praise You
for Your just rules.
63 I am a companion to all who fear You,
to those who keep Your precepts.
64 Your steadfast love, O LORD, fills the earth;
teach me Your laws.

ט 65 You have treated Your servant well,
according to Your word, O LORD.
66 Teach me good sense and knowledge,
for I have put my trust in Your commandments.
67 Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep Your word.
68 You are good and beneficent;
teach me Your laws.
69 Though the arrogant have accused me falsely,
I observe Your precepts wholeheartedly.
70 Their minds are thick like fat;
as for me, Your teaching is my delight.
71 It was good for me that I was humbled,

[b-b] *Or "songs for me."*

so that I might learn Your laws.
72I prefer the teaching You proclaimed
to thousands of gold and silver pieces.

73Your hands made me and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn Your
commandments.
74Those who fear You will see me and rejoice,
for I have put my hope in Your word.
75I know, O LORD, that Your rulings are just;
rightly have You humbled me.
76May Your steadfast love comfort me
in accordance with Your promise to Your servant.
77May Your mercy reach me, that I might live,
for Your teaching is my delight.
78Let the insolent be dismayed, for they have
wronged me without cause;
I will study Your precepts.
79May those who fear You,
those who know Your decrees,
turn again to me.
80May I wholeheartedly follow Your laws
so that I do not come to grief.

ל 81I long for Your deliverance;
I hope for Your word.
82My eyes pine away for Your promise;
I say, "When will You comfort me?"
83Though I have become like a water-skin dried in smoke,
I have not neglected Your laws.
84How long has Your servant to live?
when will You bring my persecutors to judgment?
85The insolent have dug pits for me,
flouting Your teaching.
86All Your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!
87Though they almost wiped me off the earth,

I did not abandon Your precepts.
88As befits Your steadfast love, preserve me,
so that I may keep the decree You proclaimed.

ל
89The LORD exists forever;
Your word stands firm in heaven.
90Your faithfulness is for all generations;
You have established the earth, and it stands.
91They stand this day to [carry out] Your rulings,
for all are Your servants.
92Were not Your teaching my delight
I would have perished in my affliction.
93I will never neglect Your precepts,
for You have preserved my life through them.
94I am Yours; save me!
For I have turned to Your precepts.
95The wicked hope to destroy me,
but I ponder Your decrees.
96I have seen that all things have their limit,
but Your commandment is broad beyond measure.

מ
97O how I love Your teaching!
It is my study all day long.
98Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies;
they always stand by me.
99I have gained more insight than all my teachers,
for Your decrees are my study.
100I have gained more understanding than my elders,
for I observe Your precepts.
101I have avoided every evil way
so that I may keep Your word.
102I have not departed from Your rules,
for You have instructed me.
103How pleasing is Your word to my palate,
sweeter than honey.
104I ponder Your precepts;
therefore I hate every false way.

נ

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet,
a light for my path.
106 I have firmly sworn
to keep Your just rules.
107 I am very much afflicted;
O LORD, preserve me in accordance with Your word.
108 Accept, O LORD, my freewill offerings;
teach me Your rules.
109 Though my life is always in danger,
I do not neglect Your teaching.
110 Though the wicked have set a trap for me,
I have not strayed from Your precepts.
111 Your decrees are my eternal heritage;
they are my heart's delight.
112 I am resolved to follow Your laws
[a]to the utmost[a] forever.

ס

113 I hate men of divided heart,
but I love Your teaching.
114 You are my protection and my shield;
I hope for Your word.
115 Keep away from me, you evildoers,
that I may observe the commandments of my God.
116 Support me as You promised, so that I may live;
do not thwart my expectation.
117 Sustain me that I may be saved,
and I will always muse upon Your laws.
118 You reject all who stray from Your laws,
for they are false and deceitful.
119 You do away with the wicked as if they were dross;
rightly do I love Your decrees.
120 My flesh creeps from fear of You;
I am in awe of Your rulings.

ע

121 I have done what is just and right;
do not abandon me to those who would wrong me.
122 Guarantee Your servant's well-being;
do not let the arrogant wrong me.

123 My eyes pine away for Your deliverance,
for Your promise of victory.
124 Deal with Your servant as befits Your steadfast love;
teach me Your laws.
125 I am Your servant;
give me understanding,
that I might know Your decrees.
126 It is a time to act for the LORD,
for they have violated Your teaching.
127 Rightly do I love Your commandments
more than gold, even fine gold.
128 Truly [c]by all [Your] precepts I walk straight;[c]
I hate every false way.

ד
129 Your decrees are wondrous;
rightly do I observe them.
130 [d]The words You inscribed give[d] light,
and grant understanding to the simple.
131 I open my mouth wide, I pant,
longing for Your commandments.
132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is Your rule with those who love Your name.
133 Make my feet firm through Your promise;
do not let iniquity dominate me.
134 Redeem me from being wronged by man,
that I may keep Your precepts.
135 Show favor to Your servant,
and teach me Your laws.
136 My eyes shed streams of water
because men do not obey Your teaching.

צ
137 You are righteous, O LORD;
Your rulings are just.
138 You have ordained righteous decrees;
they are firmly enduring.
139 I am consumed with rage
over my foes' neglect of Your words.
140 Your word is exceedingly pure,

[c-c] *Or "I declare all [Your] precepts to be just."*
[d-d] *With Targum; or "The exposition of Your words gives"; meaning of Heb. uncertain.*

and Your servant loves it.

141 Though I am belittled and despised,
I have not neglected Your precepts.
142 Your righteousness is eternal;
Your teaching is true.
143 Though anguish and distress come upon me,
Your commandments are my delight.
144 Your righteous decrees are eternal;
give me understanding, that I might live.

ק

145 I call with all my heart;
answer me, O LORD,
that I may observe Your laws.
146 I call upon You; save me,
that I may keep Your decrees.
147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I hope for Your word.
148 My eyes greet each watch of the night,
as I meditate on Your promise.
149 Hear my voice as befits Your steadfast love;
O LORD, preserve me, as is Your rule.
150 Those who pursue intrigue draw near;
they are far from Your teaching.
151 You, O LORD, are near,
and all Your commandments are true.
152 I know from Your decrees of old
that You have established them forever.

ר

153 See my affliction and rescue me,
for I have not neglected Your teaching.
154 Champion my cause and redeem me;
preserve me according to Your promise.
155 Deliverance is far from the wicked,
for they have not turned to Your laws.
156 Your mercies are great, O LORD;
as is Your rule, preserve me.
157 Many are my persecutors and foes;
I have not swerved from Your decrees.

158I have seen traitors and loathed[a] them,
because they did not keep Your word in mind.
159See that I have loved Your precepts;
O LORD, preserve me, as befits Your steadfast love.
160Truth is the essence of Your word;
Your just rules are eternal.

ש
161Princes have persecuted me without reason;
my heart thrills at Your word.
162I rejoice over Your promise
as one who obtains great spoil.
163I hate and abhor falsehood;
I love Your teaching.
164I praise You seven times each day
for Your just rules.
165Those who love Your teaching enjoy well-being;
they encounter no adversity.
166I hope for Your deliverance, O LORD;
I observe Your commandments.
167I obey Your decrees
and love them greatly.
168I obey Your precepts and decrees;
all my ways are before You.

ת
169May my plea reach You, O LORD;
grant me understanding according to Your word.
170May my petition come before You;
save me in accordance with Your promise.
171My lips shall pour forth praise,
for You teach me Your laws.
172My tongue shall declare Your promise,
for all Your commandments are just.
173Lend Your hand to help me,
for I have chosen Your precepts.
174I have longed for Your deliverance, O LORD;
Your teaching is my delight.
175Let me live, that I may praise You;
may Your rules be my help;

[a] *Or "have contended with."*

176I have strayed like a lost sheep;
search for Your servant,
for I have not neglected Your commandments.

199. "[The Lord will] make strong thy bones" (Isa. 58:11). R. Eleazar said: This is the most perfect of blessings.[9]

200. The sages said in the name of Rav: It is forbidden to live in a city where there is no physician.[10]

201. In a human body, the component parts are dependent on one another. When one ceases to function, so does the other. When they break apart one from the other, the body is stricken and the person dies, like a house that has four sides—if one side breaks away, the house collapses.[11]

202. The sages in the school of R. Ishmael taught: "He shall cause him to be thoroughly healed" (Exod. 21:19). From this verse we infer that permission has been given [by Heaven] to the physician to heal.[12]

203. It is told of R. Ishmael and R. Akiva that, while they were walking through the streets of Jerusalem accompanied by a certain man, a sick person confronted them and said, "Masters, tell me, how shall I be healed?" They replied, "Take such-and-such, and you will be healed." The man accompanying the sages asked them, "Who smote him with sickness?" They replied, "The Holy One." The man: "And you bring yourselves into a matter that does not concern you? God smote, and you would heal?" The sages: "What is your work?" The man: "I am a tiller of the soil. You see the sickle in my hand." The sages: "Who created the vineyard?" The man: "The Holy One." The sages: "Then why do you bring yourself into a matter that does not concern you? God created it, and you eat the fruit from it!" The man: "Don't you see the sickle in my hand? If I did not go out and plow the vineyard, prune it, compost it, and weed it, it would have yielded nothing." The sages: "You are the biggest fool in the world! Have you not heard the verse 'As for man, his days are as grass' [Ps. 103:15]? A tree, if it is not composted, weeded, and [the area around it] plowed, will not grow; and even if it does grow, if not given water to drink, it will die—will not live. So, too, the human body is a tree, a healing potion is the compost, and a physician is the tiller of the soil."[13]

204. When a man has a pain, he should visit a physician.[2]

205. R. Eleazar said: Honor your physician even before you have need of him.[3]

206. A physician who heals for nothing is worth nothing.[4]

207. A physician not nigh is [as good as] a blind eye.[5]

208. Hapless is the city whose physician has gout.[6]

209. Physician, heal your own lameness![7]

210. The best physician deserves Gehenna.[8]

211. Hezekiah hid away the Book of Cures, and the sages approved.[9]

212. Rav said to his son Hiyya:[10] Don't fall into the habit of taking drugs, don't leap over a sewer,[11] don't have your teeth pulled,[12] don't provoke serpents.[13]

213. "The saving sun with healing in its wings" (Mal. 3:20). Abbaye said: This proves that the shining sun brings healing.[14]

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1 Midrash Sam. 4.
2 B. BK 46b.
3 P. Ta 3:6, 66d.
4 B. BK 85a.
5 Ibid.
6 And can't get about. Lev. R. 5:6.
7 Gen. R. 23:5.
8 Either because he is haughty or because he occasionally endangers life. B. Kid 82a.
9 For people would no longer trust only in medical treatment. B. Ber 10b.
10 Who was not in good health.
11 So B. Pes 113a; BR: "Don't leap feet-first."
12 Wait for them to get better.
13 B. Pes 113a.
14 B. Ned 41.

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5 B. Ber 57b.
6 Since it is not possible for the water to penetrate the body, the body does not benefit from it. B. Shab 41a.
7 B. Hul 24b.
8 B. Shab 61a.
9 B. Yev 102b.
10 P. Kid 4:12, 66d.
11 Midrash Sam. 4 (ed. Buber [Cracow, 1903], p. 54).
12 B. Ber 60a.

