I AM ADONAI, YOUR HEALER:
A JEWISH FEMINIST PASTORAL THEOLOGY

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Thesis Summary
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In this thesis I propose three separate theologies of healing. Each of these theologies constructs an image of God that is deeply imbedded in Jewish text and espouses feminist and pastoral principles. Each chapter responds to a different pastoral need: Loneliness, stigmatization of the Other, and anger. This thesis is composed of an introduction, three chapters that follow a consistent structural format, and a conclusion. The opening section of each chapter presents a patient vignette that illustrates the need for the forthcoming theological response. The second section is an exploration of the pastoral need exhibited by the patient. Next I offer a theology that is both feminist and pastoral. A pastoral application section follows each theology to highlight the pertinence of this God image. Lastly, each chapter concludes with a prayer. The evaluation of each pastoral need, the individual God images, and the pastoral application each incorporate various primary Jewish texts as well as additional secondary source material. The Jewish texts are Biblical, Talmudic, Midrashic, Kabbalistic, Medieval commentary, and post-Talmudic halakhic literature.

This thesis developed as a response to suffering. It is meant to serve both pastoral care givers in their work and to offer resonant images of God to those who are suffering in the hope that such a resonance might help a person who is suffering find comfort and relief. *Kein Yihi Ratzon* – May this be God's will.

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INTRODUCTION

As a chaplain intern at Mount Sinai Hospital in the Palliative Care Department, I visited patients with endlessly demanding physical needs. Some navigated the complicated balance of pain management, other sought out the relief of palliative radiation, and many spent their last days connected to mechanical ventilation that bore most of the responsibility for their breathing. Doctors and nurses and personal care assistants all worked diligently to make the patients as physically comfortable as was feasible and ensure that their personal wishes were protected and enacted as closely as possible. Because many of my patients faced imminent death, the floor was often overcome with sadness, as one would expect. Yet you would also find boisterous laughter while reminiscing over a patient's well lived life, relief when an out of town family member arrived to say goodbye just in time, anger at life's cruelty, regret, satisfaction, fear, camaraderie, and joy. As a pastoral caregiver, I was present to respond to the spiritual and emotional distress of patients – those needs that extended far beyond the physical realm.

It was in my fourth year of rabbinical school that I served as a palliative care chaplain intern for one year at Mount Sinai. Shortly into my time with the department I met a patient in the final months of her life. We spent many hours together while I was physically present at the hospital and she was often on my mind for many more after I left. Both the end of her life and her tragic death continued to troubled me long after I knew her. In the process of my own healing from this loss, I began to conceive of an image of God – a caring and empathic Shekhinah – that would have been comforting to this patient. How healing it could have been for her and her extraordinary loneliness to

rely on the presence of the Shekhinah sitting a steadfast vigil at her bedside. This theological exploration was ultimately comforting for me as I envisioned the Shekhinah as able to spend the many hours of the day and night that I could not be physically present to support her myself. She inspired me, this dedicated Shekhinah, She gave me comfort and She gave me an idea. This was the beginning of my project towards building a Jewish feminist pastoral theology.

Pastoral

Dayle Friedman, rabbi and author, outlines the primary toolset of the spiritual caregiver in her book *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook.*

> The modality of help offered in pastoral care is relationship. Pastoral care rests on the assumption that being in caring connection can transform suffering because relationship shatters isolation and provides an opportunity for reflecting on one's experience.[1]

Relationships are at the heart of all pastoral interactions. The relationship developed between patient and pastoral care provider determines the level of work they will do together. A text from Shir HaShirim Rabbah, a Midrashic commentary on Song of Songs, emphasizes the fundamental role of relationships in pastoral work.

רבי יוחנן אתייסר ועבד חשש בצמר מורייה ג' שנים ופלג, סלק רבי חנינא למבקרה יתיה, אמר ליה "מה אית עלך" אמר ליה "אית עלאי יותר ממשאוי" אמר ליה "לא תהוי אומר כן, אלא הוי אומר 'האל הנאמן'", כד הוה צערא קשי עלוי הוה אמר "האל הנאמן"

[1] Dayle Friedman, "Livui Ruchani: Spiritual Accompaniment," in *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional & Contemporary Sources*, ed. Dayle Friedman,

וכד הוה מקשה עלוי צערא יותר מצרכו הוה סלק רבי חנינא אמר עלוי מלה והוה נסב נפש, לבתר יומין אתשש רבי חנינא סלק ר' יוחנן למבקריה אמר ליה "מה אית עלך" אמר ליה "מה קשין הן היסורין!" א"ל "ומה שכרן מרובה!" אמר ליה "לא אנא בעי להון ולא לאגרהון!" אמר ליה "למה לית את אמר ההיא מילתא דהויית אמר עלי ואיתנסיב נפש?" א"ל "כד הוינא מלבר הוינא ערב לאחרנין וכדון דאנא מלגיו לית אנא בעי אחורנין דיערבוני."

Rabbi Yochanan was tried and made weak by chills and fevers for three and half years. Rabbi Hanina went to visit him. [Rabbi Hanina] said to [Rabbi Yochanan], "How are you?" [Rabbi Yochanan] said, "It is more than I can bear." [Rabbi Hanina] said to him, "You should not say that! Instead, you should say 'Faithful God...'" So, when his suffering was heavy upon him, [Rabbi Yochanan] used to say, “Faithful God..." And when his sufferings were more than he could bear, Rabbi Hanina would go up to him and say the word over him and his spirit would be lifted. After some days, Rabbi Hanina fell ill. Rabbi Yochanan went up to visit him. [Rabbi Yohanan] said to him, "How are you?" [Rabbi Hanina] said to him, "How difficult is this suffering!" [Rabbi Yochanan] said to him, "But how great is its reward!" [Rabbi Hanina] said to him, "I do not want [this suffering] or its reward!" [Rabbi Yochanan] said to him, "Why don't you say that word that you used to say over me and your spirit will be lifted?" [Rabbi Hanina] said, "When I

am out of trouble, I can act as a guarantor for another, but when I am in trouble, I require another to act as a guarantor for me."[2]

In this rabbinic text, two friends and colleagues seek to offer one another support in a time of distress. First Yochanan shares the extent of his suffering with Hanina. His friend, Hanina, then helps Yochanan find a strategy, in this case invoking God's name as a prayer, that will bring him some relief. When Yochanan has the strength, he recites this prayer for himself but when he is so overcome that he cannot pray himself, Hanina steps in and proclaims these prayerful words on his behalf. Later on the situation reverses itself and Yochanan must visit his now sick friend, Hanina. Yochanan is surprised to find Hanina in a space of such deep suffering because it was Hanina himself who helped Yochanan when he was in need. Does he not remember how to find relief? Yochanan asks Hanina why he does not pray to God in the same way he taught Yochanan. Hanina poignantly explains, just as Yochanan needed the help of another when he was in distress, so too does Hanina require a companion to help ease his suffering. We cannot bypass the power of relationship. We cannot be our own parents, our own teachers, or our own rabbis. It is the perspective and companionship of the Other that allows us to find healing.

Additionally, it is the recitation of "Faithful God" that brings comfort to the rabbis. Rabbi Hanina presented a pastoral theology to Yochanan – a God who would remain loyal to all of Israel, including those who suffer – that particularly resonated with him. The main ambition of this thesis is to present pastoral theologies that could lead a patient towards healing, the same way "Faithful God" did for Yochanan.

[2] Shir HaShirim Rabbah Parashah 2.

Arthur Green, a rabbi and scholar of Jewish thought and spirituality, clarifies the kind of healing that is possible in a pastoral encounter.

> A distinction that was crucial to our conversation is that between 'healing' and 'cure.' The fact that we cannot offer a cure should in no way stop us from seeking to offer healing. This applies even to the use of materials from the mystical sources that indeed did claim to have curative powers; we may find them valuable resources for healing even without being literal believers in the curative effects.[3]

Green alerts us to the crucial difference between spiritual and physical healing. The aim of a pastoral theology is not and cannot be physical recovery. However, spiritual healing – relief from distress, finding meaning in the suffering, or a taste of sweetness amidst the bitter waters – this is the driving force of spiritual care work. Green implores us to keep this in mind as we mine Jewish sources, some of which promise physical recuperation. We can find healing wisdom even in these texts.

This healing potential of a pastoral interaction depends on the nature of the relationship between pastoral caregiver and patient. Friedman explains:

> The helping role we are describing involves joining with people in trouble or transition and working to help them to use the resources within and around them to come through the experience whole. It is a relationship in which the helper meets the one in need on an egalitarian footing, not through a hierarchical power connection.[4]

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[3] Arthur Green, "Mystical Sources of the Healing Movement," in *Healing and the Jewish Imagination: Spiritual and Practical Perspectives on Judaism and Health*, ed. William Cutter (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2007), p. 55.

[4] Friedman, "Livui Ruchani: Spiritual Accompaniment," in *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional & Contemporary Sources*, pp. xvi-xvii.

The chaplain meets the patient as an equal. We do not have the answers, yet we assist the patient in identifying and utilizing the resources that are available to him/her. This thesis explores multiple theologies as one such potential resource for patients and pastoral caregivers. Pastoral theologies respond to a pastoral need and seek to enable spiritual healing for those in pain or in transition. In a pastoral theology, we are in a pastoral relationship with God. And so the nature of this relationship also must be egalitarian and non-hierarchical. For this reason each theology that I have composed is both pastoral and feminist.

Feminist

Feminist Jewish thinkers have long taken issue with the predominant images of God in Jewish ritual and tradition. Judith Plaskow offers her insight into the dangers of popular male God imagery in her seminal work, *Standing Again at Sinai*. She argues that God as male indicates his power, the ultimate power in the universe. The image of the God who rules "over" is rampant in our liturgy: King/Ruler/Lord. Most people's access to religious language is limited to or concentrated on the liturgy because the words of liturgy are recited most frequently. While there are other conceptions of God in Jewish tradition that do not fit into this dominator model, those images are not ones that we encounter regularly.[5]

With God in the role as one who rules over, one who dominates, we, God's people, are cast as unworthy. These relational dynamics set an example for a model society – one run by hierarchical systems. How we label God serves as a framework for

[5] Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (New York, NY: Harper San Francisco, 1991), p. 129.

what is ideal in our culture. Plaskow explains for example that just as God took a Sabbath, it is ideal for us humans to also observe Shabbat. In the same way, God as the ultimate power teaches that hierarchy is the ideal structure for public and private relationships. This model justifies a patriarchal society where those in the top tier look for ways to exert their superiority over groups who are different from them. Plaskow posits that hierarchy creates a world order where groups of people and individuals believe they are inherently better than others. If God's presence is one that dominates, then those who are oppressed or vulnerable will not be able to see themselves reflected in the Divine.[6]

Feminist scholar, Carol Christ, explains more explicitly how such a model affects women.

> Religions centered on the worship of a male God create "moods" and "motivations" that keep women in a state of psychological dependence on men and male authority, while at the same legitimating the *political* and *social* authority of fathers and sons in institutions of society.[7]

In this kind of a society women are Other. Just as God's power shows that supremacy is the standard to which we should aspire, so is God's maleness. It is not to the benefit of men or women to see women as less than or dependent. A fully functioning society is one where all people are able to contribute to their fullest potential. Religious symbolism is extraordinarily influential in the way we perceive these dynamics within ourselves, within our personal relationships, and within our communities.

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[6] Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective,* pp. 126-127.
[7] Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: HarperOne, an Imprint of HarperCollins, 1992), p. 275.

Monotheism, a concept central to Judaism, is the belief in the unity of God. This unity of God implies that God encompasses all realities. If God encompasses all realities then God images should also represent these realities. This means that religious language must reflect the diverse experiences of modern Jews, female Jews, oppressed Jews – all Jews. To limit God imagery so that it only represents the experiences of those in positions of power within the hierarchical structure "[blocks] the possibility of religious experience"[8] for everyone else. When religious language fails to evolve with its participants, religious experience is negatively affected because it distances people from their personal experiences. Alternatively a full representation would allow all Jews religious experience through relatable God images, those that access personal experiences.[9]

Christ outlines why this is essential work for pastoral settings among those who identify as religious and even those who do not.

> Because religion has such a compelling hold on the deep psyches of so many people, feminists cannot afford to leave it in the hands of the fathers. Even people who no longer "believe in God" or participate in the institutional structure of patriarchal religion still may not be free of the power of the symbolism of God the Father. A symbol's effect does not depend on rational assent, for a symbol also functions on levels of the psyche other than the rational. Religion fulfills deep psychic needs by providing symbols and rituals that enable people to cope with limit situations in human life (death, evil, suffering) and to pass through life's important transitions (birth, sexuality, death). Even people who consider

[8] Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*, p. 132.
[9] Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*, pp. 151-152.

> themselves completely secularized will often find themselves sitting in a church or synagogue when a friend or relative gets married, or when a parent or friend has died. The symbols associated with these important rituals cannot fail to affect the deep or unconscious structures of the mind of even a person who has rejected these symbolisms on a conscious level – especially if the person is under stress.[10]

Even those who have consciously rejected God and entire religious institutions have these deeply seeded hierarchal images of God. They are imbedded into us in childhood and reinforced often. Christ points out that most people return to the religious symbols and God images that are most familiar to them in moments of suffering and in moments of transition.