SAYINGS OF NAHMAN OF BRATSLAV

Living in Tune

Everything in the world-
whatever is and whatever happens
-is a test, designed to give you
freedom of choice. Choose wisely.

Worldly desires are like sunbeams
in a dark room. They seem solid
Until you try to grasp one

Always look for the good
In yourself.

Focus on that good,
highlight it, and turn even
depression into joy.

On the Spiritual Journey

Believe that none of the effort
you put into coming closer to God
is ever wasted-even if in the
end you don't achieve what
you are striving for.

The most direct means for
attaching ourselves to God from
this material world is through
music and song.

Be like God and don't look for
people's shortcomings and
weak points. You will then be at
peace with everyone.

Never succumb to feelings
of loneliness. No matter where
you are, God is close by.
Remember:
Feeling distant from God
Is subjective, not objective;
it is just your own feeling,
not reality.

Answer insult with silence.
When someone hurts you
do not answer in kind. You will
then be worthy of genuine honor
-honor that is inner honor,
honor from Above.

Even if you can't sing well, sing,
Sing to yourself. Sing in the
privacy of your own home.
But sing.

It's easy to criticize others and
make them feel unwanted.
Anyone can do it.
What takes effort and skill is
picking them up and
making them feel good.

Psychological Aspects of Illness and of Helping

Lawrence D. Baker, M.D.

The Kesher Member as Twig

The Kesher Member as Twig

- A twig plays the role of a life saver, but remains a twig.
- The bird and the twig have a reciprocal relationship.

The Kesher Member as Twig

- As a Temple Sinai member, you will give and receive help.
- God does not want us to suffer alone and has commanded us to help each other.
- Psychologically, we know that suffering is mitigated by caring and support from others.

How to be a Sensitive Helper

- Counter-transference: feelings that are evoked by a given situation.
- Be sensitive to your own feelings and motivations

The Experience of the Sufferer

- Helplessness
- Hopelessness
- Dependence
- Worthlessness
- Embarrassment
- Guilt
- Loss
- Anxiety

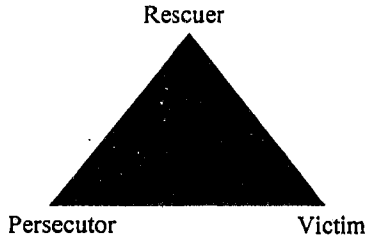
Depression and the Sufferer

- Depression is a frequent result of the experience.
- It is a separate and independent problem.
- Can be treated with talk therapy and medications and is better left to professionals.

Examples of Counter-transference

- Personally experiencing the pain of the sufferer/ re-experiencing old emotional pain/loss.
- The need to be needed:The rescue triangle.
- The need to be important.

The Rescue Triangle



Care for the Caregiver: Dealing with Feelings

- Process or talk about your own feelings.
- Take care of your body.
- Take care of your spirit.

TEMPLE BETH ZION

CARING COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

THE THEOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIPS

Rabbi Richard F. Address
October, 1998

I: SACRED TEXTS THAT CAN FORM THE FOUNDATION OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS

1. Ecclesiastes 1	We are part of something beyond our "self"
2. Genesis 1	We are created in sacred relationship with God
3. Genesis 3	The paradox of our existence...life/death... the struggle to answer God's "*ayecha?*"
4. Genesis 32	The struggle to change the self...our relationship with our "self"
5. Exodus 3	The evolving nature of our relationship with God
6. Leviticus 19	The foundation of holiness in all our relationships
7. Deuteronomy 30	The importance of making sacred choices

II: A GLANCE AT SOME VALUABLE PRAYERS

III: SOME ADDITIONAL TEXTS THAT TOUCH ON HEALING AND VISITING THE SICK.

1. Prayers for Healing from "Give Me Your Hand" by Rabbi Stuart L. Kelman

2. Visiting the Sick *'bikkur cholim"* texts from "Judaism, Medicine and Healing" by Ronald Isaacs

ECCLESIASTES קהלת

THE *WORDS OF Koheleth,
the son of David, king in
Jerusalem.

2 Vanity of vanities, saith Koheleth;
Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

3 What profit hath man of all his
labour
Wherein he laboureth under the
sun?
4 One generation passeth away, and
another generation cometh;
And the earth abideth for ever.
5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun
goeth down,
And hasteth to his place where he
ariseth.
6 The wind goeth toward the south,
And turneth about unto the north;
It turneth about continually in its
circuit,
And the wind returneth again to
its circuits.
7 All the rivers run into the sea,
Yet the sea is not full;
Unto the place whither the rivers
go,
Thither they go again.
8 All things toil to weariness;
Man cannot utter it,
The eye is not satisfied with see-
ing,
Nor the ear filled with hearing.
9 That which hath been is that
which shall be,
And that which hath been done is
that which shall be done;
And there is nothing new under
the sun.
10 Is there a thing whereof it is said:
'See, this is new'?—it hath been al-
ready, in the ages which were before
us. 11 There is no remembrance of
them of former times; neither shall
there be any remembrance of them
of latter times that are to come,
among those that shall come after.

3 To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose un-
der the heaven:
2 A time to be born, and a time to
die;
A time to plant, and a time to
pluck up that which is planted;
3 A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to break down, and a time
to build up;
4 A time to weep, and a time to
laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to
dance;
5 A time to cast away stones, and
a time to gather stones to-
gether;

A time to embrace, and a time to
refrain from embracing;
6 A time to seek, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast
away;
7 A time to rend, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, and a
time to speak;
8 A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time for war, and a time for
peace.

יד וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל
בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלָּיְלָה וְהָיוּ לְאֹתֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים
טו וּלְיָמִים וְשָׁנִים: וְהָיוּ לִמְאוֹרֹת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר
טז עַל־הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי־כֵן: וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת
הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת־הַמָּאוֹר הַגָּדֹל לְמֶמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־
הַמָּאוֹר הַקָּטֹן לְמֶמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים:
יז וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל־
יח הָאָרֶץ: וְלִמְשֹׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאוֹר
יט וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־
בֹקֶר יוֹם רְבִיעִי: פ
כ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁרְצוּ הַמַּיִם שֶׁרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה וְעוֹף
כא יְעוֹפֵף עַל־הָאָרֶץ עַל־פְּנֵי רְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמָיִם: וַיִּבְרָא
אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַתַּנִּינִם הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֵת כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה
הָרֹמֶשֶׂת אֲשֶׁר שָׁרְצוּ הַמַּיִם לְמִינֵהֶם וְאֵת כָּל־עוֹף
כב כָּנָף לְמִינֵהוּ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם
אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת־הַמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים
כג וְהָעוֹף יֵרֶב בָּאָרֶץ: וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם
חֲמִישִׁי: פ
כד וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ בְּהֵמָה
כה וָרֶמֶשׂ וְחַיְתוֹ־אֶרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וַיְהִי־כֵן: וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים
אֶת־חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת־הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְאֵת
כָּל־רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינֵהוּ וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב:
כו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ
בִּדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ

14] God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years; 15] and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth." And it was so. 16] God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. 17] And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, 18] to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. 19] And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

20] God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and birds that fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." 21] God created the great sea monsters, and all the living creatures of every kind that creep, which the waters brought forth in swarms; and all the winged birds of every kind. And God saw that this was good. 22] God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." 23] And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

24] God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind." And it was so. 25] God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. 26] And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping

16] *Two great lights.* The sun and the moon are mentioned as part of creation but have none of the divine or semidivine status attributed to them in other ancient mythologies.

21] *The great sea monsters.* Elsewhere the Bible reflects popular legends about certain forces of the deep that battled with God. Here they are simply listed with the other animals.
/ The monsters are variously called Nahar, Yam, Leviathan, and Rahab. The latter especially recalls an ancient poetic tradition of a "lord of the sea" [4]./

26] *Let us make man.* Either a majestic plural or spoken to an angelic court [5].
/ Christian theology generally takes the phrase to indicate the triune nature of God./

כח וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ: וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־
הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה
כט בָּרָא אֹתָם: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים
פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְכִבְשֻׁהָ וּרְדוּ בִּדְגַת
הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־חַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׂת עַל־הָאָרֶץ:
ל וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־כָּל־עֵשֶׂב זֹרֵעַ
זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־
בּוֹ פְרִי־עֵץ זֹרֵעַ זָרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאָכְלָה: וּלְכָל־
חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וּלְכָל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכֹל רוֹמֵשׂ עַל־
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת־כָּל־יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב לְאָכְלָה
לא וַיְהִי־כֵן: וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה־
טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי: פ
ב א וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־צְבָאָם: וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם
ג הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים
אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל־
מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת: פ

things that creep on earth." 27] And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28] God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth."

29] God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. 30] And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." And it was so. 31] And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

1] The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. 2] On the seventh day God finished the work which He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work which He had done. 3] And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation which He had done.

28] *Be fertile and increase.* A blessing. Jewish tradition considers this to be the first of the Torah's 613 commandments.

/ The halachah derived therefrom establishes man's duty to marry and have children [6]. Extensive passages in the Talmud and the codes deal with the question whether this duty devolves only upon the man or also upon the woman. Preponderant opinion favored the male's sole responsibility (incurred at age eighteen, while all other commandments are obligatory at age thirteen)./

30] *Green plants for food.* According to the biblical scheme, men and beasts became carnivorous only after the Flood (Gen. 9:3). At first they had been vegetarians. According to Isaiah, in the messianic age man and beast will return to this original state of harmony: beasts will become vegetarians once more; "the lion will eat straw like the ox" (11:7).

2:1] *Finished.* Heaven and earth "were finished," and God too "finished" His work. Both in Hebrew and in English, the word can have dual meanings. The same ambiguity is also echoed in the "Gilgamesh" epic.

2] *He ceased.* Or rested. שָׁבַת (*shavat*) is related to שַׁבָּת (*Shabbat*).

/ If creation ceased "on" the seventh day, was this not, at least in part, another day of creating? This question was much argued by the ancients [7]./

3 Now the serpent was more subtle
than any beast of the field which
the LORD God had made. And he
said unto the woman: 'Yea, hath
God said: Ye shall not eat of any tree
of the garden?' 2 And the woman said
unto the serpent: 'Of the fruit of the
trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but
of the fruit of the tree which is in the
midst of the garden, God hath said:
Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall
ye touch it, lest ye die.' 4 And the
serpent said unto the woman: 'Ye
shall not surely die; 5 for God doth
know that in the day ye eat thereof,
then your eyes shall be opened, and
ye shall be as God, knowing good
and evil.' 6 And when the woman
saw that the tree was good for food,
and that it was a delight to the eyes,
and that the tree was to be desired
to make one wise, she took of the fruit
thereof, and did eat; and she gave also
unto her husband with her, and he did
eat. 7 And the eyes of them both were
opened, and they knew that they
were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves
together, and made themselves gir-
dles. 8 And they heard the voice of
the LORD God walking in the garden
toward the cool of the day; and the
man and his wife hid themselves
from the presence of the LORD God
amongst the trees of the garden.
9 And the LORD God called unto the
man, and said unto him: 'Where art
thou?' 10 And he said: 'I heard Thy
voice in the garden, and I was afraid,
because I was naked; and I hid my-
self.' 11 And He said: 'Who told thee
that thou wast naked? Hast thou
eaten of the tree, whereof I com-
manded thee that thou shouldest not
eat?' 12 And the man said: 'The wom-
an whom Thou gavest to be with
me, she gave me of the tree, and I
did eat.' 13 And the LORD God said
unto the woman: 'What is this thou
hast done?' And the woman said:
'The serpent beguiled me, and I did
eat.' 14 And the LORD God said unto
the serpent: 'Because thou hast done
this, cursed art thou from among all
cattle, and from among all beasts of
the field; upon thy belly shalt thou
go, and dust shalt thou eat all the
days of thy life. 15 And I will put en-
mity between thee and the woman,
and between thy seed and her seed;
they shall bruise thy head, and thou
shalt bruise their heel.'

16 Unto the woman He said: 'I will
greatly multiply thy pain and thy
travail; in pain thou shalt bring forth
children; and thy desire shall be to
thy husband, and he shall rule over
thee.'

17 And unto Adam He said: 'Be-
cause thou hast hearkened unto the
voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of
the tree, of which I commanded thee,
saying: Thou shalt not eat of it;
cursed is the ground for thy sake;
in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days
of thy life. 18 Thorns also and thistles
shall it bring forth to thee; and thou
shalt eat the herb of the field. 19 In
the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat
bread, till thou return unto the
ground; for out of it wast thou taken;
for dust thou art, and unto dust
shalt thou return.' 20 And the man
called his wife's name [a]Eve; because
she was the mother of all living.
21 And the LORD God made for Adam
and for his wife garments of skins,
and clothed them.

22 And the LORD God said: 'Be-
hold, the man is become as one of us,
to know good and evil; and now, lest
he put forth his hand, and take also
of the tree of life, and eat, and live
for ever.' 23 Therefore the LORD God
sent him forth from the garden of
Eden, to till the ground from whence
he was taken. 24 So He drove out the
man; and He placed at the east of
the garden of Eden the cherubim,
and the flaming sword which turned
every way, to keep the way to the
tree of life.

ט וּפְרִים עֲשָׂרָה אֲתֹנֹת עֶשְׂרִים וַעְיָרִם עֲשָׂרָה: וַיִּתֵּן
בְּיַד־עֲבָדָיו עֵדֶר עֵדֶר לְבַדּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־עֲבָדָיו
י עִבְרוּ לְפָנַי וְרָוַח תָּשִׂימוּ בֵּין עֵדֶר וּבֵין עֵדֶר: וַיְצַו
אֶת־הָרִאשׁוֹן לֵאמֹר כִּי יִפְגָּשְׁךָ עֵשָׂו אָחִי וּשְׁאֵלְךָ
לֵאמֹר לְמִי־אַתָּה וְאָנָה תֵלֵךְ וּלְמִי אֵלֶּה לְפָנֶיךָ:
יא וְאָמַרְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיַעֲקֹב מִנְחָה הִוא שְׁלוּחָה לַאדֹנִי
יב לְעֵשָׂו וְהִנֵּה גַם־הוּא אַחֲרֵינוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר גַּם־אֶת־הַשָּׁנִי גַּם
אֶת־הַשְּׁלִישִׁי גַּם אֶת־כָּל־הַהֹלְכִים אַחֲרֵי הָעֲדָרִים
לֵאמֹר כְּדַבֶּר הַזֶּה תְּדַבְּרוּן אֶל־עֵשָׂו בְּמֹצַאֲכֶם אֹתוֹ:
יג וְאַמַּרְתֶּם גַּם הִנֵּה עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב אַחֲרֵינוּ כִּי־אָמַר
אֲכַפְּרָה פָנָיו בַּמִּנְחָה הַהֹלֶכֶת לְפָנָי וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן אֶרְאֶה
יד פָּנָיו אוּלַי יִשָּׂא פָנָי: וַתַּעֲבֹר הַמִּנְחָה עַל־פָּנָיו וְהוּא

טו לָן בַּלַּיְלָה־הַהוּא בַּמַּחֲנֶה:
וַיָּקָם בַּלַּיְלָה הוּא וַיִּקַּח
טז אֶת־שְׁתֵּי נָשָׁיו וְאֶת־שְׁתֵּי שִׁפְחֹתָיו וְאֶת־אַחַד עָשָׂר
יז יְלָדָיו וַיַּעֲבֹר אֵת מַעֲבַר יַבֹּק: וַיִּקָּחֵם וַיַּעֲבִרֵם אֶת־
יח הַנָּחַל וַיַּעֲבֵר אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ: וַיִּוָּתֵר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק
יט אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר: וַיַּרְא כִּי לֹא יָכֹל לוֹ
וַיִּגַּע בְּכַף־יְרֵכוֹ וַתֵּקַע כַּף־יֶרֶךְ יַעֲקֹב בְּהֵאָבְקוֹ עִמּוֹ:
כ וַיֹּאמֶר שַׁלְּחֵנִי כִּי עָלָה הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁלֵּחֲךָ
כא כִּי אִם־בֵּרַכְתָּנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַה־שְּׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב:
כב וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֵאָמֵר עוֹד שִׁמְךָ כִּי אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל
כג כִּי־שָׂרִיתָ עִם־אֱלֹהִים וְעִם־אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוּכָל: וַיִּשְׁאַל
יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּידָה־נָּא שְׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶּה תִּשְׁאַל

with their colts; 40 cows and 10 bulls; 20 she-asses and 10 he-asses. 17] These he put in the charge of his servants, drove by drove, and he told his servants, "Go on ahead, and keep a distance between droves." 18] He instructed the one in front as follows, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, 'Whose man are you? Where are you going? And whose [animals] are these ahead of you?' 19] you shall answer, 'Your servant Jacob's; they are a gift sent to my lord Esau; and [Jacob] himself is right behind us.'" 20] He gave similar instructions to the second one, and the third, and all the others who followed the droves, namely, "Thus and so shall you say to Esau when you reach him. 21] And you shall add, 'And your servant Jacob himself is right behind us.'" For he reasoned, "If I propitiate him with presents in advance, and then face him, perhaps he will show me favor." 22] And so the gift went on ahead, while he remained in camp that night.

23] That same night he arose, and taking his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children, he crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 24] After taking them across the stream, he sent across all his possessions. 25] Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. 26] When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he wrenched Jacob's hip at its socket, so that the socket of his hip was strained as he wrestled with him. 27] Then he said, "Let me go, for dawn is breaking." But he answered, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." 28] Said the other, "What is your name?" He replied, "Jacob." 29] Said he, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed." 30] Jacob asked, "Pray tell me your name." But he said, "You

23] *Eleven children.* That is, eleven sons. Benjamin was not yet born and Dinah was not included in the count (some commentators suggest that this narrative did not know of Dinah).

Jabbok. An eastern tributary of the Jordan, joining it about twenty-six miles north of the Dead Sea. Its steep banks make it a natural boundary. It divided the countries of Sihon and Og and, later, north and south Gilead.

29] *Striven.* שָׂרִיתָ (*sarita*), connected with the first part of יִשְׂרָאֵל (*Yisrael*). But the word may at first have been יָשָׁרְאֵל (*yashar-el*, the one whom God makes straight), as opposed to *ya-akov-el*, the one whom God makes to limp [3].

Beings divine. Or, "God" (אֱלֹהִים), explaining the syllable אֵל (*el*) in יִשְׂרָאֵל (*Yisrael*).

יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלָחַנִי אֲלֵיכֶם
וְאָמְרוּ־לִי מַה־שְּׁמוֹ מָה אֹמַר אֲלֵהֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים
אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לִבְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶהְיֶה שְׁלָחַנִי אֲלֵיכֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אֱלֹהִים
אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
אֲבֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב
שְׁלָחַנִי אֲלֵיכֶם זֶה־שְּׁמִי לְעֹלָם וְזֶה זִכְרִי לְדֹר דֹּר:
לֵךְ וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת־זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם נִרְאָה אֵלַי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק
וְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר פָּקֹד פָּקַדְתִּי אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־הֶעָשׂוּי לָכֶם
בְּמִצְרָיִם: וָאֹמַר אַעֲלֶה אֶתְכֶם מֵעֳנִי מִצְרַיִם אֶל־
אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי
אֶל־אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבָשׁ: וְשָׁמְעוּ לְקֹלֶךָ וּבָאתָ
אַתָּה וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַאֲמַרְתֶּם אֵלָיו
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִיִּים נִקְרָה עָלֵינוּ וְעַתָּה נֵלְכָה־נָּא
דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וְנִזְבְּחָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
וַאֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי לֹא־יִתֵּן אֶתְכֶם מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לַהֲלֹךְ
וְלֹא בְּיָד חֲזָקָה: וְשָׁלַחְתִּי אֶת־יָדִי וְהִכֵּיתִי אֶת־מִצְרַיִם
בְּכֹל נִפְלְאֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יְשַׁלַּח
אֶתְכֶם: וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־חֵן הָעָם־הַזֶּה בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרָיִם וְהָיָה
כִּי תֵלֵכוּן לֹא תֵלְכוּ רֵיקָם: וְשָׁאֲלָה אִשָּׁה מִשְּׁכֶנְתָּהּ
וּמִגָּרַת בֵּיתָהּ כְּלֵי־כֶסֶף וּכְלֵי זָהָב וּשְׂמָלֹת וְשַׂמְתֶּם

them?" 14] And God said to Moses, "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh." He continued, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'" 15] And God said further to Moses, "Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you:

This shall be My name forever,
This My appellation for all eternity.

16] "Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said, 'I have taken note of you and of what is being done to you in Egypt, 17] and I have declared: I will take you out of the misery of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.' 18] They will listen to you; then you shall go with the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, manifested Himself to us. Now therefore, let us go a distance of three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to the LORD our God.' 19] Yet I know that the king of Egypt will let you go only because of a greater might. 20] So I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with various wonders which I will work upon them; after that he shall let you go. 21] And I will dispose the Egyptians favorably toward this people, so that when you go, you will not go away empty-handed. 22] Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and clothing, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters, thus stripping the Egyptians."

15] *Further.* Either then or at a later time. A midrash suggests a lapse of six days [11].

18] *Hebrews.* עִבְרִיִּים (*ivriyim*, the same as *ivrim*, singular *ivri*), a term used of Israelites primarily when they are dealing with non-Israelites; see at Gen. 14:13.

19] *Because of a greater might.* Which will be exhibited by God. A more idiomatic translation would be "only if forced" [12].

21] *Empty-handed.* In the same manner as the law provides for the release of slaves; Deut. 15:13.

22] *Stripping the Egyptians.* See 12:35–36.

19 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying: 2 Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them:

Ye shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy. 3 Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and ye shall keep My sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. 4 Turn ye not unto the idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God.

5 And when ye offer a sacrifice of peace-offerings unto the LORD, ye shall offer it that ye may be accepted. 6 It shall be eaten the same day ye offer it, and on the morrow; and if aught remain until the third day, it shall be burnt with fire. 7 And if it be eaten at all on the third day, it is a vile thing; it shall not be accepted. 8 But every one that eateth it shall bear his iniquity, because he hath profaned the holy thing of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from his people.