Such symbols have the potential to offer us tremendous healing. It is for this reason that Christ concludes, "Symbol systems cannot simply be rejected, they must be replaced. When there is not any replacement, the mind will revert to familiar structures at times of crisis, bafflement, or defeat."[11] In the coming chapters I will present multiple images of God that represent a greater diversity of human experience. They reflect the realities of those who are sick and those who are dying. They are for the sufferers among us who feel disconnected or disenfranchised by God the King and God the Lord. A simple rejection of these images is not sufficient, they will only return to us in moments of crisis. The theologies that I will present in this thesis are meant to add to the lexicon of

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[10] Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, pp. 274-275.

[11] Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, p. 275.

feminist theologies and of pastoral theologies so that more people than before can find healing and wholeness.

Structure

In order to meet these goals, each chapter follows the same structural format. I open each chapter with a patient vignette. Each of these patient stories illustrates an encounter that either I had with a patient or one of my fellow chaplain interns took part in and then reflected back to me. In my work with patients I consistently encountered similar pastoral needs. In this project, I chose three of those needs to focus on. As a result each patient's story is presented to highlight one of these pastoral needs. The second section of the chapter unpacks that need and why it seems to be a common experience among the sick and dying. In doing so, I present a survey of Jewish sources on the given theme. The first chapter confronts the pain of loneliness, the second examines the stigmatization of the Other, and the third investigates the experience of anger.

It is in the third unit of each chapter where I propose a theological response to each of these needs. For example the God image in the first chapter is a response to the experience of radical loneliness. Ideally someone who feels isolated could call upon this image of God to ease his/her suffering. In my own spiritual exploration and my examination of countless Jewish teachings, I sought to answer the following questions: How might someone with this pain find comfort? What kinds of dynamics in a relationship respond to this need? What healing role could God play that another person could not? Each God image is fully constructed of Jewish texts.

Pastoral application comprises the fourth component of each chapter. This section is meant to guide the pastoral caregiver in how to utilize this model in a pastoral care interaction. Oftentimes we can inhabit the models of care presented within each theology. Just as the theologies are meant to respond to the pastoral need, the pastoral application section, encourages the pastoral caregiver to examine how we too can best respond to a patient with this particular kind of pain. Lastly, each chapter concludes with a prayer to remind us that this work is not only thought-based and emotional but it is also religious.

Prayer

Psalms 118:14

עָזִּי וְזִמְרָת יָהּ וַיְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה

God is my strength and might. God will bring me relief.

God, You are our strength. You model what it means to possess might in this world. Where are honest emotional expression, vulnerability, unapologetic weeping, and loyal companionship in the ranks of the Almighty? We search for these attributes in You, God, so that You can show us that the bounds of power and strength far exceed our expectations. When You are kind, I know that kindness is Divine. When You are compassionate, I know that compassion is Sacred. When You weep, my tears cease to represent fragility and weakness, instead they emerge as the symbol of strength they always have been. It is then, God, in my own empowerment, that You bring me relief.

CHAPTER ONE:
SHEKHINAH: SHE CRIES, SHE CARES, SHE'S GOD

Patient Story: Molly

Molly was a 37-year-old woman in liver failure – she spent months at a time in the hospital waiting for a transplant that would not come. Her family lived hours away and for reasons unknown to me were unable or possibly unwilling to make the trip in to be with Molly. On account of this, Molly spent the long hospital days without anyone to keep her company other than hospital staff and volunteers. I first met Molly a couple months into my internship. Her loneliness was palpable. Her entire body would shake as she cried out in the physical pain that failed to be managed by medication. One day Molly welcomed me and immediately asked me to look at her wounded skin. I reminded her that I could not provide her with medical advice but I would be happy to find a nurse when she threw aside her hospital gown. All I saw was black, the black mark of necrotic skin that doomed her to an imminent death. Later I surmised that she wanted me – someone, maybe anyone – to witness her story, to witness her pain, to witness her neglect.

What might it have been like for Molly to have access to an image of God who sat at her bedside and saw her? Who wept with her over her pain and injustice and who kept her company through the endless cycle of tests and a revolving door of roommates and medical professionals? If modern medicine had failed her, might this God image have provided her with something or some One whom could she rely on?

Loneliness

Molly was not alone in the loneliness she felt while she lay dying. Unfortunately, it is a common experience among those who are seriously sick and those who face death to encounter considerable isolation. Norbert Elias explores this in his book, *The Loneliness of the Dying:*

> Many people die gradually; they grow infirm, they age. The last hours are important, of course. But often the parting begins much earlier. Their frailty is often enough to sever the ageing from the living. Their decline isolates them. They may grow less sociable, their feelings less warm, without their need for people being extinguished. That is the hardest thing - the tacit isolation of the ageing and dying from the community of the living, the gradual cooling of their relationships to people to whom they were attached, the separation from human beings in general, who gave them meaning and security.[12]

Elias identifies the slow disintegration of connection that can happen among those who die slowly. He writes of the steady decline that accompanies aging but his description could undoubtedly apply to someone like Molly as well – someone young who suffers from an illness from which she would not physically recuperate. In each case, the sufferer continues to feel the needs of a social being yet becomes more and more detached from his/her community.

The isolation and loneliness of the seriously ill and dying occurs for many reasons. They have likely been removed from their usual environment and the familiar faces they encounter regularly. They have experienced a change in their position in

[12] Norbert Elias, *The Loneliness of the Dying* (Oxford, UK: B. Blackwell, 1985), p. 2.

society – where they once had many dependents, they now require a significant amount of care. This loss of purpose and independence can significantly alter one's relationships. Additionally, it is not uncommon for a community to withdraw from the dying person because being around someone who is dying often forces family members and friends to confront their own mortality. For those who do visit the sick, they frequently cannot find the appropriate language or sentiment to call upon in order to relate to the patient, leaving the ill/dying person feeling isolated even when s/he is surrounded by people.[13]

Clearly the Rabbis understood that the sick are more likely to experience disconnection from their community. They insist upon ביקור חולים, the commandment to visit the sick.

כל המבקר חולה נוטל אחד משישים בצערו.

Anyone who visits a sick person, takes away a sixtieth of his/her pain.[14]

This text suggests the healing power of such a visit. While a visitor would not be able to take away a portion of the sick person's physical pain, perhaps their presence can offer some relief to the pain of loneliness and isolation brought on by illness. Another Talmudic text suggests a severe consequence for one who does not fulfill the commandment of ביקור חולים.

כל מי שאין מבקר חולים כאילו שופך דמים.

One who does not visit the sick is like a shedder of blood.[15]

[13] Elias, *The Loneliness of the Dying*, pp. 17-24.
[14] Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 39b.
[15] BT Nedarim 40a.

Visiting the sick held such life saving power to the Talmudic sages, that to withhold oneself from visiting the sickbed is compared to murder. It is not just that one who visits the sick provides a measure of healing and one who does not visit, does nothing. Rather, the one who does not visit actually harms the ill person. For those who experience the pain of isolation as a result of their physical decline, members of the community who do not visit, maintain or deepen the sick person's experience of loneliness.

While the Rabbis respond to issues of loneliness surrounding death in antiquity and the medieval period, Elias suggests that the isolation of the dying is more pronounced in modern developed societies than it was in the past:

> …this motif of dying alone occurs more frequently in the modern period than ever before. It is one of the recurrent forms of experience of people in a period when the self-image of a person as a totally autonomous being, not only different from all other people but separated from them, existing entirely independently of them, is becoming ever more clearly marked. The special accent taken on in the modern period by the idea that one dies alone matches the accentuation in this period of the feeling that one lives alone.[16]

According to Elias, the current cultural climate magnifies the experience of isolation for the dying. The individualistic tendencies of this era, which influence all aspects of our lives, are mirrored in the experiences of our deaths. In today's industrialized world, people die in sterile hospital rooms rather than their homes.[17] The proliferation of hospitals reflects significant advances in the medical field that lead to longer lives and remedies to illnesses that would have once ensured a death sentence. It also contributes to

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[16] Elias, *The Loneliness of the Dying,* pp. 59-60.
[17] Elias, *The Loneliness of the Dying,* p. 23.

an intensification of loneliness in the process of dying that may exceed the experience of Jews in antiquity and those rabbinic sages who implored us to visit the sick. In all of our work with the infirm, it is essential that we take extra care in the vital pastoral work we do with patients like Molly to remain conscious of this heightened experience of loneliness.

The Shekhinah's Empathic Presence

The Shekhinah as an image of God, responds directly to those who seek meaningful connection yet endure their illnesses alone. The very word Shekhinah comes from the root שכן meaning *dwell* or put another way – to be present. We find this same root as a verb in the book of Exodus, when God commands the Israelites,

Ex. 25:8 וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם

Ex. 25:8 Build for me a tabernacle so that I may dwell among them.

Ex. 29:45 וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים

Ex. 29:45 I will dwell among the Israelites and I will be their God.

In each case the subject of the verb וְשָׁכַנְתִּי is God. God will dwell among the Israelites. In the Biblical context, the verb gives a sense of God's indwelling presence. From וְשָׁכַנְתִּי, from God dwelling with us in the wilderness, comes Shekhinah, the indwelling presence of a God who accompanies us, as a people and as individuals.

Gershom Scholem, a modern scholar of Jewish Mysticism, teaches that in the early rabbinic texts that precede Kabbalah, the Shekhinah refers simply to God's

indwelling presence.[18] Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael, a fourth century Midrashic work, highlights a central function of this presence.

וכן אתה מוצא כל זמן שישראל משועבדין כביכול שכינה משועבדת עמהם שנ' ויראו את אלהי ישראל ותחת רגליו כמעשה לבנת הספיר (שמות כד י). וכשנגאלו מה הוא אומר וכעצם השמים לטוהר ונאמר בכל צרתם לו צר (ישעיה סג ט). אין לי אלא צרת ציבור צרת יחיד מנין ת"ל יקראני ואענהו עמו אנכי בצרה (תהלים צא טו), ואומר ויקח אדני יוסף אותו, ואומר ויהי י"י את יוסף (בראשית לט כ כא), ואומר מפני עמך אשר פדית לך ממצרים גוי ואלהיו (שמואל ב' ז כג)... ר' עקיבא אומר אלמלא מקרא כתוב אי אפשר לאמרו כביכול אמרו ישראל לפני הקב"ה עצמך פדית. וכן את מוצא בכל מקום שגלו ישראל כביכול גלתה שכינה עמהם, גלו למצרים שכינה עמהם שנ' הנגלה נגליתי אל בית אביך בהיותם במצרים (ש"א ב כז), גלו לבבל שכינה עמהם שנ' למענכם שולחתי בבלה (ישעיה מג יד), גלו לעילם שכינה עמהם שנ' ושמתי כסאי בעילם (ירמיה מט לח), גלו לאדום שכינה עמהם שנ' מי זה בא מאדום חמוץ בגדים מבצרה (ישעיה סג א).

> And so you find that whenever Israel is enslaved, the Shekhinah, as it were, is enslaved with them, as it is said: "And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under God's feet …" (Exodus 24:10). And it also says: "In all their affliction God was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:10). So far I only know that God shares in the affliction

[18] Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (New York: Schoken Books, 1991), p. 147. See Scholem for an extensive overview of the Shekhinah throughout Jewish literature.

> of the community. How about the affliction of the individual? Scripture says: "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble" (Psalms 91:15). It also says: "And Joseph's masters took him," etc. (Genesis 39:20). And what does it say then? "But God was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:21). And so it says: "And who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth, whom God went and redeemed as God's people" (2 Samuel 7:23). …Rabbi Akiva says: Were it not expressly written in scripture, it would be impossible to say it. Israel said to God: You have redeemed Yourself, as though one could conceive such a thing. Likewise you find that whenever Israel was exiled, the Shekhinah was exiled with them, as it is said: "I exiled Myself to the house of your fathers when they were in Egypt" (1 Samuel 2:27). When they were exiled to Babylon, the Shekhinah was with them, as it is said: "For your sake I ordered Myself to go to Babylon" (Isaiah 43:14). When they were exiled to Elam, the Shekhinah was with them, as it is said: "I will set my throne in Elam" (Jeremiah 49:38). When they went into exile to Edom, the Shekhinah was with them, as it is said: "Who is this that comes from Edom" (Isaiah 63:1).[19]

The above Midrash outlines how the Shekhinah shared in the collective suffering of Israel and grieved alongside individuals such as Josesph. With ample evidence from Scripture, this passage reveals that in each place that Israel was exiled, the Shekhinah too left the Land of Israel to dwell in the diaspora. For the Rabbis, the thought of being abandoned by God in exile, far away and seemingly left to fend for themselves, was intolerable; so much that the image of the Shekhinah accompanying Israel in their pain

[19] Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael Massekhet d'Piskha, Parasha 14.

and loneliness became common in rabbinic texts.[20] Time and again, the rabbis recall the notion of the Shekhinah going into exile, as a means of providing comfort and the reassurance of God's continual presence.

The Mekhilta text specifically describes the Shekhinah as “enslaved” and brings a prooftext from Isaiah 63:10, “In all their affliction, God was afflicted” to show that the Shekhinah not only accompanied us into exile, but felt our fear, our loss, and our disorientation. Here we encounter the Shekhinah as the principle of Divine empathy. The Shekhinah joins the whole of Israel in the pain and rejection one might feel upon exile. However not only does the Shekhinah feel compassion for the entire people Israel in times of collective trauma, but the Shekhinah responds to individuals in need as well. The Midrash refers to Psalms 91:15, “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble” to highlight this function of the Shekhinah. Singular language in the verse allows God to promise help to an individual in need.