9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corner of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleaning of thy harvest. 10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather the fallen fruit of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God. 11 Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie one to another. 12 And ye shall not swear by My name falsely, so that thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD. 13 Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbour, nor rob him; the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. 14 Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but thou shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD. 15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor favour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. 16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand idly by the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbour, and not bear sin because of him. 18 Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD. 19 Ye shall keep My statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind; thou shalt not sow thy field with two kinds of seed; neither shall there come upon thee a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together. 20 And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, designated for a man, and not at all redeemed, nor was freedom given her; there shall be inquisition; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. 21 And he shall bring his forfeit unto the LORD, unto the door of the tent of meeting, even a ram for a guilt-offering. 22 And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt-offering before the LORD for his sin which he hath sinned; and he shall be forgiven for his sin which he hath sinned.

23 And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as forbidden; three years shall it be as forbidden unto you; it shall not be eaten. 24 And in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy, for giving praise unto the LORD. 25 But in the fifth year may ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you more richly the increase thereof: I am the LORD your God. 26 Ye shall not eat with the blood; neither shall ye practise divination nor soothsaying. 27 Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard. 28 Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor imprint any marks upon you: I am the LORD. 29 Profane not thy daughter, to make her a harlot; lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of lewdness. 30 Ye shall keep My sabbaths, and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD. 31 Turn ye not unto the ghosts, nor unto familiar spirits; seek them not out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God. 32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and thou shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD. 33 And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not do him wrong. 34 The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the homeborn among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. 35 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in metyard, in weight, or in measure. 36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. 37 And ye shall observe all My statutes, and all Mine ordinances, and do them: I am the LORD.

בְּכֹל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶךָ בְּפִרְיִ בִטְנְךָ וּבִפְרִי בְהֶמְתְּךָ
וּבִפְרִי אַדְמָתְךָ לְטֹבָה כִּי יָשׁוּב יְהוָה לָשׂוּשׂ
עָלֶיךָ לְטוֹב כַּאֲשֶׁר־שָׂשׂ עַל־אֲבֹתֶיךָ: כִּי תִשְׁמַע
בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו
הַכְּתוּבָה בְּסֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה כִּי תָשׁוּב אֶל־יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשֶׁךָ: ס כִּי הַמִּצְוָה
הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם לֹא־נִפְלֵאת הִוא
מִמְּךָ וְלֹא־רְחֹקָה הִוא: לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הִוא לֵאמֹר
מִי יַעֲלֶה־לָּנוּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְיִקָּחֶהָ לָּנוּ וְיַשְׁמִעֵנוּ אֹתָהּ
וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה: וְלֹא־מֵעֵבֶר לַיָּם הִוא לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲבָר־לָנוּ
אֶל־עֵבֶר הַיָּם וְיִקָּחֶהָ לָּנוּ וְיַשְׁמִעֵנוּ אֹתָהּ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה:
כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ
לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ: ס רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַחַיִּים
וְאֶת־הַטּוֹב וְאֶת־הַמָּוֶת וְאֶת־הָרָע: אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ

הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בִּדְרָכָיו
וְלִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְחָיִיתָ וְרָבִיתָ
וּבֵרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה בָא־שָׁמָּה
לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: וְאִם־יִפְנֶה לְבָבְךָ וְלֹא תִשְׁמָע וְנִדַּחְתָּ
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לֵאלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַעֲבַדְתָּם: הִגַּדְתִּי
לָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אָבֹד תֹּאבֵדוּן לֹא־תַאֲרִיכֻן יָמִים
עַל־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹבֵר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לָבוֹא
שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: הַעִדֹתִי בָכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־
הָאָרֶץ הַחַיִּים וְהַמָּוֶת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְּלָלָה
וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה אַתָּה וְזַרְעֶךָ: לְאַהֲבָה
אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לִשְׁמַע בְּקֹלוֹ וּלְדָבְקָה־בוֹ כִּי הוּא
חַיֶּיךָ וְאֹרֶךְ יָמֶיךָ לָשֶׁבֶת עַל־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע
יְהוָה לַאֲבֹתֶיךָ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב לָתֵת לָהֶם:

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undertakings, in the issue of your womb, the offspring of your cattle, and the produce of your soil. For the LORD will again delight in your well-being, as He did in that of your fathers, 10] since you will be heeding the LORD your God and keeping His commandments and laws that are recorded in this book of the Teaching—once you return to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

11] Surely, this Instruction which I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach. 12] It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?" 13] Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who among us can cross to the other side of the sea and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?" 14] No, the thing is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it.

15] See, I set before you this day life and prosperity, death and adversity. 16] For I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His laws, and His rules; that you may thrive and increase, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land which you are about to invade and occupy. 17] But if your heart turns away and you give no heed, and are lured into the worship and service of other gods, 18] I declare to you this day that you shall certainly perish; you shall not long endure on the soil which you are crossing the Jordan to invade and occupy. 19] I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life—if you and your offspring would live— 20] by loving the LORD your God, heeding His commands, and holding fast to Him. For thereby you shall have life and shall long endure upon the soil that the LORD your God swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give to them.

14] *In your mouth.* As you retell the commands of Torah. Oral transmission was of supreme importance since not many people could read.

HEALTH רפואה

רְפָאֵנוּ ״ וְנֵרָפֵא, הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ וְנִוָּשֵׁעָה, וְהַעֲלֵה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה
לְכָל־מַכּוֹתֵינוּ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ״, רוֹפֵא הַחוֹלִים.

Heal us, O God, and we shall be healed; save us, and we shall be saved; grant us a perfect healing for all our infirmities.

(A personal prayer for one who is ill may be added here.)

We praise You, O God, Healer of the sick.

WEEKDAY MORNING SERVICE

FOR THE BODY אשר יצר

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ״, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת־הָאָדָם
בְּחָכְמָה, וּבָרָא בוֹ נְקָבִים נְקָבִים, חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים. גָּלוּי
וְיָדוּעַ לִפְנֵי כִסֵּא כְבוֹדֶךָ, שֶׁאִם יִפָּתֵחַ אֶחָד מֵהֶם, אוֹ
יִסָּתֵם אֶחָד מֵהֶם, אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִתְקַיֵּם וְלַעֲמוֹד לְפָנֶיךָ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ״, רוֹפֵא כָל־בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe. With divine wisdom You have made our bodies, combining veins, arteries, and vital organs into a finely balanced network.

Were one of them to fail, O wondrous Maker and Sustainer of life, —how well we are aware!—we would lack the strength to stand in life before You.

Source of our health and strength, we give You thanks and praise.

אֵלּוּ דְבָרִים שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם שִׁעוּר:
כִּבּוּד אָב וָאֵם,
וּגְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים,
וְהַשְׁכָּמַת בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ
שַׁחֲרִית וְעַרְבִית,
וְהַכְנָסַת אוֹרְחִים,
וּבִקּוּר חוֹלִים,
וְהַכְנָסַת כַּלָּה,
וּלְוָיַת הַמֵּת,
וְעִיּוּן תְּפִלָּה,
וַהֲבָאַת שָׁלוֹם בֵּין אָדָם
לַחֲבֵרוֹ.
וְתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֶגֶד כֻּלָּם.

These are duties whose worth cannot be measured:
honoring one's father and mother,
acts of love and kindness,
diligent pursuit of knowledge and wisdom,
hospitality to strangers,
visiting the sick,
celebrating with bride and groom,
consoling the bereaved,
praying with sincerity,
and making peace where there is strife.
And the study of Torah leads to them all.

FOR THE SOUL

אֱלֹהַי: נְשָׁמָה שֶׁנָּתַתָּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא! אַתָּה בְרָאתָהּ, אַתָּה
יְצַרְתָּהּ, אַתָּה נְפַחְתָּהּ בִּי, וְאַתָּה מְשַׁמְּרָהּ בְּקִרְבִּי. כָּל־זְמַן
שֶׁהַנְּשָׁמָה בְּקִרְבִּי, מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהַי וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי
וְאִמּוֹתַי, רִבּוֹן כָּל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים, אֲדוֹן כָּל־הַנְּשָׁמוֹת.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ נֶפֶשׁ כָּל־חָי וְרוּחַ כָּל־בְּשַׂר־אִישׁ.

אלהי נשמה

The soul that You have given me, O God, is pure! You created and formed it, breathed it into me, and within me You sustain it. So long as I have breath, therefore, I will give thanks to You, my God and the God of all ages, Source of all being, loving Guide of every human spirit.

Birth is a beginning
And death a destination.
And life is a journey:
From childhood to maturity
And youth to age:
From innocence to awareness
And ignorance to knowing:
From foolishness to discretion
    And then, perhaps, to wisdom:
From weakness to strength
Or strength to weakness—
    And, often, back again:
From health to sickness
    And back, we pray, to health again:
From offense to forgiveness,
From loneliness to love,
From joy to gratitude,
From pain to compassion,
And grief to understanding—
    From fear to faith:
From defeat to defeat to defeat—
Until, looking backward or ahead,
We see that victory lies
Not at some high place along the way,
But in having made the journey, stage by stage,
    A sacred pilgrimage.
Birth is a beginning

And death a destination.
And life is a journey,
A sacred pilgrimage—
    To life everlasting.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

As you visit the sick—listening to their concerns, talking with them, laughing and praying together, holding one another—keep in mind that you are experiencing rare moments, closer to the core of human experience than most moments you encounter in the hurly-burly of daily life. Learn from your experience in the sickroom. Reflect on what is important in life. Consider your own priorities. Think about the meaning of friendship in general, and the particular friendship that you are confirming or forging in the performance of the *mitzvah*.

Feel enriched and empowered by the *mitzvah* of *bikkur cholim*. For indeed, the benefit flows not only to the person who is ill, but to you, the visitor. It is as if you were the one who asked the patient, "Give me your hand," and rose up stronger and straighter because of the touch.

APPENDIX 1—PRAYERS

1. *Mi Sheberach*—
Traditional Prayer for Healing

May the One who blessed our ancestors, Sarah and Abraham, Rebecca and Isaac, Leah, Rachel, and Jacob, bless _____ son/daughter of _____ and _____ along with all the ill among us. Grant insight to those who bring healing; courage and faith to those who are sick; love and strength to us and all who love them. God, let Your spirit rest upon all who are ill and comfort them. May they and we soon know a time of complete healing, a healing of the body and a healing of the spirit, and let us say: Amen.

—FROM THE SIDDUR

For a male:

מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אָבוֹתֵינוּ, אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה,
הוּא יְבָרֵךְ וְיִרְפָּא אֶת הַחוֹלֶה _____ בֶּן _____. הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא
יְמַלֵּא רַחֲמִים עָלָיו, לְהַחֲזִיקוֹ וּלְרַפְּאוֹתוֹ, וְיִשְׁלַח לוֹ מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה
שְׁלֵמָה לְכָל אֵבָרָיו וְגִידָיו בְּתוֹךְ שְׁאָר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, רְפוּאַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ
וְרְפוּאַת הַגּוּף (שַׁבָּת הִיא מִלְּזְעוֹק / יוֹם טוֹב הוּא מִלְּזְעוֹק /
וּרְפוּאָה קְרוֹבָה לָבוֹא) הַשְׁתָּא בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב, וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

For a female:

מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אָבוֹתֵינוּ, אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה,
הוּא יְבָרֵךְ וְיִרְפָּא אֶת הַחוֹלָה _____ בַּת _____. הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא
יְמַלֵּא רַחֲמִים עָלֶיהָ, לְהַחֲזִיקָהּ וּלְרַפְּאוֹתָהּ, וְיִשְׁלַח לָהּ מְהֵרָה
רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְכָל אֵבָרֶיהָ וְגִידֶיהָ בְּתוֹךְ שְׁאָר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,
רְפוּאַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאַת הַגּוּף (שַׁבָּת הִיא מִלְּזְעוֹק / יוֹם טוֹב הוּא
מִלְּזְעוֹק / וּרְפוּאָה קְרוֹבָה לָבוֹא) הַשְׁתָּא בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב,
וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

2. *Mi Sheberach*—Alternate Version

Source of mercy, spread Your shelter of peace over all the ill among us and watch with special care over _____. Help us, as we seek ways of healing; share Your kindness with us, that the bonds of love and caring be increased; and grant courage and hope to the sick and the well together. Reveal Your compassion and Your blessing upon all who are ill and comfort them. Speedily and soon, let us see together a day of complete healing, a healing of body and a healing of spirit, and let us say: Amen.

—FROM "SERVICE OF HEALING," RUACH AMI, SAN FRANCISCO

3. *Mi Sheberach*—

Music by Debbie Friedman
Lyrics by Debbie Friedman and Drorah Setel

מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה לְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ

Mi sheberach avoteinu, m'kor habracha l'imoteinu:
May the Source of strength who blessed the ones before us
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing
And let us say: Amen.

מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אִמּוֹתֵינוּ, מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ

Mi sheberach imoteinu, m'kor habracha l'avoteinu:
Bless those in need of healing with *refuah shelaymah*
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit
And let us say: Amen.

4. A Prayer for Visitors to Recite

Source of Healing of the Universe,
  in whose hands are the issues
  of life and health,
Grant complete healing
  to _____,
  along with all those who suffer.
Impart your wisdom
  to those who care for the sick.

To the family
  of _____,
  give strength enough for each day.
To us,
  the members of his/her community,
  grant understanding
  and a caring heart,
So that we may be there when he/she needs us.
Return him/her to us, we pray,
  sound in body and whole in spirit,
  in perfect health,
To do your will.

— RABBI AVIS D. MILLER, ADAS ISRAEL CONGREGATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

5. From the Siddur

Blessed are You, Adonai, Creator of the universe, who has made our bodies in wisdom, creating openings, glands and organs, marvelous in structure, intricate in design. Should but one of them, by being blocked or opened, fail to function, it would be difficult to stand before You. Praised are You, source of our health and strength, we give You thanks and praise.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּחָכְמָה
וּבָרָא בוֹ נְקָבִים נְקָבִים חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים. גָּלוּי וְיָדוּעַ לִפְנֵי כִסֵּא
כְבוֹדֶךָ שֶׁאִם יִפָּתֵחַ אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ יִסָּתֵם אֶחָד מֵהֶם אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִתְקַיֵּם
וְלַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה רוֹפֵא כָל בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

6. A Litany for Healing

We pray that we might know before whom we stand: the Power whose gift is life, who quickens those who have forgotten how to live.

We pray for winds to disperse the choking air of sadness, for cleansing rains to make parched hopes flower and to give all of us the strength to rise up towards the sun.

We pray for love to encompass us for no other reason save that we are human—that we may all blossom into persons who have gained power over our own lives.

We pray to stand upright, we fallen; to be healed, we sufferers; we pray to break the bonds that keep us from the world of beauty; we pray for opened eyes, we who are blind to our authentic selves.

We pray that we may walk in the garden of a purposeful life, our own powers in touch with the power of the world.

Praise to the God whose gift is life, whose cleansing rains let parched men and women flower toward the sun.

—FROM "SERVICE OF HEALING," RUACH AMI, SAN FRANCISCO

7. The Priestly Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26)

May God bless you and guard you

May God show you favor and be gracious to you

May God show you kindness and grant you peace.

יְבָרֶכְךָ יהוה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ.
יָאֵר יהוה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ.
יִשָּׂא יהוה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם.

8. From the *Amida*

Heal us, Adonai, and we shall be healed. Help us and save us, for You are our glory. Grant perfect healing for all our afflictions. May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, to send complete healing of body and soul, to _____ along with others who are stricken. For You are the faithful and merciful God of healing. Praised are You, Adonai, Healer of the people of Israel.

רְפָאֵנוּ יהוה וְנֵרָפֵא, הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ וְנִוָּשֵׁעָה כִּי תְהִלָּתֵנוּ אָתָּה.
וְהַעֲלֵה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְכָל מַכּוֹתֵינוּ.

On behalf of someone ill, you may add:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּשְׁלַח
מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, רְפוּאַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאַת הַגּוּף,
לְ_____ בֶּן/בַּת_____ בְּתוֹךְ שְׁאָר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ רוֹפֵא נֶאֱמָן וְרַחֲמָן אָתָּה. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה
רוֹפֵא חוֹלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

9. From the Siddur

בְּשֵׁם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	In the name of Adonai:
מִימִינִי מִיכָאֵל.	May the angel Michael be at your right
וּמִשְּׂמֹאלִי גַּבְרִיאֵל.	and the angel Gabriel be at your left;
וּמִלְּפָנַי אוּרִיאֵל.	and in front of you the angel Uriel
וּמֵאֲחוֹרַי רְפָאֵל.	and behind you the angel Rafael
וְעַל רֹאשִׁי	and above your head
שְׁכִינַת אֵל.	the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence).

10. Psalms

Another way to pray for the sick is to recite specific Psalms that engender hope, such as Psalms 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 25, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 49, 51, 55, 56, 59, 69, 77, 86, 88, 90, 91, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 116, 118, 121, 130, 137, 142, 143, 148, or 150. These may be said in any language and either by the visitor or together with the sick person. A wonderful resource is *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*, edited by Simkha Y. Weintraub (see Bibliography) in which spiritual leaders unfold the strength and solace in selected Psalms.

A different custom is to choose verses from Psalm 119 that spell out the individual's name, the mother's name, and the words: *kera satan* (may the evil decree be abolished). Since Psalm 119 is an acrostic containing verses beginning with each letter of the alphabet, this is a unique way to tailor a prayer to an individual. This is typically followed by a *Mi Sheberach* (above).

11. Names

In many communities it is customary to use the name of the mother of the sick person instead of the father. The reason often given for this custom is that the Hebrew word for compassion is *rachamim* and the Hebrew word for womb is *rechem*. We ask that God give protection and be compassionate just as the mother's womb gave love and compassion.

In the event of serious illness, there was a custom to give an additional name (usually of someone who had lived a long life) to the sick person. This folk custom was intended to confuse the Angel of Death who

would be unable to know the new person's name and so could not claim the soul. This is viewed as a re-birth. This name change usually follows the recitation of Psalm 119, after which the following lines are said:

And his/her name in Israel shall be called: (new name).

(For a male): As it is written: "And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I made you the father of a multitude of nations." (Genesis 17:5)

(For a female): As it is written: "As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her Sarai, but her name shall be Sarah." (Genesis 17:15)

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, that the change of this name make naught all harsh and evil decrees; tear away from him/her the evil decisions. If death was decreed upon (old name), but on (new name) it was not decreed. If harm was decreed upon (old name), but on (new name) there is no such decree. She/he is like a different person, a newborn individual. Like an infant born to good life, length of years, and fullness of days, as it is written : "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. I hereby add fifteen years to your life" (Isaiah 38:5).[41]

12. *Vidui*—Confession

Our tradition has a prayer of confession which should be recited by the rabbi or elder family member together with the person who is so severely ill as to be near death. This does not mean that all hope for recovery is lost, rather that the recitation of this confession should ease the mind and reduce the anxiety while at the same time asking for God's forgiveness. Various forms such as this one exist:

My God and God of my ancestors, accept my prayer; do not ignore my supplication. Forgive me for all the sins which I have committed in my lifetime. I am abashed and ashamed of the wicked deeds and sins which I committed. Please accept my pain and suffering as atonement and forgive my wrong-doing, for against You alone have I sinned.

May it be Your will, Adonai my God and God of my ancestors, that I sin no more. With Your great mercy cleanse me of my sins, but not through suffering and disease. Send a perfect healing to me and to all who are stricken.

Unto you, Adonai, my God and God of my ancestors, I acknowledge that my life and recovery depend upon You. May it be Your will to heal me. Yet if You have decreed that I shall die of this affliction, may my death atone for all sins and transgressions which I have committed before You. Shelter me in the shadow of Your wings; grant me a share in the world to come.

Father of orphans and Guardian of widows, protect my beloved family, with whose soul my own soul is bound.

Into your hand I commit my soul. You have redeemed me, Adonai, God of truth.

Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is one.

Adonai, He is God. Adonai, He is God.

אֱלֹהַי וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי, תָּבֹא לְפָנֶיךָ תְּפִילָּתִי וְאַל תִּתְעַלַּם מִתְּחִנָּתִי. אֲנָא, כַּפֶּר לִי עַל כָּל-חַטֹּאתַי שָׁחָטְאתִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֵעוֹדִי עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. בּוֹשְׁתִּי וְגַם נִכְלַמְתִּי כִּי הִסְכַּלְתִּי לַעֲשׂוֹת מַעֲשִׂים רָעִים וְחַטֹּאִים. וְעַתָּה, קַח נָא עָנְיִי וּמְרוּדִי לְכַפָּרָתִי, וּמְחַל לְמִשּׁוּבָתִי, כִּי לְךָ לְבַד חָטָאתִי.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהַי וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי, שֶׁלֹּא אֶחֱטָא עוֹד, וּמַה שֶׁחָטָאתִי לְפָנֶיךָ, מָרֹק בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים, אֲבָל לֹא עַל יְדֵי יִסּוּרִים וַחֳלָיִים רָעִים. וּשְׁלַח לִי רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה עִם כָּל-חוֹלֵי עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

מוֹדָה (מוֹדָה) אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהַי וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי, שֶׁרְפוּאָתִי וּמִיתָתִי בְּיָדֶךָ. יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, שְׁתִּרְפָּאֵנִי רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה. וְאִם גְּזַרְתָּ שֶׁאָמוּת מַחוֹלִי זֶה, תְּהִי מִיתָתִי כַּפָּרָה עַל כָּל-חַטֹּאִים וַעֲוֹנוֹת וּפְשָׁעִים שֶׁחָטָאתִי וְשָׁעִוִיתִי וְשָׁפַשְׁעְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ. וְתַסְתִּירֵנוּ בְּצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ, וְאָזְכֶּה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

אֲבִי יְתוֹמִים וְדַיַּן אַלְמָנוֹת, הָגֵן בְּעַד קְרוֹבַי הַיְקָרִים אֲשֶׁר נַפְשִׁי קְשׁוּרָה בְּנַפְשָׁם.

בְּיָדְךָ אַפְקִיד רוּחִי, פָּדִיתָה אוֹתִי יְיָ, אֵל אֱמֶת.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד.

יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים. יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.