For the individual, like Molly, racked with physical and emotional pain, the Shekhinah could serve as a companion in that suffering. A Talmudic text explains even more specifically how that could be the case.

ואמר רבין אמר רב: מניין שהשכינה שרויה למעלה ממטתו של חולה? שנאמר: יי' יסעדנו על ערש דוי (תהלים מא ד).

> Ravin also said in the name of Rav: From where do we know that the Shekhinah dwells above the bed of the sick person?” “May God sustain him on his bed of pain” (Psalms 41:4).[21]

[20] Norman J. Cohen, "Shekhinta Ba-Galuta," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 8, no. 1-2 (1982): p. 157, doi:10.1163/157006382x00080.

According to this rabbinic teaching, the Shekhinah is present not only when the individual experiences pain but particularly at her sick bed. Though not yet overtly identified as feminine, already here the Shekhinah begins to demonstrate maternal qualities, insofar as mothers are often more fused with their children and might identify more profoundly or steep themselves in their children's suffering. The following Talmudic source further illuminates the tradition of the Shekhinah at the bed of the sick person.

תניא נמי הכי: הנכנס לבקר את החולה לא ישב לא על גבי מטה ולא על גבי כסא אלא מתעטף ויושב לפניו, מפני ששכינה למעלה מראשותיו של חולה, שנאמר ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי (תהלים מא ד).

> It was taught: One who enters [a house] to visit the sick may sit neither upon the bed nor on a seat, but must wrap himself about and sit in front of him, for the Shekhinah is above an invalid's pillow, as it is said: May God sustain him on his bed of pain (Psalms 41:4).[22]

Here, the teaching that the Shekhinah dwells within the presence of the severely ill, seems to be so fundamental that it leads to instruction on how a visitor should conduct oneself when visiting an ailing community member. The Rabbis use the image of the Shekhinah to remind a visitor to think carefully about his/her body language. Moses Isserles, clarifies this for us in his gloss to the Shulkhan Arukh, a 16th century code of Jewish law.

ודוקא כשהחולה שוכב על הארץ, דהיושב גבוה ממנו, אבל כששוכב על המטה מותר

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[21] BT Nedarim 40a.
[22] BT Shabbat 12b.

לישב על כסא וספסל.

> This only applies when the sick person lies on the ground, so that one would be higher than him, but if [the sick person] is lying in bed, it is permissible to sit on a chair of bench.[23]

In the above text, Isserles responds to the notion that one is not permitted to sit on the bed or on a chair when visiting the sick. He explains that this reflects a custom where the infirm lie on the floor. However in a modern context, when the sick person is more likely to be in a bed, it is perfectly acceptable to sit in a chair or on a bench, as long as the visitor remains on the same level as the patient. With Isserles' explication we can understand that one would be instructed to sit on the floor in the Talmudic text above so that the visitor's body location and language would not be overpowering to the sick person. The text encourages us to get on their same level so that we will be able to relate to the individual. Here then, the image of the Shekhinah's presence above the head of the sick person inculcates humility and reminds us to use our bodies consciously and sensitively. It also brings to mind the notion of a beneficent, enveloping presence emanating from Heaven.

So far, we have seen that the Talmudic and Midrashic texts depict the Shekhinah as one who accompanies those who suffer, feels their pain alongside them, and rests over the beds of those who are severely ill. In Kabbalah, The Shekhinah becomes one of the *sefirot*. The ten *sefirot* are the ten independent manifestations of the Divine, each representing a different stage in God's revelation. Divinity in Kabbalah is both immanent and transcendent and the Shekhinah straddles each of these worlds. Scholem asserts that

[23] Yoreh Deah 335:8.

in the early rabbinic texts that precede Kabbalistic literature, the Shekhinah is not associated with a particular gender.[24] That said, Shekhinah is a feminine noun that takes a verb that has been conjugated in the feminine. Because of this the language in the above texts do reflect feminine grammatical patterns. Additionally, the Shekhinah is associated with traditionally feminine characteristics including empathy and caretaking. While Scholem stresses that it is not until the literature of the Kabbalists that we see the Shekhinah overtly identified as female, it seems that the feminization of the Shekhinah is consequential even before then.

In many instances, in the Bible, for example, the people and land are feminized in their most debased and exiled condition. The Shekhinah as a feminine presence is the one manifestation of God that goes into exile. It is not surprising, then, that God would be feminized in the midst of an expulsion. In this culture and ours, the masculine mode is normative and the feminine is Other. According to this cultural construct, living outside of the Land in exile would likely be a feminized state because the people were distanced from the rightful, masculine center. (At the same time, one can observe a tendency on the part of many cultures, including Judaism, to feminize homeland or place names, reflecting yet another cultural norm to see the land as something possessed or tilled by masculine warriors/farmers). The Shekhinah as feminine is typically treated in Jewish literature as a passive and inferior symbol. In spite of this, there are many elements of the Shekhinah in Jewish text that can be reclaimed and reimagined in a feminist theology. Judith Plaskow teaches, "The Shekhinah is a usable image for feminists only if it is partly wrenched free from its original context, so that the tradition becomes a starting point for

[24] Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah,* p. 160.

an imaginative process that moves beyond and transforms it.[25]" We acknowledge her history and her origins as best we know them, and we do her justice through a thoughtful and intentional reconstruction.

In Sefer HaBahir, dated to the 13th century and considered the first Kabbalistic work, our sages move from this tendency to assign feminized characteristics to the Shekhinah to a deliberate development of metaphors linking her to feminine roles:

ומאי עבידתיה הכא, משל למה״ד למלך שהיתה ול בת טובה ונעימה ונאה לשלימה והשיאה לבן למלך והלבישה ועטרה וקשטה ונתנה לו בממון רב אפשר לו למלך לישב חוץ מביתו אמרת לא אפשר לו לשבת כל היום תמיד עמה אמרת לא הא כיצד שם חלון בינו לבינה וכל שעה שצריכה הבת לאביה או האב לבתו מתחברים יחד דרך החלון הה״ד כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה ממשבצות זהב לבושה (תהלים מה יד).

> What is its function? It is comparable to a king who had a daughter who was good and comely, graceful and perfect. And he married her to a prince, and gave her garments and a crown and jewelry and great wealth. Can the king live without his daughter? No! But can he be with her all day long? No! What did he do? He built a window between himself and her, and whenever the daughter needs the father and the father the daughter, they join one another through the window. Of this it is written: "All glorious is the king's daughter within the palace; her robe interwoven with gold" (Psalms 45:14).[26]

In this passage the daughter represents the Shekhinah who has been married to a prince. The window that separates the Shekhinah from her father is a symbol for the Shekhinah's

[25] Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*, p.140.
[26] Sefer HaBahir 3:54.

separation from the heavenly world. However, their ability to maintain connection through the window at certain times highlights the Shekhinah's position in between the immanent and transcendent worlds of the Kabbalists. Most importantly, the Shekhinah is identified as a daughter. In the Kabbalistic texts, the Shekhinah retains her role as present in the corporeal world and does so as explicitly feminine.

From here on, I will refer to the Shekhinah exclusively gendered as female. This decision reflects both the practice of the Kabbalists and a need presented by feminist theology. Male God language dominates Jewish literature and Jewish ritual. Judith Plaskow teaches us that current God language is deficient because it fails to represent the God experiences of large portions of the Jewish people. For example God's maleness neglects to reflect the experience of women. God as male demonstrates to our people that maleness is ideal. Because God as male elevates men's positions, God as *not* female, demotes the position of women. This brand of God language influences our society by pushing it to reflect these values – namely that women are inferior. Simultaneously the values imbedded in the structure of our society influence the language we choose to represent the Divine, our ideal. And so the cycle continues. For that reason in order to attain a shift in perspective, a change must occur. Female references to God help to incorporate the reality lived by half of the population, a segment formerly excluded.[27]

Rita Gross highlights that Judaism is a theistic religion wherein we are in relationship with God. She argues that in an effort to relate to our relational God, we inevitably include anthropomorphisms and gender assignment in our God images. Gross asserts that given this reality, we must at least use anthropomorphisms that promote

[27] Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*, pp. 125-130.

equality and egalitarianism. For this reason she suggests that we balance our use of God-He with images of God-She.[28] Carol Christ also explores the benefits of God-She by examining the effects of Goddess culture.

> The simplest and most basic meaning of the symbol of Goddess is the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of female power as a beneficent and independent power. A woman who echoes Ntosake Shange's dramatic statement, "I found God in myself and I loved her fiercely," is saying "Female power is strong and creative."[29]

God-She is empowering. God-She not only corrects the imbalance of male God language that only reflects the realities of half the population, it also elevates the status of women to the Divine. The Shekhinah, of course, is not a Goddess. Gross reminds us that in a theistic theology, the anthropomorphism and gender assignment that we require is all metaphor.[30] We use this language to aid our connection to God. God-He is not male and God-She is not female. Even so, the language we utilize to describe the indescribable has lasting effects on our personal experiences and on society as a whole. If characteristics of God elevate what is meaningful and what is strong, then the Shekhinah as God-She teaches us that a nurturing presence and empathy are desirable, powerful, and God-like.

Shekhinah as Divine Mother presents another opportunity for an emotional expression that traditionally communicates fragility and even weakness to be elevated to

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[28] Rita Gross, "Female God Language in a Jewish Context," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: HarperOne, an Imprint of HarperCollins, 1992), p. 172.
[29] Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, p. 277.
[30] Gross, "Female God Language in a Jewish Context," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, p. 168.

an expression of strength. In 13th century Castille, in response to prolific images of Mary as the suffering mother, Jewish writers began connecting the weeping matriarch Rachel with images of the Shekhinah in Exile.[31] Although we already have an understanding that the Shekhinah accompanied Israel into exile, "These Kabbalists draw from existing Midrashic traditions and make Rachel the symbol of the *Shekhinah*, suffering for her children in exile."[32] Jews were looking for the theological outlet their Christian counterparts found with Mary – a maternal figure who would experience pain with them and assuage them of their feelings of loneliness. As a result, Rachel as the selfless, weeping matriarch becomes connected with the suffering Shekhinah. Once the Kabbalists identify the Shekhinah as female, her "feminine character…now absorbs everything capable of such an interpretation in biblical and rabbinic literature."[33] While in their original context, the biblical and rabbinic stories were not connected to the Shekhinah, once she has been linked to Rachel, stories about Rachel that preceded the Kabbalistic literature are free to be reinterpreted as representing the Shekhinah as Divine Mother.

The following passage from Lamentations Rabbah can be read through this lens. The proem begins with our matriarch Rachel addressing God. In this interaction Rachel reminds God that she was promised to Jacob before her father conspired against Jacob so that he would marry Rachel's sister Leah instead. Rachel explains that when this occurred, she helped her sister Leah mislead Jacob so that Leah could successfully consummate the marriage. Rachel challenges God by reminding God that she was able to

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[31] Sharon Koren, "Two Voices Heard in Castile: Rachel and Mary Weep for Their Children in the Age of the Zohar," (2015), Unpublished, p. 2.
[32] Koren, "Two Voices Heard in Castile: Rachel and Mary Weep for Their Children in the Age of the Zohar," p. 2.
[33] Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah,* p. 160.

put aside her jealousy of her sister, whereas God – who is the Divine no less –cannot overcome petty jealousy over the Israelites worshipping idols and return them from exile. The following is God's response to Rachel.

ואמר בשבילך רחל אני מחזיר את ישראל למקומן, הה"ד כה אמר ה' קול ברמה נשמע נהי בכי תמרורים רחל מבכה על בניה מאנה להנחם על בניה כי איננו (ירמי' לא טו), וכתיב כה אמר ה' מנעי קולך מבכי ועיניך מדמעה כי יש שכר לפעולתך וגו' (שם טז), וכתיב ויש תקוה לאחריתך נאם ה' ושבו בנים לגבולם (שם יז).

> [God] said, For your sake, Rachel, I will restore Israel to their land, as it is said, "Thus says God, A cry is heard in Ramah — Wailing, bitter weeping — Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone. Thus says God, Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded, God declares, they will come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for your future, God declares, your children will return to their country (Jeremiah 31:15-17)."[34]

God responds to Rachel's challenge with contrition and promises to return the people of Israel to their homeland. Put more simply: Rachel compels God to repent and draw closer to the people! The prooftexts from Jeremiah that appear at the end of the passage portray a crying Rachel. She weeps for her exiled children, God hears her voice, and rewards her for her show of agony. Rachel does not suppress her pain or hold back her tears for fear of social stigma. On her account, God promises redemption for Israel. In the Jeremiah

[34] Lamentations Rabbah Petikhta 24.

verses, Rachel is already the mother of all of Israel and not only the children that she birthed.