13. *Birkat Hagomel*—Giving Thanks

Birkat Hagomel is recited in the synagogue upon receiving an *aliyah* after recovering from a serious illness, surviving a harrowing trauma, or successfully undergoing surgery or difficult treatments:

Praised are You, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, graciously showing kindness to those in Your debt, even as You have bestowed favor on me.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַגּוֹמֵל לְחַיָּבִים טוֹבוֹת שֶׁגְּמָלַנִי כָּל טוֹב.

Baruch atta Adonai, eloheinu melech haolam, hagomel lachayavim tovot, shegemalani kol tov.

The congregations responds:

May God who has been gracious to you continue to favor you with all that is good.

מִי שֶׁגְּמָלְךָ (שֶׁגְּמָלֵךְ) כָּל טוֹב, הוּא יִגְמָלְךָ (יִגְמָלֵךְ) כָּל טוֹב סֶלָה.

Mi shegemalcha (shegemalech) kol tov, hu yigmalcha (yigmalech) kol tov sela.

14. Alternate Prayer upon Recovery

I give thanks to You, Adonai my God, faithful healer of the sick. You gave me strength to bear pain and affliction. You have given me new spirit and hope.

I am grateful to You, Adonai my God, for all the messengers of healing; for those whose medical skills and patient care aided me; for all those who helped speed my recovery by kind words and deeds of friendship and affection.

Continue to be with me during the days of my convalescence. Help me be cheerful and to bear with patience whatever discomforts I may have.

I pray that I may carry out the worthy resolutions which I made during my illness.

May I always value the blessing of health; and in gratitude for Your healing, may I do the utmost in helping to preserve the health and well-being of others.

—FROM PRAYERS FOR HEALING, PRAYER BOOK PRESS OF MEDIA JUDAICA

To be said by the rabbi if the patient is unable to do so

Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, we acknowledge that our life is in Your hands. May it be Your will that You send perfect healing to _____. Yet if it is Your final decree that he/she be taken by death, let it be in love. May his (her) death atone for the sins and transgressions which he (she) committed before You. Grant him/her of the abundant good which is held in store for the righteous, and give him/her life replete with joy in Your Presence, at Your right hand forever.

Father of orphans and Guardian of widows, protect his (her) beloved family, with whose soul his/her own soul is bound. Into your hand he/she commits his/her soul. You have redeemed him/her, Adonai, God of truth.

Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is one.

Praised be the glory of God's sovereignty for ever and ever.

Adonai is King; Adonai was King; Adonai shall be King for ever and ever.

Adonai, He is God. Adonai, He is God.

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁחַיֵּינוּ מְסוּרִים בְּיָדֶךָ. יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, שְׁתִּרְפָּא אֶת הַחוֹלֶה הַמְּסְכָּן הַזֶּה (הַחוֹלָה הַמְּסְכָּנָה הַזֹּאת) רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה. וְאִם הַמָּוֶת כָּלָה וְנֶחֱרָץ מֵעִמְּךָ יִקְחֵנוּ (יִקְחֶהָ) מִיָּדְךָ בְּאַהֲבָה. וּתְהִי מִיתָתוֹ (מִיתָתָהּ) כַּפָּרָה עַל כָּל חֲטָאִים וַעֲוֹנוֹת וּפְשָׁעִים, שֶׁחָטָא וְעָוָה וְשָׁפַשׁ וְשֶׁחָטְאָה וְשָׁעֲוָתָה וְשֶׁפָּשְׁעָה) לְפָנֶיךָ. וְתַשְׁפִּיעַ לוֹ (לָהּ) מַרַב טוּב הַצָּפוּן לַצַּדִּיקִים וְתוֹדִיעֵהוּ (וְתוֹדִיעָהּ) אֹרַח חַיִּים, שִׂבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נָצַח. אִבִּי יְתוֹמִים וְדַיַּן אַלְמָנוֹת הֱגֵן בְּעַד קִרוֹבָיו (קִרוֹבֶיהָ) הַיְקָרִים אֲשֶׁר נַפְשׁוֹ (נַפְשָׁהּ) קְשׁוּרָה בְּנַפְשָׁם. בְּיָדְךָ יַפְקִיד רוּחוֹ (תַּפְקִיד רוּחָהּ), פָּדִיתָ אוֹתוֹ (אוֹתָהּ) יְיָ, אֵל אֱמֶת, אָמֵן וְאָמֵן.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד.
בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
יְיָ מֶלֶךְ, יְיָ מָלָךְ, יְיָ יִמְלוֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים. יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.

APPENDIX 2— A CHECKLIST OF DO'S AND DON'TS FOR VISITORS

The Initial Visit

DO

- ❑ Visit sick friends or strangers after the crisis period of the illness has passed.
- ❑ Call or write a note before coming if you do not know the patient well.
- ❑ Call again if the patient does not wish to see you initially. This simply may be a bad day.
- ❑ Familiarize yourself with the patient's condition, if possible, so that you do not appear surprised if he or she is disfigured or disabled.
- ❑ Enter the room with something to talk about that will interest the patient.
- ❑ Leave a note if, when you visit, the patient is asleep or out of the room.
- ❑ Bring a little gift.
- ❑ Relax yourself into a visiting mode by concentrating on your visit, so that you can truly "be present."

DON'T

- ❑ Be afraid of doing something wrong.
- ❑ Wear perfume or shaving lotion, as illness often heightens a person's sense of smell.
- ❑ Make elaborate plans for your initial visit.
- ❑ Insist on visiting if the patient repeatedly asks you not to visit.
- ❑ Wear a depressed face.

Appropriate Time to Visit

DO

- ❑ Visit during hospital hours or, at home, during the early afternoon to early evening, unless the patient requests otherwise.
- ❑ Visit on the Sabbath and holy days.

Length and Frequency of Visits

DO

- ❑ Visit a patient both at the hospital and after returning home.
- ❑ Suggest that you come another time, if the patient has visitors.
- ❑ Step out of the room if the doctor wants to examine the patient.
- ❑ Visit frequently, if possible.

DON'T

- ❑ Stay long, unless the patient requests it.

Listening

DO

- ❑ Listen actively by questioning and acknowledging what the patient is telling you.
- ❑ Let the patient's anger come out without taking it personally.
- ❑ Remember that you are there as a friend and do not have to make things better.
- ❑ Keep matters confidential if that is the patient's desire.

DON'T

- ❑ Question the doctor's judgment on the diagnosis or treatment, even when the patient does.

- ❑ Take sides in a patient's expressions of anger about family or friends.
- ❑ Change the subject. As tough as it may be for you, try to hear him or her out.

Talking

DO

- ❑ Watch and listen for clues from the patient regarding the desire for conversation.
- ❑ Talk about the patient's world beyond the sickroom.
- ❑ Try to create a sense of hope and meaning.
- ❑ Let the patient know that he or she matters and that you and the community care.

DON'T

- ❑ Feel that it is necessary to talk with the patient all the time you are visiting.
- ❑ Be afraid to laugh with the patient.
- ❑ Initiate discussion of a patient's medical condition or the possibility of death. Instead, follow his or her lead.
- ❑ Talk about a patient who appears unable to hear, in that patient's presence.
- ❑ Tire the patient.
- ❑ Offer platitudes or speak as if you know God's plans.
- ❑ Talk about your own illnesses or troubles.

Prayer

DO

- ❑ Pray in a sick person's presence, but only if he or she requests it.
- ❑ Pray so that the patient can hear and understand you.
- ❑ Pray for the patient outside of his or her presence.
- ❑ Feel free to formulate your own personal prayers, or use a commonly accepted prayer in the prayer book.
- ❑ Conclude the visit with the words: May you have a *refuah shelaymah*.

Touching the Sick Person

DO

- ❑ Ask the patient whether you may touch him or her, if you are in doubt.
- ❑ Offer to hold hands, brush hair, or touch in other non-threatening ways.

DON'T

- ❑ Touch a patient's wheelchair, walker, or other medical paraphernalia without asking permission.

Sitting with the Patient

DO

- ❑ Position yourself so that the patient can see you without strain.
- ❑ Sit at the same level.

DON'T

- ❑ Sit on the bed without asking the patient's permission.
- ❑ Communicate a desire to get away.

Tending to Tangible Needs

DO

- ❑ Discover how you can be of tangible assistance to the patient.
- ❑ Offer to help only with things that you are actually able to perform.
- ❑ Offer help to patients both in the hospital and at home.
- ❑ Be sensitive to the ways in which you can help the patient's family.

DON'T

- ❑ Insist on helping if the patient or family indicate that they don't need your help.
- ❑ Decide for the patient or his family what sort of help they most need.
- ❑ Offer to do more than you are able to do.
- ❑ Try to "fix" it.

These are the deeds that yield fruit and continue to yield fruit in time to come . . . visiting the sick (*Shabbat* 127a).

The following ancient Jewish legend teaches an important lesson related to the power of people serving other people.

A righteous man was permitted by God to attain foreknowledge of the world-to-come. In a celestial palace he was ushered into a large room, where he beheld people seated at a banquet table. The table was laden with the most delectable foods, but not a morsel had been touched. The righteous man gazed in wonder at the people seated at the table. They were emaciated with hunger and moaned constantly for food, even though the delicious viands were before them.

"If they are hungry, why is it that they do not partake of the food that is before them?" asked the righteous one of his heavenly guide. "They cannot feed themselves," said the guide. "If you will notice, each one has his arms strapped straight, so that no matter how he tries, he cannot get the food

into his mouth." "Truly, this is hell," said the righteous one as they left the hall.

The heavenly attendant escorted him across the hall into another room, and the righteous one observed another table equally as beautiful, and also laden with delicacies. Here he noticed that those seated around the table were well-fed, contented, and joyous. To his amazement, he discerned that these people, too, had their arms strapped straight. Turning to his guide, he asked in perplexity: "How is it, then, that they are so well fed, since they are unable to transport the food to their mouths?" "Behold," said the heavenly guide. The righteous one looked closely, and beheld that each one was feeding the other. "In truth," he exclaimed, "this is truly heaven." "In truth it is," agreed the attendant. "As you can see, the difference between heaven and hell is a matter of cooperation and serving one's fellow human being."

For Jews, *bikkur cholim* (visiting the sick) is one important way of serving one's fellow human being. Visiting the sick is much more than simply a social act that is to be commended. Rather, it has the status of a *mitzvah*, a religious obligation, and it is counted in the Talmud among the religious duties for which no limit has been prescribed (*Shabbat* 127a). God Himself is said to have visited Abraham during his illness. The rabbis of the Talmud found reference to this visit in Genesis 18:1, where we are told that God appeared to Abraham soon after his circumcision.

The Bible commands, "And you shall walk in God's ways" (Deuteronomy 28:9). A person is ex-

pected to pattern himself upon God's ways. Thus, just as God visited Abraham immediately following his circumcision, so too the Jew has the obligation to visit the sick.

Visiting the sick is, according to the Talmud, one of the precepts for the fulfillment of which a person is rewarded in both this world and the world-to-come. Ben Sira (7:35) counsels: "Do not hesitate to visit a person who is sick."

Visiting the sick is considered to be one of the supreme acts of holiness, because one's visit brings both physical and psychological relief and healing to the sick person. According to a talmudic statement (*Nedarim* 40a), whoever visits a sick person helps that person to recover. A visit to a sick person can help calm and lift the patient's spirit, engendering a feeling of care, warmth, and love.