As we read this text through the lens of the Kabbalists and we draw out Rachel's association with the Shekhinah, then Rachel's role is elevated to that of Divine Mother. From here we find the classic understanding of the Shekhinah who weeps for her exiled children who were sent from their homes and forced to live outside the bounds of familiarity. In this case, the Shekhinah's efficacious tears lead to God's promise to end the exile. Given this, might the Shekhinah's tears also be efficacious for those who feel extraordinary loneliness in their illnesses? Our earlier texts presented the Shekhinah as one who is present and shares in our pain. The Shekhinah as Divine Mother extends this empathic presence to that of a maternal figure. She cries out of her love for her children while her tears communicate to an isolated Molly how deeply she cares for her. It is common for family members and friends to visit their loved ones and with the best of intentions solely focus on the positive or placate the patient – much for the sake of avoiding their own discomfort. In contrast, the Shekhinah's tears demonstrate that she does not shy away from painful realities; rather, they validate and normalize her suffering. Our Shekhinah does not come to the bedside to provide miracles of physical recovery – rather she pulls up a chair and cries with the patient to say that she too is devastated by this loss.

It is essential to note that when a visitor cries during an interaction with a patient there are multiple potential effects. It could lead to a moment of intense connection so that the loneliness and isolation of the sick person are temporarily abated. However, it could also happen, that this visitor's tears overpower the patient's emotional expression

and out of social responsibility, the patient feels obligated to comfort the visitor. This is an entirely inappropriate responsibility for the patient to take on. Thankfully, the Shekhinah does not run this risk. Because she is not a person, we have the gift of owing her nothing. Her emotive presence is there only for our benefit. She promises not to overpower us and only to do her best to occupy the empty space created by our loneliness.

In another Kabbalistic collection from the 13th century, Sefer HaYashar, Joseph reaches out to his parents for help after his brothers sell him to the Ishmaelites and it is Rachel as Divine Mother who offers him comfort. In exploration of their interaction, we can find a deeper insight into how the Shekhinah can offer healing to those who suffer.

וישמע יוסף כי הולכים הישמעאלים מצרימה ויצעק יוסף ויבכה...ובכל זאת היה יוסף צועק ובוכה ויאמר אבי אבי...וילכו האנשים בדרך ויעברו מדרך אפרת אשר עם קבורת רחל ויגיע יוסף עד קבר אמו וימהר וירץ יוסף אל קבר אמו ויפול על הקבר ויבכה :ויצעק יוסף על קבר אמו ויאמר אמי אמי יולדתני עורי וקומי וראה את בנך איך נמכר לעבד ואין מרחם ...ויוסף עוד לדבר כדברים האלה ויצעק ויבך יוסף בכי גדול על קבר אמו ויכל לדבר וידום כאבן על הקבר ממר לבו וישמע יוסף את קול מדבר אליו מתחת הארץ ויענהו בלב מר ובקול בכי ותחנה כדברים האלה בני בני יוסף בני שמעתי את קול בכייתך ואת קול צעקותיך ראיתי את דמעותיך ידעתי את צרתך בני ויצר לי עליך ותוסף לי יגון רב על יגוני ועתה בני יוסף בני חכה את יי והתחולל לו ואל תירא כי יי עמך הוא יציל אותך מכל צרה קום בני ולך לך מצרימה עם אדוניך ואל תירא כי האלהים עמך בני ותוסף לדבר אל יוסף כדברים האלה ותדום

וישמע יוסף את הדבר הזה...ויוסף עוד לבכות.

Joseph heard that the Ishmaelites were going to Egypt, so Joseph yelled out and he cried… Joseph continued to cry and weep, and he said, My father, My father… And the men continued along the way, and they passed through the path of Ephrat where Rachel was buried. Joseph reached his mother's grave, and Joseph hurried and ran to his mother's grave, and fell upon the grave and wept. And Joseph cried aloud on his mother's grave, and he said, My mother, My mother, you who gave birth to me, awake now, and rise and see your son, how he has been sold for a slave, and no one to pity him… And Joseph continued to speak these words, and Joseph cried aloud and wept bitterly upon his mother's grave; and he ceased speaking, and from bitterness of heart he became still as a stone upon the grave. And Joseph heard a voice speaking to him from under the ground, which answered him with bitterness of heart, and with a voice of weeping and praying in these words: My son, my son, Joseph, I have heard the voice of your weeping and the voice of your pained cries; I have seen your tears; I know your trouble, my son, and it pains me for you sake, and your great suffering adds to my own suffering. Now therefore my son, Joseph my son, wait for God and do not fear, for God is with you, God will deliver you from all trouble. Rise my son and go down to Egypt with your masters, and do not fear, God is with you, my son. And she continued to speak to Joseph with similar words, and she was still. And Joseph heard this…and Joseph continued to weep.[35]

[35] Sefer HaYashar Parashat Yeshev Seif 69.

Joseph is terrified – he was taken from his home and sold into slavery. Joseph knows that he is headed for a place called Egypt where he has never been before and will most likely never see his father or brothers again. Joseph is completely isolated. We know that Joseph is scared and desperate because he continues to weep and cry out in painful sobs. Joseph tries to reach out of his isolated state by crying out first for his father and then for his mother. Rachel calls back out to her son and does so with the same bitter heart with which he calls out to her. She does not approach him with a cheery affect; rather she meets Joseph where he is – in his pain and bitterness of heart. Rachel responds with her own tears. She tells Joseph – I see you. I hear you. I know your pain. Your pain gives me pain. She is present when no one else was. She is empathic when he is emotionally isolated. Rachel is the Shekhinah as Divine Mother. She weeps not only for the collective of her children, as in Lamentations Rabbah, she also joins in the agony of each child, as she does here for Joseph. In our most vulnerable, when we are at the greatest risk of feeling invisible or losing our voice, the Shekhinah sees us; She hears us.

Second Kings 20:5, the verse that provides the text for Rachel's speech to Joseph in the midrash, helps to clarify the effect of the Shekhinah's empathic presence with Joseph.

2Kings 20:5 שָׁמַ֣עְתִּי אֶת־תְּפִלָּתֶ֗ךָ רָאִ֙יתִי֙ אֶת־דִּמְעָתֶ֔ךָ הִנְנִ֥י רֹפֵ֖א לָֽךְ

> **2Kings 20:5** I have heard your prayers, I have seen your tears, I am here, healing you.

The prophet Isaiah conveyed these words to King Hezekiah when he was gravely ill - almost identical to those the Shekhinah cries to Joseph. I have heard your prayers. I have seen your tears. And then an overt promise to accompany the sick and isolated: הִנְנִי, "I

am here." Finally, we learn that this promise of an empathic presence leads to רֹפְאֶךָּ, "healing you." I am here. I hear you. I see you in your pain. It is this seeing that provides spiritual healing.

The Shekhinah has promised her presence to Joseph by joining him in his pain. She does so again explicitly when she declares, "Rise my son and go down to Egypt with your masters, and do not fear, God is with you, my son." Joseph's future is forever changed. The life he imagined for himself will not come to be. His devastation over this is no secret. Yet the Shekhinah does not show up to "fix" Joseph's circumstances. She cannot. But she is able to accompany him through the unknown journey ahead. When Joseph hears this, he weeps. The Shekhinah's presence does not alter a diagnosis, change the efficacy of a medical treatment, or even eliminate his tears. But she ensures that we are not alone in the darkness or isolated in the pain. רֹפְאֶךָּ may not mean a miraculous healing of the physical body; but God still can be רֹפְאֶךָּ to us through a sense of presence that provides comfort and somehow helps ease our suffering, spiritually, if not physically.

Pastoral Application

The Shekhinah teaches us that through a presence that engages the fullness of self and a willingness to bear witness to another's painful experience, a degree of spiritual healing is possible. The Shekhinah's devotion offers us a model of pastoral care. We know that as spiritual caregivers we cannot offer physical healing to those who suffer, but what would it mean for us to follow this model of the Shekhinah as one who responds to

the loneliness of isolation by accompanying the sick? The following text, BT Sotah 14a, teaches us that we are God-like when we show up for those in our communities in need.

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא, מאי דכתיב: אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו (דברים יג ה)? וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר: כי ה' אלהיך אש אוכלה הוא (שם ד כד)! אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקב"ה...הקב"ה ביקר חולים, דכתיב: וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא, אף אתה בקר חולים (בראשית יח א).

> Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina further said: What does it mean, "You shall walk after the Eternal your God (Deuteronomy 13:5)? Is it possible for a person to walk and follow the Shekhinah? Has it not been said: For the Eternal your God is a devouring fire (ibid 4:24)? It means to walk after the attributes of the Holy Blessed One…The Holy Blessed One visits the ill, as it says, "And God visited [Abraham] in the oaks of Mamreh (Genesis 18:1), so you too shall visit the ill.[36]

When we visit the sick, we walk in the pathway of God. Joseph Ozarowski, a contemporary rabbi and chaplain, explains that "By visiting the ill, we follow God's paths, acting as God does…Our own imitation of God's love can be most effective in helping the trouble and suffering… Human beings can imitate God through empathy."[37] We too, are closest to God when we walk in God's path, when we "imitate" God's empathic presence and love. We are God-like when we strive to emulate the Shekhinah's healing presence.

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[36] BT Sotah 14a.

[37] Joseph Ozarowski, "Bikur Cholim: A Paradigm for Pastoral Caring," in *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional & Contemporary Sources,* ed. Dayle Friedman, 2nd ed. (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2013), p. 57-64.

The Shekhinah teaches us to show up and to care. Naomi Paget and Janet McCormack understand chaplaincy through this idea of presence. They write,

> Chaplain ministry has often been called the 'ministry of presence.' Presence is both physical and emotional. First, the chaplain makes a conscious choice to be physically present with the client. Second, the chaplain is emotionally present…through emphatic listening. Through presence the chaplain begins to build relationships that eventually bring comfort to those who feel alone in their suffering or despair.[38]

As spiritual caregivers, it is upon us to show up, to share the burden. When we walk into a room, our physical presence reassures the patient that he or she is not alone. When we emotionally arrive, we echo God's words, "I hear your prayers. I see your tears. הִנֵּנִי."

While we cannot fully take on another's pain and weep with the sufferer as the Shekhinah does, we can learn from how she relates to others emotionally. We do not go to the extreme of the Shekhinah, yet we demonstrate that we have emotionally shown up for them through an empathic presence. According to the rabbinic sages, when we walk in the pathway of the Shekhinah and show up for those who suffer amongst us, we are able to offer them some relief.

We demonstrate our presence through careful and attentive listening. Rabbi Joseph B. Meszler reminds us in *Facing Illness Facing God*,

> It is easy to forget that listening is an actual activity, and not a passive one. Real listening does not only mean taking in all the information that is being said to us. It also means reading the facial expressions of the speaker and being sensitive to

[38] Naomi K. Paget and Janet R. McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), p. 27.

her tone of voice. Most importantly, active listening means making the other person feel heard.[39]

Active listening challenges us to remain focused and emotionally present with those who suffer. It is all too easy to physically show up and tell ourselves that we have heeded the advice of the Shekhinah. We cannot say שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־תְּפִלָּתֶךָ, "I have heard your prayers," unless we truly listen for them. The Laws of Visiting the Sick in the Shulkhan Arukh highlight the value of listening to the sick for our sages.

נכנסין בבית החיצון ושואלין ודורשין בו אם צריכין לכבד ולרבץ לפניו, וכיוצא בו, ושומעין צערו ומבקשים עליו רחמים.

People should come [when visiting a sick person] into an outer chamber of the house and ask and inquire of [the sick person] whether they need to help clean or rinse anything, or similar things, and they should listen to [the sick person's] pain and request compassion on his behalf.[40]

We are instructed not only to listen to the words and stories of the person who suffers, but we are to pay attention so that we can hear their pain. Listening to a person's pain might involve a list of medical tests and procedures that the patient has endured throughout the day. However, it also likely includes listening for the story behind the story and remaining vigilantly aware of the loneliness and isolation that so often joins illness and dying.

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[39] Joseph B. Meszler, *Facing Illness, Finding God: How Judaism Can Help You and Caregivers Cope When Body or Spirit Fail* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2010), p. 63.
[40] Yoreh Deah 335:8.

Much like the rabbis in the Talmudic text above, Paget and McCormack identify our role as empathic listener as a partnership with God.

> The presence of God in the person and ministry of the chaplain empowers the client to healing and wholeness…[I]n partnership with the presence of God, chaplains bring calm to chaos, victory over despair, comfort in loss, and sufficiency in need.[41]

This "partnership with the presence of God" allows the spiritual caregiver to not only follow the model of healing provided by the Shekhinah, but also to embody God's presence near the bed of the sick person. *We* act as a conduit for God's presence. *Our* hands provide a comforting touch. O*ur* voices say שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־תְּפִלָּתֶךָ, "I have heard your prayers," רָאִיתִי אֶת־דִּמְעָתֶךָ, "I have seen your tears," הִנֵּנִי, "I am here." But it is the Shekhinah's *presence* that enables us to offer a 'ministry of presence' that can "bring calm to chaos, victory over despair, comfort in loss and sufficiency in need."

Let it not be said that to be radically empathic or to bear witness to another's pain is a straightforward or easy task. Another Talmudic text offers us a warning to the one who prematurely assumes that he understands the pain of his friend and colleague.

רבי אלעזר חלש, על לגביה רבי יוחנן. חזא דהוה קא גני בבית אפל, גלייה לדרעיה ונפל נהורא. חזייה דהוה קא בכי רבי אלעזר. אמר ליה: אמאי קא בכית? אי משום תורה דלא אפשת שנינו: אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים! ואי משום מזוני לא כל אדם זוכה לשתי שלחנות! ואי משום בני דין גרמא דעשיראה ביר. אמר ליה: להאי שופרא דבלי בעפרא קא בכינא. אמר ליה: על דא ודאי קא בכית, ובכו תרוייהו.

[41] Paget and McCormack, *The Work of the Chaplain*, p. 28.

אדהכי והכי, אמר ליה: חביבין עליך יסורין? אמר ליה: לא הן ולא שכרן. אמר ליה: הב לי ידך, יהב ליה ידיה ואוקמיה.

> Rabbi Eleazar fell ill and Rabbi Yohanan went in to visit him. He noticed that he was lying in a dark room, so he bared his arm and light radiated from it. Then 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 learnt: 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. Is it perhaps because of [the lack of] children? This is the bone of my tenth son! — [Eleazar] replied to him: I am weeping on account of this beauty that is going to rot in the earth. [Yochanan] said to him: On that account you surely have a reason to weep; and they both wept…[Yochanan] said to him: Give me your hand, and [Eleazar] gave him his hand and [Yochanan] raised him.[42]

Yochanan found Eleazar weeping and assumed many times over that he knew the cause of his friend's pain. Eleazar explains that his tears are "on account of this beauty that is going to rot in the earth." Eleazar weeps for the beauty of creation that is manifest in his physical form and for its inevitable demise. Eleazar's sentiment reflects one of Norbert Elias' explanations of the dying person's sense of isolation: "…with our death the little world of our own person, with its unique memories and its feelings and experiences known only to ourselves, with its own knowledge and dreams, will vanish forever."[43]

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[42] BT Berachot 5b.
[43] Elias, *The Loneliness of the Dying,* p. 59.

Eleazar is painfully alone as he reflects on the enormous beauty of his own life, filled with “unique memories and feelings” that he believes will perish alongside him. It was not until Eleazar had the courage to share this true source of his suffering that Yochanan is able to demonstrate radical empathy and join his friend in their now shared pain. Then, and only then, can Yochanan offer some relief to his troubled companion.

It is challenging for the spiritual caregiver to identify the needs of the sufferer in this work of empathic presence. It is also the case that patients might close themselves off and refuse to be accompanied. Adriane Leveen examines the first chapter of the book of Ruth as illustrative of this dynamic.

1:1 וַיְהִי בִּימֵי שְׁפֹּט הַשֹּׁפְטִים וַיְהִי רָעָב בָּאָרֶץ וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֶחֶם יְהוּדָה
לָגוּר בִּשְׂדֵי מוֹאָב הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּשְׁנֵי בָנָיו

1:2 וְשֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֱלִימֶלֶךְ וְשֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ נָעֳמִי וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי־בָנָיו | מַחְלוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן
אֶפְרָתִים מִבֵּית לֶחֶם יְהוּדָה וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂדֵי־מוֹאָב וַיִּהְיוּ־שָׁם

1:3 וַיָּמָת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ אִישׁ נָעֳמִי וַתִּשָּׁאֵר הִיא וּשְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ

1:4 וַיִּשְׂאוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מֹאֲבִיּוֹת שֵׁם הָאַחַת עָרְפָּה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית רוּת וַיֵּשְׁבוּ
שָׁם כְּעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים

1:5 וַיָּמוּתוּ גַם־שְׁנֵיהֶם מַחְלוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן וַתִּשָּׁאֵר הָאִשָּׁה מִשְּׁנֵי יְלָדֶיהָ וּמֵאִישָׁהּ

1:6 וַתָּקָם הִיא וְכַלֹּתֶיהָ וַתָּשָׁב מִשְּׂדֵי מוֹאָב כִּי שָׁמְעָה בִּשְׂדֵה מוֹאָב
כִּי־פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת־עַמּוֹ לָתֵת לָהֶם לָחֶם

1:7 וַתֵּצֵא מִן־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה־שָּׁמָּה וּשְׁתֵּי כַלֹּתֶיהָ עִמָּהּ וַתֵּלַכְנָה בַּדֶּרֶךְ

לָשׁוּב אֶל־אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה

1:8 וַתֹּאמֶר נָעֳמִי לִשְׁתֵּי כַלֹּתֶיהָ לֵכְנָה שֹּׁבְנָה אִשָּׁה לְבֵית אִמָּהּ יַעַשׂ יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם חֶסֶד כַּאֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם עִם־הַמֵּתִים וְעִמָּדִי

1:9 יִתֵּן יְהוָה לָכֶם וּמְצֶאןָ מְנוּחָה אִשָּׁה בֵּית אִישָׁהּ וַתִּשַּׁק לָהֶן וַתִּשֶּׂאנָה קוֹלָן וַתִּבְכֶּינָה

1:10 וַתֹּאמַרְנָה־לָּהּ כִּי־אִתָּךְ נָשׁוּב לְעַמֵּךְ

1:11 וַתֹּאמֶר נָעֳמִי שֹׁבְנָה בְנֹתַי לָמָּה תֵלַכְנָה עִמִּי הַעוֹד־לִי בָנִים בְּמֵעַי וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לַאֲנָשִׁים

1:12 שֹׁבְנָה בְנֹתַי לֵכֶן כִּי זָקַנְתִּי מִהְיוֹת לְאִישׁ כִּי אָמַרְתִּי יֶשׁ־לִי תִקְוָה גַּם הָיִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה לְאִישׁ וְגַם יָלַדְתִּי בָנִים

1:13 הֲלָהֶן | תְּשַׂבֵּרְנָה עַד אֲשֶׁר יִגְדָּלוּ הֲלָהֶן תֵּעָגֵנָה לְבִלְתִּי הֱיוֹת לְאִישׁ אַל בְּנֹתַי כִּי־מַר־לִי מְאֹד מִכֶּם כִּי־יָצְאָה בִי יַד־יְהוָה

1:14 וַתִּשֶּׂנָה קוֹלָן וַתִּבְכֶּינָה עוֹד וַתִּשַּׁק עָרְפָּה לַחֲמוֹתָהּ וְרוּת דָּבְקָה בָּהּ

1:15 וַתֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבִמְתֵּךְ אֶל־עַמָּהּ וְאֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ שׁוּבִי אַחֲרֵי יְבִמְתֵּךְ׃

1:16 וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת אַל־תִּפְגְּעִי־בִי לְעָזְבֵךְ לָשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרָיִךְ כִּי אֶל־אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ וּבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִינִי אָלִין עַמֵּךְ עַמִּי וֵאלֹהַיִךְ אֱלֹהָי

1:17 בַּאֲשֶׁר תָּמוּתִי אָמוּת וְשָׁם אֶקָּבֵר כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לִי וְכֹה יֹסִיף כִּי הַמָּוֶת יַפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵךְ

1:18 וַתֵּ֣רֶא כִּי־מִתְאַמֶּ֣צֶת הִ֔יא לָלֶ֖כֶת אִתָּ֑הּ וַתֶּחְדַּ֖ל לְדַבֵּ֥ר אֵלֶֽיהָ׃

1:19 וַתֵּלַ֣כְנָה שְׁתֵיהֶ֗ם עַד־בֹּאָנָה֙ בֵּ֣ית לֶ֔חֶם וַיְהִ֣י כְבֹאָנָה֙ בֵּ֣ית לֶ֔חֶם וַתֵּהָ֥ם כָּל־הָעִ֖יר עֲלֵיהֶ֑ן וַתֹּאמַ֕רְנָה הֲזֹ֖את נָעֳמִֽי

1:20 וַתֹּ֣אמֶר אֲלֵיהֶ֗ן אַל־תִּקְרֶ֤אנָה לִי֙ נָעֳמִ֔י קְרֶ֥אןָ לִ֖י מָרָ֑א כִּי־הֵמַ֥ר שַׁדַּ֖י לִ֥י מְאֹֽד

1:21 אֲנִי֙ מְלֵאָ֣ה הָלַ֔כְתִּי וְרֵיקָ֖ם הֱשִׁיבַ֣נִי יְהוָ֑ה לָ֣מָּה תִקְרֶ֤אנָה לִי֙ נָעֳמִ֔י וַיהוָ֥ה עָנָ֖ה בִּ֑י וְשַׁדַּ֖י הֵרַ֥ע לִֽי

1:22 וַתָּ֣שָׁב נָעֳמִ֗י וְרוּת֙ הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּ֣ה כַלָּתָ֔הּ עִמָּ֖הּ הַשָּׁ֣בָה מִשְּׂדֵ֣י מוֹאָ֑ב וְהֵ֗מָּה בָּ֤אוּ בֵֽית־לֶחֶם֙ בִּתְחִלַּ֣ת קְצִ֣יר שְׂעֹרִֽים

1:1 In the days when the chieftains ruled, there was a famine in the land; and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, accompanied his wife and two sons, went to live in the country of Moab.

1:2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion — Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there.

1:3 Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

1:4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived there about ten years.

1:5 Then those two — Mahlon and Chilion — also died; so the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband.

1:6 She started out with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab;
for in the country of Moab she had heard that God had taken note of God's people
and given them food.
1:7 Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had
been living; and they set out on the road back to the land of Judah.
1:8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return, each of you to her
mother's house. May God deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead
and with me!
1:9 May God grant that each of you find security in the house of a husband!" And
she kissed them farewell. They broke into weeping
1:10 and said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."
1:11 But Naomi replied, "Turn back, my daughters! Why should you accompany
me? Have I any more sons in my body who might be husbands for you?
1:12 Go, return, my daughters, for I am too old to be married. Even if I thought
there was hope for me, even if I were married tonight and I also bore sons,
1:13 should you wait for them to grow up? Should you on their account debar
yourselves from marriage? Oh no, my daughters! My lot is far more bitter than
yours, for the hand of God has struck out against me."
1:14 They broke into weeping again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law
farewell. But Ruth clung to her.
1:15 So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods.
Go follow your sister-in-law."

1:16 But Ruth replied, “Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

1:17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. This and more may God do to me if anything but death parts me from you.”

1:18 When [Naomi] saw how determined she was to accompany her, she ceased to argue with her;

1:19 and the two went on [together] until they reached Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city buzzed with excitement over them. The women said, “Can this be Naomi?”

1:20 “Do not call me Naomi,” she replied. “Call me Mara, for Shaddai has made my lot very bitter.

1:21 I went away full, and God has brought me back empty. How can you call me Naomi, when God has dealt harshly with me, when Shaddai has brought misfortune upon me!”

1:22 Thus Naomi returned from the country of Moab; she returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Naomi’s husband and two sons die as a result of a famine in Moab. Naomi’s daughters-in-law remain loyal to her until she instructs them to return to their parent’s homes. After this, only one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, remains steadfast in her dedication to Naomi. In Naomi’s grief she tries to push away those who cared about her, but Ruth refused. Leveen notes that the word for “accompany,” the root הלך, is used nine times in

the first chapter and as such, functions as a key word in the chapter. Ruth insists on accompanying Naomi yet Naomi refuses. The root, הלך, is utilized to communicate successful accompaniment in verses 1, 7, and 19 – first when the family moves to Moab, then, when they begin the journey back to Judah, and finally, when Ruth and Naomi resume the trip together. This word also signifies Ruth's repeated attempts to accompany Naomi in verses 16 and 18. The dynamic root also voices Naomi's rejection of Ruth's comfort in verses 8, 11, and 12 where she repeatedly tells her daughters-in-law to turn back. Lastly in verse 21, the root reminds us that Naomi continues to suffer. Ultimately, she allows Ruth to stay physically by her side, but Naomi remains emotionally closed off until much later in the book.[44] Notably, this root, הלך, which contains a connotation of movement, is antithetical to the root of Shekhinah, שכן, which indicates repose and dwelling. Naomi needs to find her way home and establish her dwelling place before she can feel properly accompanied. As a model, Naomi and Ruth teach us that the one we wish to accompany must be open to it in order for our presence to be efficacious.

How can we combine this insight with the rabbinic teaching we explored earlier:

כל המבקר חולה נוטל אחד משישים בצערו.

The one who visits a sick person, takes away a sixtieth of his/her pain.[45]

Reading these two teachings together suggests that this sixtieth portion of the sufferer's pain is alleviated whether or not the patient opens him/herself to the spiritual caregivers presence or not. However the individual must be willing to join the pastor in

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[44] Adriane Leveen, "Call Me Bitterness: Individual Responses to Despair," in *Healing and the Jewish Imagination: Spiritual and Practical Perspectives on Judaism and Health*, ed. William Cutter (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2007), pp. 102-103.
[45] BT Nedarim 39b.

accompaniment in order to perceive the relief. A sixtieth of his/her pain could be so small as to go unrecognized. In contrast, when the sick person is open to the companionship then such a small measure of healing is magnified and potentially transformative.

Prayer

Psalms 30:3

יְהוָה אֱלֹהָי שִׁוַּעְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ וַתִּרְפָּאֵנִי

Adonai, my God, I cried out to You for help and You healed me.