The Talmud tells how Rabbi Akiva once visited a student who had become ill. No one else bothered to visit the disciple, and, as a result, his house was most untidy. Rabbi Akiva did all that was needed, even sweeping the man's floors. When the disciple recovered, he attributed his restored health to Akiva's visit. By preparing his home for a return to life's daily routine, he said, Akiva had strengthened his will to get well.

Jewish tradition also teaches that it is important to allow others to help us when we are sick. For example, the Talmud (*Nedarim* 39b–40a) tells the story of Rabbi Yochanan, who once visited Rabbi Chanina when he was ill. When Chanina complained about his suffering, Rabbi Yochanan suggested that he repeat to himself the same encouraging

words he had spoken to such good effect when Rabbi Yochanan was ill. Chanina replied: "When I was free of suffering, I helped others. But now that I suffer, I must ask others to help me." This story is a reminder that one should know when to give and when and how to receive, and that, in receiving, one is also often giving.

During the Middle Ages, much kindness was shown by those visiting the ill. It was quite common, after the synagogue service on the Sabbath morning, for worshippers to pay regular visits to the sick before they returned home to partake of their meal. There was also a customary etiquette to visiting the sick. Short visits—rather than lengthy ones—were encouraged, and visitors were instructed not to visit when the sick person was in extreme pain.

In modern times, the religious duty to visit the sick has become an obligation for professionals. When a person becomes ill, he or she is treated by a network of health-care facilities and medical professionals. In addition, the patient is generally visited by a clergyperson of that patient's faith, who brings comfort to patients in local hospitals and nursing facilities. Such conditions are of recent origin. For centuries, the Jewish people sought to give emotional support to those who were ill as well as to provide medical care to the extent that it was available. There were *bikkur cholim* societies whose function it was to visit those confined by illness. Today, many synagogues and Jewish communities have their own *bikkur cholim* groups, which afford members of their congregations who are ill, both comfort and friendship.

The *mitzvah* of *bikkur cholim* is necessarily much different from the typical social visit. The famous philosopher and commentator Nachmanides explains that the obligation consists of two parts: (1) an endeavor to determine whether the patient requires care, and the actual provision of such medical and nursing care as is necessary; and (2) prayer on behalf of the patient. Nachmanides goes on to say that one who visits the sick and does not pray on his behalf has not fulfilled the *mitzvah*.

It is customary, upon visiting the sick, to extend the prayerful wish that the patient be granted a complete recovery from his or her illness. The words for a complete healing are *Refuah shlayma*. This phrase is taken from the eighth benediction of the daily Amidah, in which the worshiper petitions God to heal all who are ill.

WHY VISIT THE SICK?

Visiting the sick often cheers patients and inspires them with comfort and with hope. Here are a couple of rabbinic selections that illuminate the ancient rabbinic thinking vis-à-vis the reason for visiting those that are ill.

Visiting the Sick Alleviates Pain

Rabbi Acha son of Chanina said: "One who visits the sick takes away one-sixtieth of that person's pain." They said to him: "If so, let sixty people visit

him and restore him to health." He replied: "The principle of decreasing illness by one-sixtieth is the same as the principle of distribution of property among female heirs: as the tenth spoken of in the school of Rabbi. . . ." For it was taught: "Rabbi said, 'A daughter who enjoys maintenance from her brothers' estate receives a tenth of the estate.'" They said to Rabbi: "If so, if a man leaves ten daughters and one son, the son receives nothing." He replied: "The first to marry receives a tenth of the estate, the second a tenth of the remaining, the third a tenth of what remains" (*Nedarim* 39b).

Visiting the Sick Gives Life

When Rav Dimi came, he said: "He who visits the sick causes him to live, while he who does not causes him to die." How does he cause this? Shall we say that he who visits the sick prays that he may live, while he who does not prays that he should die? "That he should die." Can you really think that someone would pray so? But say thus: "He who does not visit the sick prays neither that he may live nor that he may die" (*Nedarim* 40a).

In the first passage we learn of the belief that each person who visits a sick person takes away one-sixtieth of that person's illness. Regarding the power of healing inherent in visiting the sick, it is quite likely that Rabbi Acha believed that when a sick person believes that people care about his or her welfare, that person feels better.

The second passage likely relates to a talmudic statement made by Rabbi Akiva that "one who does not visit the sick is like a shedder of blood"

(*Nedarim* 40a). Rav Dimi appears to be making the point that when one does not visit the sick, one is not showing concern for that person's welfare. The passage also clearly alludes to the purpose of visiting the sick, which includes cheering patients, rendering them any service, inspiring them with hope, and praying for their welfare.

WHEN AND HOW LONG TO VISIT

The Best Times to Visit the Sick

Visitors must be sensitive to the patient's needs and condition. The following passage and the passage in the next section relate to the timing of visiting the sick and the amount of time that a visitor ought to stay with a patient.

> Rav Shisha son of Rav Idi said: "One should not visit the sick during the first three or the last three hours of the day, lest he thereby omit to pray for him." During the first three hours of the day, the sick person's illness is alleviated; in the last three hours, his sickness is strongest (*Nedarim* 40a). [The modern physician is well aware of the accuracy of this statement. Fever is usually lower in the morning and higher in the evening in a patient with a febrile illness.]

This passage may imply that if the visitor sees the sick person during the first three hours, he may

think that the sick person is nearly well and not in need of visitors. If, on the other hand, he visits during the last three hours, he may think that the patient is about to die. In either case, the temporary change in the sick person's condition may cause the visitor to treat him in ways that are inappropriate to his condition.

Limit Your Stay

The next selection is a statement by Rabbi Eliezer, an eleventh-century scholar and teacher:

> Be zealous in visiting the sick, for sympathy lightens pain. . . . Pray for him, and leave. Do not fatigue him by staying too long, for his malady is heavy enough already. Enter cheerfully, for his heart and eyes are on those who come in.

Rabbi Eliezer is providing sound psychological advice, for visitors often do overextend their stays, causing fatigue to the sick person, which may be injurious to the health.

WHO SHOULD VISIT WHOM?

Should people visit ill people that they don't know? Is it enough to visit our sick friends and relatives? The following passages shed light upon these questions and other matters related to the question of who should visit whom.

The Great Should Visit the Humble

Judah Ha-Chasid, a twelfth-century moralist, said: "Even the great should visit the humble. If a poor man and a rich man fall ill at the same time, and many go to the rich man to pay him honor, then go to the poor man, even if the rich man is a scholar" (*Sefer Chasidim*).

Relatives and Close Friends Should Visit First

Relatives and close friends visit as soon as a person becomes sick; others should visit after the first three days of illness (Jerusalem Talmud, *Pe'ah* 3:7). Here we see the preference for visitors who are closely acquainted with the invalid during the early days of the illness. The reasons for this are that during the first three days a patient may not be feeling very well, and that those most closely acquainted with him will be the ones most likely to know how best to tend to his needs.

Whom to Visit and Whom Not to Visit

This statement is taken from the talmudic tractate *Nedarim* 41a.

> Samuel said: "Only a sick person who is feverish may be visited." What does this exclude? It excludes those whom it has been taught by Rabbi Yose ben Parta in Rabbi Eliezer's name: "One must not visit those suffering with bowel trouble, or with

eye disease or from headaches." Now, the first is logical, the reason being through embarrassment. But what is the reason of the other two? On account of Rabbi Judah's dictum: "Speech is injurious to the eyes and to people suffering from headaches."

WHAT TO DO DURING THE VISIT

The following rabbinic advice relates to what a visitor ought to do during the visit itself. From these selections we learn that praying on behalf of the sick is an expectation. In addition, several of the texts imply that if one lovingly acquiesces in one's sufferings, one's reward in the world-to-come will be great. We also learn that touch may be quite important to the healing process, and that healing requires much faith and commitment. From the last selection we learn that bringing things (refreshments and the like) can help awaken the souls of those who are ill.

What to Say When Visiting the Sick

When Rabbi Judah visited the sick, he said, "May the Almighty have compassion upon you and the sick of Israel." Rabbi Yose said, "May the Almighty have compassion upon you in the midst of Israel." Sometimes Rabbi Elazar would say, "The Almighty visit you in peace." At other times, he said, "The Almighty remember you in peace" (*Shabbat* 12b).

Visiting the Sick Uplifts Them

Rabbi Chiyya ben Abba fell ill, and Rabbi Yochanan went to visit him. He said to him: "Are your sufferings welcome to you?" He replied: "Neither they nor their reward." He said to him: "Give me your hand." He gave him his hand and he raised him. Why was Rabbi Yochanan unable to raise himself? They replied: "The prisoner cannot free himself from jail."

Rabbi Yochanan once fell ill, and Rabbi Chanina went to visit him. He said to him: "Are your sufferings welcome to you?" He replied: "Neither they nor their reward." He said to him: "Give me your hand." He gave him his hand and he raised him. Why would not Rabbi Yochanan raise himself? They replied: "The prisoner cannot free himself from jail."

Rabbi Eleazar fell ill and Rabbi Yochanan went to visit him. He noticed that he was lying in a dark room, and he bared his arm and light radiated from it. Thereupon he noticed that Rabbi Eleazar was weeping, and he said to him: "Why do you weep? Is it because you did not study enough Torah? Surely we learned: The one who sacrifices much and the one who sacrifices little have the same merit, provided that the heart is directed to heaven. Is it perhaps lack of sustenance? Not everybody has the privilege to enjoy two tables [i.e., learning and wealth]. Is it perhaps because of the lack of children? This is the bone of my tenth son." He replied to him: "I am weeping on account of this beauty, that is going to rot in the earth." He said to him: "On that account you surely have reason to weep," and they both wept. In the meanwhile he said to him:

"Are your sufferings welcome to you?" He replied: "Neither they nor their reward." He said to him: "Give me your hand," and he gave him his hand and he raised him (*Berachot* 5b).

Never Visit the Sick Empty-Handed

"When you visit a sick person who is without means, do not go to him with empty hands. When he awakens, be quick to offer him refreshments and he will esteem it as though you did uphold and restore his soul" (Rabbi Eliezer of Worms).

SUMMARY OF LAWS RELATED TO VISITING THE SICK

The following is a summary of laws for visiting the sick. The source of these is the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: The Condensed Code of Jewish Law* compiled by Rabbi Solomon Ganzfried.

1. All Are Obligated to Visit the Sick: When a person gets sick, it is the duty of every person to visit him, for we find that the Blessed Holy One visits the sick. As our rabbis of blessed memory explained [*Baba Metzia* 86b] the verse (Genesis 18:1): "And God appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre," from this is inferred that God came to visit Abraham because he was sick. Relatives and friends who are accustomed to visit the person often should visit as soon as they hear of his sickness.

Strangers should not call immediately, but should wait three days, in order not to spoil his chances of recovery by attaching to him the designation of a patient. If, however, one becomes suddenly ill, even strangers should visit him immediately. Even a great person should visit a less important one, even many times during the day. It is meritorious to visit a sick person as frequently as possible, providing that it does not weary the sick person. One should not visit a sick enemy, nor should one come to comfort him in his mourning, for he may think that he rejoices at his calamity. One may, however, attend his funeral, and he need not fear that people will think that he rejoices at his downfall, since this is the end of every mortal.