May our cries to the Divine be held in a compassionate embrace. Whether our cries are anguished shouts or barely detectable whispers, let them be *seen*, let them be *heard*. Let our pain be known by the Shekhinah's ever-loyal presence. Imbue us with the strength to bear witness to the inaudible cries. Shekhinah, we beg for Your steadfast company, for the generosity of Your spiritual healing, as we encounter the inescapable pain contained within Your realm. As we embrace the pain that was not ours yesterday but is now felt by us today, grant us too your ineffable comfort.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE GOD WHO SEES ME

Patient Story: James

James was in his early 30s and was engaged to a woman he met when she was one of his at home aids. James had been sick his entire life. He came from a big family: he had two sisters and a brother. James' family had always taken care of him. His sisters were the seasoned protectors of their younger brother. When I met James he was on a ventilator and was no longer able to speak understandably. Because writing was also a challenge, it was unclear if he was coherent enough to understand what the doctor was telling him in order to make decisions on his own behalf. James' eyes were open, giving the impression that he was fully aware, but it was unclear how much he actually understood. The interdisciplinary team[46] went to talk to him about beginning hospice care and about removing the ventilator. After decades of illness, the end, death, seemed to be near. The decision fell to his family who would aim to make a decision as to what was best for James, presumably in line with what he would have wanted for himself. James spent this life defined by his illness, and now he was not able to make what might be the final decision of his life.

The Other

We cannot know for sure, but it is likely that over the thirty years of James' illness, there were times when his body became a mere object to be poked and prodded, when people forgot that there was more to James than the sick brother, son, or fiancé. James' family surrounded him with all of their best intentions – hoping beyond hope that

[46] The interdisciplinary team is made up of doctors, nurses, social workers and chaplains from the Palliative Care Unit and from James' medical unit.

they could honor him. The team and his family were committed to helping James find peace. And yet, James lay in another room not a part of this conversation. It was too physically trying, too emotionally stressful for him to struggle to communicate with the group; at the same time, it was unclear to us how much he fully grasped to begin with. James could not advocate for himself. The team and James' family worked together to make a decision on James' behalf that took into account not only James the sick person, but James the whole person. What was his personality? How did he live his life? The attempt was made to consider James in terms of his whole self yet we could not erase James' Otherness.

There were two distinct aspects to his Otherness. The first was a universal condition: Like everyone else, James was an Other to the people he knew, just as they were Other to him. Pamela Cooper-White describes the Other simply, "the not-like-me/not-like-us."[47] The nature of being in relationship renders anyone who is not the self – the Other. At the same time, the Other can also be understood as a person or group of individuals who possess some characteristic that makes them consistently and uniformly different from another group.

Emmanuel Levinas, a 20th century French philosopher discusses the Other at length as he outlines a theology of obligation to the Other. Judith Rosen-Berry explains, "Levinas's construction of an ethical, relational self involves preserving the integrity of

[47] Pamela Cooper-White, "The Other Within: Multiple Selves Making a World of Difference," *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry,* Vol. 29 (2009), p. 23.

the ‘other’ and does not presume to dominate or assimilate the ‘other.’”[48] Rosen-Berry highlights Levinas’s concern for the Other to retain his/her Otherness. He explains that he is not interested in the Other for the ways in which they are the same, rather he is interested in the Other precisely for the ways in which they are different. Levinas’ concern with “preserving the integrity of the ‘other’” suggests a celebration of diversity. He rails against the effort to turn the Other into the same because it denies the individual’s distinct personhood.

Levinas continues to explain that God can only be understood and approached through a reverential encounter with the Other. “God, then, is a term whose meaning comes to light through an ethical stance, a defense of the specificity of the human being, the other man: ‘The respect for the stranger and the sanctification of the name of the Eternal are strangely equivalent.”[49] Again this “defense of the specificity,” wherein we do not assert our norms onto the Other, is somehow equated with the sanctification of God. We honor and hallow God when we honor and hallow the Other. The act then of protecting the Other against those that might ask him/her to conform to reflect certain categorization is sacred work. Rosen-Berry elaborates on the theological implications of Levinas’ obligation to the Other. “So, although the divine personality is transcendent and other to human personality, when the personhood of the ‘other’ is carefully tended the divine achieves immanence. God is tended and restored in the tended and restored

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[48] Judith Rosen-Berry, "Revealing Hidden Aspects of Divinity in the 'Queer' Face: Towards a Jewish 'Queer' (Liberation) Theology," *European Judaism Eur Judaism* 41, no. 2 (2008): p. 147, doi:10.3167/ej.2008.410223.
[49] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 67.

person."[50] When the Other is seen in the wholeness of self, for the entirety of their personhood, they have been "tended and restored." According to Rosen-Berry, Levinas is suggesting a kind of healing that is possible when someone is appreciated for their whole self. God's presence in this world is predicated on this healing and whole person understanding of the Other.

Rachel Adler also supports maintaining some boundaries between Others. "Eradicating otherness, breaking down all boundaries between self and other, self and God, God and world simultaneously eradicates relatedness. How is it possible to have a covenant without an Other?"[51] Adler addresses the kind of Otherness that is inherent to relationship. In valuing the role of relationships, she argues that certain boundaries are necessary. While maintaining boundaries too strictly keeps us from entering into relationship with one another, a complete lack of boundaries denies any distinction between individuals. If there are no borders whatsoever, there can be no one other than the self to interact with. Adler elevates the necessity of relationship to a theology of God as Other. In order to be in relationship with God, God must in some way be separate from the self. Adler then continues, "Because God is Other, God creates a world filled with difference."[52] God as Other whose image we are created in, explains the reality of diversity among people.

In each of these frameworks Levinas and Adler describe an Other that is to be celebrated and protected – this Other is necessary to our ability to be in relationship and simultaneously obligates us to live ethically. However in another context, Adler describes

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[50] Judith Rosen-Berry, "Revealing Hidden Aspects of Divinity in the 'Queer' Face: Towards a Jewish 'Queer,'" p. 148.
[51] Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), pp. 91-92.
[52] Adler, *Engendering Judaism*, p. 92.

an Other who has been marginalized and relegated to the outskirts of society – this is the "stigmatized Other."[53] Adler understands the stigmatized Other through the model of the *metzora*, a person with *tzara'at*, in the book of Leviticus. *Tzara'at*, commonly translated as leprosy, is rather an unidentifiable skin condition that created significant stress for the Levitical priests. *Tzara'at* contamination dictated that the individual would be sent outside the Israelite encampment if or until the condition abated. Leviticus specifically outlines the process the priest and *metzora* undergo from identification of the ailment to separation from the rest of the community to ritualized reentry. Adler describes the severity with which the priests considered *tzara'at* and postulates the reasoning behind their reactions:

> By systematizing social categories, societies show where their boundaries are…People who cross the boundaries or seem to be teetering on their edges remind us of the fragility, the vulnerability of both society and self…People who are liminal or marginal – who have been pushed to the edges of social boundaries – also embody this anxiety-provoking place on the edge of the dangerous and the chaotic. This is where 'normal' society puts those it stigmatizes as non-normal, such as people of color, the poor, and the aged. At times of social stress, those who represent the norm are greatly tempted to relieve their terrors by casting out or punishing these dangerous Others.[54]

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[53] Rachel Adler, "Those Who Turn Away Their Faces: Tzaraat and Stigma," in *Healing and the Jewish Imagination: Spiritual and Practical Perspectives on Judaism and Health*, ed. William Cutter (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2007), p. 143.
[54] Adler, "Those Who Turn Away Their Faces: Tzaraat and Stigma," in *Healing and the Jewish Imagination: Spiritual and Practical Perspectives on Judaism and Health*, p. 146.

Adler describes the stigmatized Other as "non-normal." This person is somehow dangerous to society because s/he challenges the categories we have instituted to allow ourselves to feel safe from the truly chaotic nature of the world. In this case, Adler does not reference relational boundaries rather societal boundaries. These societal boundaries teach us what is safe and what is unsafe or in the language of Leviticus, what is pure and what is impure. The stigmatized Other, threatens the entire groups' sense of safety that has been established through manufactured order. Adler connects the threat of the non-normal, the stigmatized Other, with the *metzora*.

> *Tzara'at* is ancient Israel's version of what I am going to call radical illness, illness that strikes at the root of our being in the world, ravaging our communities, filling witnesses with fear. Radical illness erodes the body and often the self. It takes us and unmakes us. Radical illness seems to us arbitrary; either we do not know how to cure it or why it struck, or we do not know how to contain its spread. There is a dread about radical illness that is greater than the sum of its parts…Yet even an illness not known to be contagious may still bear a stigma so powerful that people shun the sufferer.[55]

Tzara'at was a threat to the entire community because it was considered both physically and socially contagious. The social contagion forced those present to confront the possibility of death and as a result their own mortality. Such proximity to death and the fear that provokes can lead community members to force social isolation upon the afflicted. Such an act is an attempt to recreate a sense of order by distancing oneself from the reality of chaos and disorder. The Levitical description of *tzara'at* and those who

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[55] Adler, "Those Who Turn Away Their Faces: Tzaraat and Stigma," in *Healing and the Jewish Imagination: Spiritual and Practical Perspectives on Judaism and Health*, p. 143.

suffered from the condition illuminates the Biblical response to radical illness and also forces us to confront the way that we categorize the sickest among us, sometimes for the sake of our own discomfort.

Adler is careful to refer to this person as the "*tzara'at* carrier" or "*tzara'at* sufferer" whereas the Biblical text offers a simple and blatant description – the *metzora*. By identifying the person who is sick only by their physical condition all other parts of their selves are negated. The term schizophrenic leaves room for no other identity than the symptoms and manifestations of the mental disorder. Instead to describe the individual as "a person with schizophrenia" communicates that this person has a particular diagnosis that constitutes only one piece of him/her. A person with schizophrenia could also be a person with six siblings or a person with an artistic inclination. Adler addresses this when she writes, "…entities with *tzara'at* seem to have in common that their wholeness is being compromised."[56] In Levinas' words, "the personhood of the 'other'" is most certainly being violated if as Adler describes "their wholeness is being compromised." While Levinas argues for the protection of the individual's particularities, he does not suggest that we relegate the Other to *only* be defined by them. The entirety of the Other's personhood must be acknowledged in order for God's immanence to be realized.

Cynthia Willett, Ellie Anderson, and Diana Meyers offer another useful definition of the Other that encapsulates James' experience of Otherness. "To be the other is to be

[56] Adler, "Those Who Turn Away Their Faces: Tzaraat and Stigma," in *Healing and the Jewish Imagination: Spiritual and Practical Perspectives on Judaism and Health*, p. 142.

the non-subject, the non-person, the non-agent - in short, the mere body."[57] People who suffer from illness in our society are consistently consigned to the role of Other, where we focus only on the disease and forget the whole person who inhabits the body. Like any Other, the person whose body is taken over by illness, deserves to have their whole person recognized and protected. James, too, became "a mere body," one that was poked and prodded, discussed and debated. It was the slow deterioration of his physical health that disabled him both physically and socially. While James was not designated with the social stigma of the *tzara'at* carrier, his worsening health did cause him to lose ownership over his body, his life, and his self. As his family humbly set out to make decisions that would alter James' future, both his autonomy and sense of self simultaneously diminished. James was the Other.

The God Who Sees

In the Biblical tradition the story of Hagar the Egyptian offers another insight into treatment of the Other. She comes from a different background than her Canaanite owners and is subjected to a life of slavery until Sarai gives her to Abram as a surrogate. Overwhelmed by the consequences of Sarai's anger and resentment, Hagar runs away to the wilderness to escape the horrors of her life. It is important to note that different factors lead Hagar to Otherness than those involved in cases of illness. Hagar is Other because she is Egyptian and not Canaanite, because she is a slave and not a free person. However, Hagar possesses the freedom of physical ability not shared by James – whose

[57] Willett, Cynthia, Anderson, Ellie and Meyers, Diana, "Feminist Perspectives on the Self", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/feminism-self/>.

physical condition precludes him from independence. Still, Hagar's story and her interaction with the Divine reveals to us a God image that can be healing for those who suffer as the Other – regardless of the differentiating influences.

After Hagar fled encampment, her Otherness is symbolized by her place outside of the camp, much like the *metzora*. The *metzora* is forcibly placed outside while Hagar seemingly chooses to enter the wilderness. The wilderness represents a place that is untamed and dangerous, it is outside the physical and social boundaries of what are considered safe. This would not be an easy or favorable decision for Hagar to make. By running away, she communicates the desperate situation she is in with Abram and Sarai. While she is in the wilderness, an angel of God appears to Hagar to inquire after her and ultimately to give her instruction.

Gen. 16:9 וַיֹּ֤אמֶר לָהּ֙ מַלְאַ֣ךְ יְהוָ֔ה שׁ֚וּבִי אֶל־גְּבִרְתֵּ֔ךְ וְהִתְעַנִּ֖י תַּחַ֥ת יָדֶֽיהָ

Gen. 16:10 וַיֹּ֤אמֶר לָהּ֙ מַלְאַ֣ךְ יְהוָ֔ה הַרְבָּ֥ה אַרְבֶּ֖ה אֶת־זַרְעֵ֑ךְ וְלֹ֥א יִסָּפֵ֖ר מֵרֹֽב

Gen. 16:11 וַיֹּ֤אמֶר לָהּ֙ מַלְאַ֣ךְ יְהוָ֔ה הִנָּ֥ךְ הָרָ֖ה וְיֹלַ֣דְתְּ בֵּ֑ן וְקָרָ֥את שְׁמ֖וֹ יִשְׁמָעֵ֑אל

כִּֽי־שָׁמַ֥ע יְהוָ֖ה אֶל־עָנְיֵֽךְ

Gen. 16:9 And the angel of God said to her, "Go back to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands."

Gen. 16:10 And the angel of God said to her, "I will greatly increase your offspring, And they will be too many to count."

Gen. 16:11 The angel of God said to her further, "Behold, you are with child and will bear a son; You will call him Ishmael, For God has paid heed to your suffering.