2. **The Posture of the Visitor:** When the patient lies upon the ground, the visitor must not sit upon a chair, which is more elevated, because the Divine Presence is above the head of the sick, as it is written [Psalms 41:4]: "God supports him upon the bed of illness." But when the invalid lies in bed, the visitor may sit on a chair or on a bench.

3. **The Importance of Prayer:** The essential reason for the precept of visiting the sick is to look to his needs, to see what is necessary to be done for him, and to pray for mercy on his behalf. If one visited a sick person and did not pray for him, he did not fulfill his duty.

4. **What Language to Use and What to Say When Praying for the Ill:** If one prays in the presence of

the sick person, one may say the prayer in any language, because one is praying before the Divine Presence, Who is at the bedside of the sick. If, however, one prays in the absence of the sick person, and the prayer is brought up by ministering angels who do not regard all languages, one should pray in Hebrew and include him among the sick of Israel; for, by including him with all the others, the prayer will be more readily heard because of the collective merit of the multitude. In praying, one says: "May the Omnipresent have mercy upon him among all the sick of Israel"; on the Sabbath, one adds: "This is the Sabbath. We are forbidden to complain; healing is sure to come; God's mercy is great. God's seat is in peace."

5. What to Talk About When Visiting the Sick: Visitors must use judgment and tact when talking to the sick person, so as not to give him false hopes or cause him to despair. They should encourage him to talk about his affairs and to state whether he had loaned to others, or had deposited anything with others or others with him. The sick person should be given to understand that to impart such information will not hasten his death.

6. Never Mix Thoughts of Mourning When Visiting the Sick: The patient should not be informed of the death of a member of his family, because it may disconcert him. Even if he becomes aware of it, he should not be told to rend his garments, lest it aggravate his anxiety. One should neither weep nor mourn in the presence of a sick person, whether

the dead be a member of his family or a stranger, lest he fear that he, too, will pass away. Those who comfort mourners in the presence of a sick person should be silenced.

7. Visiting Those Afflicted with Intestinal Problems Is Prohibited: We must not visit a person who is afflicted with intestinal pains, so as not to embarrass him, or one who is troubled with his eyes, or one who has a headache, or any person who is gravely ill, and to whom conversation is difficult. But we should call at an outer room, inquire regarding the patient's condition, and ascertain whether the patient is in need of anything. We should take an interest in the person's condition and pray for mercy on his behalf.

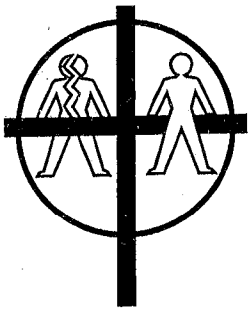
8. Instructions for One Who Has Two Precepts to Perform: One who has two precepts to perform—namely, visiting a sick person and comforting a mourner—and is able to attend both, should first visit the sick, so that one may pray for mercy on his behalf. If one is unable to fulfill both duties, one should fulfill that of comforting the mourner, as this is an act of loving-kindness toward both the living and the dead.

9. The Importance of Visiting a Non-Jew Who Is Ill: A non-Jew should be visited during his illness for the sake of preserving peaceful relations.

10. A Dying Person Must Confess: It is expounded in the Sifri (Numbers 5–6): "Rabbi Nathan said:

'From the verse [Numbers 5:6]: "And that soul be guilty, then shall they confess," a conclusion can be drawn, that all dying persons must confess.'"

11. Text of the Confessional: A brief form of confession is as follows: "I acknowledge unto You, O God and God of my ancestors, that both my cure and my death are in Your hand. May it be Your will to grant me a perfect healing. Yet, if You have decreed that I should die, may my death expiate all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions that I have committed perversely before You, and grant me a portion in *Gan Eden* and cause me to merit the life of the world-to-come, which is reserved for the righteous." If the invalid wishes to make a lengthy confession, like the one for Yom Kippur, he may do so.



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Following is a descriptive list of the 15 most frequent responses to these two questions, citing the benefits congregations report receiving when they enroll in the Stephen Series:

1 *A Comprehensive System*

By enrolling in the Stephen Series, congregations receive a comprehensive system of integrated steps for implementing and maintaining lay caring ministry in the congregation. This series of steps includes a clear, straightforward, thorough plan; extensive training and resources for those who will lead this ministry; complete training materials to equip lay caregivers in the congregation; crucial facts, such as how to supervise and make referrals to Stephen Ministers, all of which ensure that Stephen Ministers will provide high-quality, distinctively Christian care to those who need it; and much more. The Stephen Series helps your congregation's Stephen Leaders know what to do and when and how to do it, step-by-step, in order to implement effective and lasting ministry.

2 *Equipping of Stephen Leaders*

Stephen Leaders, both clergy and laity, are the key to successful, sustained caring ministry in congregations. Stephen Ministries equips Stephen Leaders from enrolled congregations at seven-day Stephen Series Leader's Training Courses (LTCs) conducted annually in six locations across the United States. These courses are comprehensive, including everything Stephen Leaders need to administer the Stephen Series in your congregation. As your congregation's Stephen Ministry grows, or you need to train new clergy or others as leaders, your one-time enrollment fee means that you can send additional persons to future Leader's Training Courses in any year—for conference fees only. Stephen Ministries has conducted over 90 Leader's Training Courses and has trained over 24,000 Stephen Leaders since 1978, many of whom have called their Leader's Training Course one of the mountaintop experiences in their lives.

3 An Extensive Leader's Manual

The *Stephen Series Leader's Manual* is the resource Stephen Leaders use to direct all aspects of a congregation's Stephen Ministry. This manual is available only to those from enrolled congregations who attend a seven-day Leader's Training Course. Over 2200 pages in 70 file folders and two binders, it includes 26 complete training modules that Stephen Leaders use as they train Stephen Ministers in the initial 50 hours of training and continuing education plus extensive organizational and administrative resources. The *Stephen Series Leader's Manual* is a wealth of information, carefully organized and very usable by those who implement and lead Stephen Ministry in the congregation.

4 Free Ongoing Consultation

A congregation's enrollment in the Stephen Series has many similarities to a franchise. As your Stephen Ministry goes on, your congregation's Stephen Leaders may run into questions about implementing Stephen Ministry in your specific situation. Your congregation's enrollment in the Stephen Series entitles your Stephen Leaders to call our office to ask questions of pastoral and program staff who share their extensive training, expertise, and time to assist and support your congregation's Stephen Ministry—at no additional charge. Stephen Ministries' consultant staff has worked with over 5000 Stephen Series congregations for over 20 years. This wealth of experience means that our staff is highly likely to have an effective response to questions from your Stephen Leaders.

5 Materials for Training Stephen Ministers

Stephen Ministries has built its reputation on providing the best training materials available to equip lay people for practical, meaningful ministry. These include the *Stephen Ministry Training Manual* for Stephen Ministers (the lay caregivers whom Stephen Leaders train in your congregation), several textbooks, videotapes, and other resources for both initial training as well as continuing education of your Stephen Ministers.

6 Ongoing Communications and Updated Material

Trained Stephen Leaders receive communications, updates, and materials from Stephen Ministries free of charge. A resource packet called *In Touch* goes out to Stephen Leaders twice a year. *In Touch* shares news and ideas from Stephen Leaders in other enrolled congregations, provides information about new resources and training, and introduces new materials that are ready for your congregation's Stephen Leaders to use.

7 Practical Application

When a congregation enrolls in the Stephen Series, it receives a system of ministry that works and lasts. The Stephen Series is not just a theoretical model. From beginning to end, it is a true system of practical ministry. It is active Christianity, empowering deeds of love that flow from faith in Christ. Though deeply theological, it tackles tough, realistic "how-to" issues such as: how to build owner-

ship and support for lay caring ministry in your congregation; how to select the right people to serve as Stephen Ministers; how to identify and prepare those who will receive care from a Stephen Minister; how to train and supervise Stephen Ministers; and many more.

8 *Continual Revision*

When a congregation enrolls in the Stephen Series, it becomes a recipient of the efforts of the entire Stephen Ministries research and development team who continue to work to make even better what many consider the very best system of lay caring ministry available. Along with those from the over 5000 other enrolled congregations, your congregation's Stephen Leaders are encouraged to share ideas, insights, and experiences that help our staff to fine-tune Stephen Ministry training and materials. This process of continual refining and enhancing will make the Stephen Series an even more effective and vital part of your congregation's life and ministry as time goes on.

9 *Cross-Continent Referrals*

Your congregation's enrollment in the Stephen Series makes you a part of a North American network of congregations 5000 strong. Members of your congregation may move, have a relative who is alone or needs surgery, treatment or some other form of care in other parts of North America, conceivably the world. As part of our service to enrolled congregations, Stephen Ministries helps you find Stephen Ministry congregations located where those people are traveling, moving, or living. Enrolled congregations are also on the receiving end of these referrals for care, if they are willing to accept them. Our office receives an average of 25 such calls per week to facilitate this worldwide ministry. Many members of Stephen Series congregations who move also look specifically for another Stephen Ministry congregation in their new location. Our staff can help them find such congregations.

10 *Local Area Networking*

When your congregation enrolls, we can help you be in touch with other enrolled congregations in your area using the Stephen Series. You can link up for fellowship, idea sharing, and mutual support and encouragement as you implement your own Stephen Ministry.

11 *Organizational Experience and Stability*

When a congregation enrolls in the Stephen Series, it works with an experienced, sound organization. Stephen Ministries has been delivering the Stephen Series since 1975. For over 20 years, our organization has focused exclusively on delivering training and materials that are distinctively Christian, of the highest quality, and extremely practical and reliable. To accomplish that, we emphasize service and responsibility. We seek to build healthy, mutually satisfying, long-lasting relationships with enrolled congregations.

12 *Breadth and Depth of Staff*

An organization is no better than its people—and the people of Stephen Ministries make all the difference. When a congregation enrolls in the Stephen Series, it links up with a team of committed, competent, experienced, Christian people—clergy and lay, women and men—who write, develop, teach, consult, and administer the Stephen Series. The pastoral and program staff numbers 12 individuals, with a total organizational staff of 50.

13 *Theological Credibility*

When congregations enroll in the Stephen Series, they receive a ministry system with theological depth and substance. The essence of Stephen Ministry is incarnation: God becoming a human being in Jesus Christ, and Christ caring for people through people. Stephen Ministry offers a solidly biblical and distinctively Christian approach to caring ministry within a theological framework consistent with the beliefs and practices of Christian denominations. Enrolled congregations then build on this strong theological foundation by supplementing their training of Stephen Ministers with the distinctive beliefs and practices of their own particular faith tradition.

14 *Psychological Depth*

Stephen Ministries' staff includes three mental health professionals—one Ph.D. clinical psychologist, one psychiatric social worker, and one who is both a psychiatric social worker and psychiatric nurse. Their expertise ensures that the training and resources of Stephen Ministries are psychologically sound and compatible with the values and beliefs of Christian faith and life.

15 *Cost Savings*

Congregations that enroll find that the Stephen Series is one of the most cost-effective ministries they have ever implemented. Alternatives to caregiving of the quality of the Stephen Series usually involve hiring additional church staff. With the increasing costs of salary and benefits, hiring additional church staff can be difficult for many congregations. Even more to the point, adding church staff does not always result in multiplying the amount of care for people the way the Stephen Series does by equipping lay people and multiplying ministry.

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