The angel of God promises Hagar that she will give birth to a son, Ishmael, and that her future offspring will be plentiful. This messenger of God encourages Hagar to return to Abram and Sarai even though she will continue to suffer under those circumstances. Danna Nolan Fewell offers an understanding into why Hagar might have returned to her abusers.

> An impoverished woman without family would have had few options. She might have become a prostitute. If completely destitute, she might have little recourse but to sell herself into slavery. And, of course, there was always the danger of being kidnapped and being sold into slavery by someone else.[58]

Fewell reminds us of the desperate position, Hagar, a pregnant and poor woman, finds herself in. It is devastating that God does not promise her a better life in the immediate present but instead ensures that she remains in an abusive one. She cannot survive in the wilderness on her own so instead she returns to the hostile company of Abram and Sarai.

It is astounding then that when Hagar speaks up for the first time since she received this news, she responds in verse 13 by saying,

Gen. 16:13 וַתִּקְרָא שֵׁם־יְהוָה הַדֹּבֵר אֵלֶיהָ אַתָּה אֵל רָאִי

> **Gen. 16:13** She called out the name of God who spoke to her, you are El Roi (the God who sees me).

[58] Danna Nolan Fewell, "Changing the Subject: Retelling the Story of Hagar the Egyptian," in *Genesis: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 183.

El Roi – the God who sees me – suggests a deeply personal and healing interaction that occurred between Hagar and God[59]. We might expect her to respond in anger or profound disappointment, but this pronouncement, which suggests that she agrees that this El Roi "has paid heed to [her] suffering" as suggested in verse 11 comes as a surprise. The experience of being seen by God enables Hagar to find the inner strength to continue on her journey for her own sake and for the sake of her unborn child. Who is the El Roi who possesses this healing power?

> Thistle Parker-Hartog writes in a modern Midrash,
>
> …when El Roi answered my prayers, he told me "Fear not, for God has heard the lad's voice where he is." My dear son had only pretended to worship Yahweh, and had learned our faith without my knowing. El Roi led us steadfastly from that point on.[60]

In this Midrash, Parker-Hartog explores the idea that El[61] Roi is a separate deity from Yahweh. In the narrative El Roi becomes a loyal God to those who are Othered – Hagar and Ishmael. In a monotheistic setting, we can consider El Roi as one aspect of God, specifically, the one who is present for those who experience the stigma of Otherness. Divine sense of sight is fundamental to the healing capacity of this image of God.

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[59] Although the biblical text notes in each verse that Hagar meets the "angel of God," she speaks here as though she interacted with God directly. While the text is indefinite here, it seems that Hagar experienced an encounter with God.

[60] Thistle Parker-Hartog, "The Stranger's Perspective," *Bridges: Confronting Text and Tradition* 8, no. 1/2 (2000): p. 41, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40358534.

[61] "But it must be noted that in its use of El the Hebrew of the Bible is completely unconscious of the ancient pagan use of El as the proper name of the head of the Phoenician, and no doubt also of the Canaanite, pantheon. El in the Bible is fully synonymous with the proper name Yhwh." While the use of El that predates the Hebrew Bible would have been gendered male, by its use in Genesis it was synonymous with Yhwh to the Israelite audience. M. H. Segal, "El, Elohim, and Yhwh in the Bible," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 46, no. 2 (October 1955): p. 91, doi:10.2307/1452792.

As we strive to understand the healing properties of seeing Otherness, we initially turn to First Samuel 16, which highlights the distinction between Divine sight and human sight. At the beginning of the chapter God instructs Saul to travel to Bethlehem in order to anoint Saul's successor as King of Israel. God specifically directs Samuel to find Jesse, who God identifies as the father of the next king. The following biblical passage describes Samuel's presumption when he encounters Jesse and his sons and then God's subsequent reaction.

1Sam. 16:6 וַיְהִ֣י בְבוֹאָ֔ם וַיַּ֖רְא אֶת־אֱלִיאָ֑ב וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אַ֔ךְ נֶ֥גֶד יְהוָ֖ה מְשִׁיחֽוֹ

1Sam. 16:7 וַיֹּ֤אמֶר יְהוָה֙ אֶל־שְׁמוּאֵ֔ל אַל־תַּבֵּ֥ט אֶל־מַרְאֵ֖הוּ וְאֶל־גְּבַ֣הַּ קוֹמָת֑וֹ כִּ֣י מְאַסְתִּ֔יהוּ כִּ֣י ׀ לֹ֣א אֲשֶׁ֣ר יִרְאֶ֣ה הָאָדָ֔ם כִּ֥י הָאָדָ֖ם יִרְאֶ֣ה לַעֵינַ֑יִם וַיהוָ֖ה יִרְאֶ֥ה לַלֵּבָֽב

1Sam. 16:6 When they arrived and he saw Eliav, he thought: "Surely God's anointed stands before God."

1Sam. 16:7 But God said to Samuel, "Pay no attention to his appearance or his stature, for I have rejected him. For not as humanity sees [does God see] – humanity sees on the surface level whereas God sees into the heart."

Upon meeting Jesse's sons, Samuel assumes that Eliav, the firstborn, is God's choice for Saul's replacement. The repeated use of the root ראה emphasizes the role of sight in this passage. Apparently when Samuel first saw Eliav and noticed his position as firstborn son, Samuel could only do surface level seeing. God, on the other hand, could see well into Eliav's heart and made the decision about the rising King of Israel based on criteria that were inaccessible to Samuel.

This ability to see more deeply and what is less visible to the human eye, belongs to God. Psalm 139 demonstrates that this Divine sight is not confined within the bounds of a human sense of time.

Ps. 139:13 כִּי־אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כִלְיֹתָי תְּסֻכֵּנִי בְּבֶטֶן אִמִּי

Ps. 139:14 אוֹדְךָ עַל כִּי נוֹרָאוֹת נִפְלֵיתִי נִפְלָאִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וְנַפְשִׁי יֹדַעַת מְאֹד

Ps. 139:15 לֹא־נִכְחַד עָצְמִי מִמֶּךָּ אֲשֶׁר־עֻשֵּׂיתִי בַסֵּתֶר רֻקַּמְתִּי בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ

Ps. 139:16 גָּלְמִי | רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ

Ps. 139:13 It was You who created my conscience; You fashioned me in my mother's womb.

Ps. 139:14 I praise You, for I am awesomely, wondrously made; Your work is wonderful; I know it very well.

Ps. 139:15 My frame was not concealed from You when I was shaped in a hidden place, knit together in the recesses of the earth.

Ps. 139:16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance

Psalms 139 identifies God as the psalmist's creator. From the very beginning of this creation, God has seen the psalmist, before s/he physically and emotionally took form. El Roi then is not limited to seeing in one moment of time. Rather, El Roi is able to perceive the unformed origins of a human being. In the 1 Samuel text, Divine sight extends past the surface of appearance and into a person's heart. This psalm further emphasizes God's capacity to see beyond the surface. If God has the power to see us before we have even come into being, then God can faithfully bear witness to a person's true self. The God who sees will not be distracted by the stigma of illness that may sidetrack family and

friends. Instead, the God who sees provides healing to the Other through the gift of Divine sight.

Our sages elevate Divine sight by accentuating its role at the holy moment of revelation in the following Midrash.

א"ר לוי נראה להם הקב"ה כאיקונין הזו שיש לה פנים מכל מקום, אלף בני אדם מביטין בה והיא מבטת בכולם. כך הקב"ה כשהיה מדבר כל אחד ואחד מישראל היה אומ' עמי הדבר מדבר, אנכי יי אלהיכם אין כת' כאן, אלא אנכי יי אלהיך (שמות כ:ב).

> Rabbi Levi said, The Holy One appeared to them as though God were a statue with faces on every side. A thousand people might be looking at the statue, but it would appear to be looking at each one of them. So, too, when the Holy One spoke, each and every person in Israel could say, "The Divine Word is addressing me." Note that Scripture does not say, "I am Adonai *your* (pl) God"; but "I am the Adonai *your* (seeing) God" (Ex 20:2).[62]

Rabbi Levi references the idea that a seeing God is one that can see from all sides, and that enables each person to have an individualized revelatory experience. The notion of being seen is so powerful that the Rabbis would be willing to image God as a statue with faces on every side, even though this image smacks of idolatry. The benefit of this image, idolatrous resonances notwithstanding, is that it emphasizes Divine sight, providence, and the idea of a personal relationship with God. To be seen by God for one's whole self is an immeasurably validating experience. The relationship extends beyond the superficial. When the individual is no longer seen only for his/her Otherness, then the painful power

[62] Pesikta de Rav Kahana 12:25.

that Otherness once possessed is diminished. When each part of a person is seen, each part of that person is called important because it was worthy of being seen.

The Seeing God Who Names

El Roi is capable of seeing a person's whole self. Yet the power of being seen for who one sincerely is, will not be felt unless the individual knows they have been seen. In order to accomplish this the God who sees must also be a God who names. The process of naming lets the Other know that they have been seen as a whole. Rachel Adler underscores both the risk of not seeing the whole person and the restorative ability of naming.

> For the feminist reader, the most problematic characteristics of the rabbinic hero-tales we examine here are their tactics for the de/facing of women: silence and invisibility on the one hand and on the other what I have called dis/remembering. Invisibility is the hiding of women. Silence is their exile from discourse, their erasure from the surface of the text. An androcentric hermeneutic conspires with the text to perpetuate and normalize its silence about women…Dis/remembering is a different kind of rending. If re/membering is the restoration of wholeness, then in every act of dis/remembering inheres a dis/membering. A dismembering is a mutilation. A dis/remembering is a particular kind of mutilation through language – a de/facing, a tearing away for the face of the other. Naming and telling are the means whereby the memory of our faces is preserved.[63]

[63] Adler, *Engendering Judaism*, p. 3.

Adler explains the de/facing of women as a lack of visibility. Where are women in the classic rabbinic hero tales that she references? They infrequently appear as the wife and more often are missing entirely. We cannot see the role of women in Jewish history when we have no representations of them in this religious corpus of teachings. We dis/remember when we pretend as if they did not exist. Adler describes this as a violent tearing, a kind of brokenness. This brokenness is imaged as "a tearing away for the face of the other." When we remove what is possibly visible to us, we actively refuse to see the Other. The possibility of healing, of wholeness, rests in the action of naming and in telling. When we name, we restore. When we name we create the possibility of remembering and therefore the renewed ability to see the face of the Other. According to Adler, we name so that we can continue to see the whole person. In the case of the sick patient, we aim to see them as a whole person and then we name that for them so that they know they have been seen. However, when we are with them and forget to search beyond our surface level seeing, then, naming jolts us into a kind of remembering where we are moved to see the whole person.

In the creation narrative of Genesis 1 God demonstrates how seeing and naming are interrelated and can alternate between these two processes. In the first case God sees and then God names.

Gen. 1:4 וַיַּ֤רְא אֱלֹהִים֙ אֶת־הָאֹ֔ור כִּי־טֹ֑וב וַיַּבְדֵּ֣ל אֱלֹהִ֔ים בֵּ֥ין הָאֹ֖ור וּבֵ֥ין הַחֹֽשֶׁךְ

Gen. 1:5 וַיִּקְרָ֨א אֱלֹהִ֜ים ׀ לָאֹור֙ יֹ֔ום וְלַחֹ֖שֶׁךְ קָ֣רָא לָ֑יְלָה וַיְהִי־עֶ֥רֶב וַיְהִי־בֹ֖קֶר יֹ֥ום אֶחָֽד

Gen. 1:4 God saw that the light was *tov*, and God separated the light from the darkness.

Gen. 1:5 God named the light Day, and the darkness God named Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

In the first verse, God sees that the creation of light was *tov* and as a result God separates the light from darkness. *Tov* is typically translated as "good" but the meaning of the word is rather vague and does not give us much information about what it is that God saw. Is *tov* as good a moral category like it will be later with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? Does *tov* as good indicate obedience as in good behavior? These are likely not aspects of goodness that have not become relevant at this stage in creation. It is clear that *tov* seems to communicate approval because God marks this act of creation through the naming of light and darkness as Day and Night. The verse below from Genesis 2 further illuminates this particular use of *tov* in the creation stories.

Gen. 2:18 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֹא־טוֹב הֱיוֹת הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ

Gen. 2:18 God said, "It is not *tov* for a human being to be alone."

This verse gives us insight into the meaning of *tov* by describing the negative – what is not *tov*. In Genesis 2, our second creation story, when God creates HaAdam – the first human being, God determines that it is not *tov* for this person to be alone. God then creates a second person. It would seem that this singular human being was incomplete or not whole, when living without a companion. Perhaps then, *tov*, in this case, indicates wholeness. HaAdam is not whole without a partner and so the act of creating human beings was not complete. God continued to work until this creation was whole. On the other hand, in the verses above from Genesis 1, when God created the light and saw that it was *tov*, that it was whole, God's creation could be named to mark its wholeness. Here, God sees the wholeness of a part of creation and then names that being so the act of

seeing will be commemorated and known. In the verse below, also from Genesis 1, God reverses the order of seeing and naming.

Gen. 1:10 וַיִּקְרָ֣א אֱלֹהִ֣ים ׀ לַיַּבָּשָׁה֮ אֶ֪רֶץ וּלְמִקְוֵ֣ה הַמַּ֣יִם קָרָ֣א יַמִּ֑ים וַיַּ֣רְא אֱלֹהִ֔ים כִּי־טֽוֹב׃

Gen. 1:10 God named the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters God named Seas. And God saw that this was whole.

Here, God first names this aspect of creation – Earth and Sea – and then sees that it was whole. In this case, God names the dry land and the waters in order to see their wholeness. Through the act of naming them, God is able to witness them as whole entities.

The value of this is seen in Psalms 147 where God names as a healing act.

Ps. 147:2 בּוֹנֵ֣ה יְרוּשָׁלַ֣ם יְהוָ֑ה נִדְחֵ֖י יִשְׂרָאֵ֣ל יְכַנֵּֽס׃

Ps. 147:3 הָרֹפֵ֥א לִשְׁבוּרֵי־לֵ֑ב וּמְחַבֵּ֖שׁ לְעַצְּבוֹתָֽם׃

Ps. 147:4 מוֹנֶ֣ה מִסְפָּ֣ר לַכּוֹכָבִ֑ים לְכֻלָּ֖ם שֵׁמ֣וֹת יִקְרָֽא׃

Ps. 147:2 God rebuilds Jerusalem; gathers in the exiles of Israel.

Ps. 147:3 God heals their broken hearts, and binds up their wounds.

Ps. 147:4 God counted the number of the stars; to each gave its name.

The Psalm begins with the rebuilding of Jerusalem – a restorative act for the sufferers in exile. In the third verse, the psalmist explicitly states that God is in midst of healing, of making their broken hearts whole again. Simultaneously in the fourth verse, God counts the stars (a reference to God's promise to make Israel as numerous as כְּכוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם–

the stars in the sky[64]) and names each one. Exile is a symbol of Otherness, like Hagar in the dangerous wilderness of the unknown, when one is distanced from the center, they are Other. God names each star, each person in Israel, so that they will find healing from the pain of exile, the pain of Otherness. God's capacity to see what is whole enables God to see the wholeness of the Other and mend each individual broken heart.

Pastoral Application

At the end of the first creation story, in Genesis 1:27, we learn that human beings are created בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים – in the image of God. Perhaps, to have been created in the image of God means that we share the God-like ability of seeing wholeness and naming it. As the text of our Torah continues, we find countless examples of the power to name used to subjugate and oppress. Our challenge then, is to access this God-like capacity that we possess, and to use it for healing purposes as God does in Psalms 147 and to re/face and remember the silent, the hidden, and the Othered as Adler implores us. As spiritual care givers it is our responsibility to embody this charge.

Carol and Richard Levy call on the theological language of Martin Buber to explain the value of person-to-person naming in pastoral relationships. They explain that we name – ourselves and Others – in order to move out of the I-It encounter and into an I-Thou encounter. They suggest that the act of naming will move us from a space where we feel only superficially or partially seen and into a space where our whole self is

[64] Genesis 22:17, 26:4, etc.

noticed, accounted for, and appreciated.[65] In the latter I-Thou moment, God is present. When we use our God-like capacity to see and name in a way that yields healing and wholeness, we usher God's presence into our midst. Or as Judith Rosen-Berry described in an application of Levinas' theology of Other, "…when the personhood of the 'other' is carefully tended the divine achieves immanence. God is tended and restored in the tended and restored person."[66] The careful tending of the personhood of the Other occurs when the Other has been seen for their wholeness of self. At that time, God achieves immanence.

In returning to Hagar as the personification of Otherness, we see how she is both transformed and then able to transform through her seeing encounter with God.

Gen 16:13 וַתִּקְרָא שֵׁם־יְהוָה הַדֹּבֵר אֵלֶיהָ אַתָּה אֵל רֳאִי

Gen 16:13 She called out the name of God who spoke to her, you are El Roi (the God who sees me).

It is not just that Hagar has been seen but that she too has seen, and thus has been able to name her Seer. God then was able to be fully present with Hagar after she provided the name El Roi. In the act of naming God El Roi, Hagar was able to acknowledge and fully appreciate her experience of being known for her personhood. She marked the moment by naming God and in that celebration of being fully seen, God become truly immanent. As pastoral care givers we can help our patients see and name God themselves, so that they can access God's healing presence.

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[65] Carol Levy and Richard N. Levy, "Of Teachers and Angels: Jewish Insights on Transforming the Relationship between Patient and Health Professional," *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly* (Summer 2012): p. 56.
[66] Judith Rosen-Berry, "Revealing Hidden Aspects of Divinity in the 'Queer' Face: Towards a Jewish 'Queer,'" p. 148.

Psalms 41 below offers a cautionary tale to spiritual care givers. The psalmist describes the devastating consequences of one who sees incompletely and names in search of power rather than wholeness.

Ps. 41:6 אוֹיְבַי יֹאמְרוּ רַע לִי מָתַי יָמוּת וְאָבַד שְׁמוֹ

Ps. 41:7 וְאִם־בָּא לִרְאוֹת | שָׁוְא יְדַבֵּר לִבּוֹ יִקְבָּץ־אָוֶן לוֹ יֵצֵא לַחוּץ יְדַבֵּר

Ps. 41:8 יַחַד עָלַי יִתְלַחֲשׁוּ כָּל־שֹׂנְאָי עָלָי | יַחְשְׁבוּ רָעָה לִי׃

Ps. 41:9 דְּבַר־בְּלִיַּעַל יָצוּק בּוֹ וַאֲשֶׁר שָׁכַב לֹא־יוֹסִיף לָקוּם

Ps. 41:10 גַּם־אִישׁ שְׁלוֹמִי | אֲשֶׁר־בָּטַחְתִּי בוֹ אוֹכֵל לַחְמִי הִגְדִּיל עָלַי עָקֵב

Ps. 41:6 My enemies speak evil of me, “When will he die and his name be blotted out?”

Ps. 41:7 And if one comes to see me, his heart speaks falsely. He gathers up wickedness for himself, leaves, speaks outside**.**

Ps. 41:8 Together all who hate me whisper against me, against me, they plot out my bad fortune.

Ps. 41:9 “A wicked thing is firmly set in him, as he lies down he will not rise up again.”

Ps 41:10 Even my close friend, who I trusted, who ate my bread, deeply deceived me.

…

Verses 6-10 outline the psalmist’s experience of becoming seriously ill and the resulting mistreatment by his supposed friends. Those who once shared meals together and presumably were able to relate to him, now talk only of his illness that is ravaging his

body. Our psalmist is the Other. In verse 6, his enemies (former friends) use naming not for healing but instead to dis/remember, like Adler writes. They seek to tear away the face of the Other rather than that to openly encounter it. In verse 7, the psalmist explains that each visitor can only see his illness and cannot see him fully. The psalmist expressed his anger and frustration over being treated this way so much so that he begins to call his former friends, his enemies. It may be that these visitors are well-meaning and that the psalmist has exaggerated their ill intent towards him. If this is the case, these verses highlight how important it is to be careful and intentional with how we interact with someone who has been made to feel like the Other.

Ps. 41:2 אַשְׁרֵי מַשְׂכִּיל אֶל־דָּל בְּיוֹם רָעָה יְמַלְּטֵהוּ יְהוָה

Ps. 41:3 יְהוָה | יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ וְיְחַיֵּהוּ יְאֻשַּׁר [וְ][אַשַּׁר] בָּאָרֶץ וְאַל־תִּתְּנֵהוּ בְּנֶפֶשׁ אֹיְבָיו

Ps. 41:4 יְהוָה יִסְעָדֶנּוּ עַל־עֶרֶשׂ דְּוֵי כָּל־מִשְׁכָּבוֹ הָפַכְתָּ בְחָלְיוֹ

Ps. 41:5 אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי יְהוָה חָנֵּנִי רְפָאָה נַפְשִׁי כִּי־חָטָאתִי לָךְ

Ps. 41:2 Happy is the one who *maskil* the poor, on a day of bad fortune, may God deliver him.

Ps. 41:3 May God protect him and keep him alive. May he be called happy in the land. And do not hand him over to his enemies.

Ps. 41:4 May God sustain him on [his] sickbed, You transform the bed of his sickness.

Ps. 41:5 I said, “Adonai, be gracious to me, heal me, for I sinned against you.”

In previous verses of the psalm, the psalmist references God’s role as healer and gives us insight into how one should treat the one who suffers. The person who משכיל the

sufferer will find healing and happiness. The meaning of משכיל is not immediately clear. משכיל as a noun typically means an enlightened person or as a verb typically indicates the act of becoming more learned, intelligent or enlightened. The form in this verse, משכיל אל דל where the verb takes an indirect object is unusual. Because of this, Ibn Ezra, a medieval commentator from Spain, seeks to clarify the meaning of the verb.

> משכיל כמו מביט כמו מסתכל הוית. והנכון: מגזרת שכל שישים לבו שישכיל
>
> משכיל as in sees or looks; the more correct definition is to understand with one's heart regarding the patient.

According to Ibn Ezra, משכיל does not refer to a superficial sight or perception of the Other, rather we are to use our own hearts to connect to the Other. If we perceive this kind of sight as originating from our eyes, then we may be tempted to only see what is on the surface – to see the stigmatized Other. However, when we begin from the heart, what is most truthful inside of us, then we are more likely and more able to see what is most truthful inside of the Other.

However, this heart-to-heart seeing is challenging. In order to do this we have to be aware of our own biases and how they may affect the way we interact with the Other. Carrie Doehring writes in *The Practice Of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach*:

> Alterity is an evocative term describing each person's otherness: those aspects of their religious or spiritual world hidden by what seems similar or familiar to us. As intercultural spiritual caregivers we are responsible for monitoring the ways that our social location and privileges make us see the other through our own experience, often eclipsing what is mysterious about them. Too easily we

> assimilate the differences of others into our own story-making, sometimes by imposing our religious beliefs and values on those seeking care.[67]

Doehring highlights the tendency to unintentionally group people into ready-made categories that may not actually fit or properly describe them. In doing so, we run the risk of denying them the integrity of their whole selves. As pastoral care givers we inescapably bring our experiences and worldview to each patient visit. Doehring outlines that the risk of this dynamic is to make assumptions about the Other's emotional and life experiences because of our own backgrounds. As Levinas warns, when we are unable to see the differences between ourselves and the Other we run the risk of subsuming the Other. The irony is that it is precisely what makes them different from us that might lead us to unintentionally ignore those differences. Doehring uses sight here to refer to this unacknowledged bias that leads to surface level seeing. It is precisely this bias that will keep us from whole person seeing.

Doehring continues, "Radical respect for alterity describes the quality of relationship that awaits the emergence of mystery. Trusting in the ultimate goodness of alterity, we are more likely to welcome de-centering and jarring moments that could become epiphanies."[68] As pastoral care givers we must challenge ourselves to embrace diversity and confront the assumptions we make in people's stories. We remember that every person is an Other in relation to the self. Yet the stigmatized Other, a designation that includes those who are ill in our society, should not be marginalized precisely

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[67] Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach,* Revised and Expanded Edition ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), p. 33.
[68] Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach,* Revised and Expanded Edition ed., p. 35.

because of their differences. It is at this point that we will be able to see a self that is inclusive of the difference.

Moving beyond our natural presumptions and tendency towards superficial seeing, we must challenge ourselves to leave what is comfortable and known to us and join the Other outside of the camp. In studying the temporary banishment of the *metzora*, Adler warns us, "Before we become shocked at this inhumanity, we should consider that hospitals and nursing homes in our culture are dwellings outside the camp."[69] For legitimate reasons the sickest members of our society reside in hospitals and nursing homes. Yet it is essential that we remember these locations are outside of the camp. They are meant to be a temporary – although sometimes permanent – dwelling place for those who are not able to live in their independent residences. They are just as dangerous as the wilderness would have been to the Israelites – long hospitals stays carry a high risk of infection for the patient and depression rates are significant in long-term care facilities.[70] As pastoral care givers, we must cross these boundaries outside of the camp and into the rooms, which may challenge our sense of comfort and order.

Rabbi Ruth Gais recounts some of her experiences stepping over the threshold into the realm of the patients in a state psychiatric hospital.

> Sometimes, as I listen to Shem Nachum or Kurt, a provocative, fervent Messianic Jew, always dressed in white, or Elizabeth, who is Jesus, I am afraid. Would one of them hurt me? Many of them are, after all, paranoid or delusional, with past

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[69] Adler, "Those Who Turn Away Their Faces: Tzaraat and Stigma," in *Healing and the Jewish Imagination: Spiritual and Practical Perspectives on Judaism and Health*, p. 154.
[70] Dietmar Kramer et al., "Depression in Nursing Homes: Prevalence, Recognition, and Treatment," *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 39, no. 4 (2009): p. 345, doi:10.2190/pm.39.4.a.

> histories of violence. And maybe they will hurt me because to them I am the Other? Sometimes, though, as they look at me, a person who can come and go as she pleases, who can unlock doors, who has power, I can see that they are afraid.[71]

Gais reports her fear when she engages with some of the most stigmatized and admittedly perplexing Others in our society. In her discussion of *tzara'at,* Adler offered us compelling reasons for the fear that permeates our confrontation with such difference – namely that it is "dangerous" to our own sense of world order and the safety we find in that order. It *is* scary to push oneself out of the order and into the chaos – to be challenged by the unpredictability of mental illness. And still, Gais remains present through that fear, and finds that just beyond the fear lies a brief moment of seeing the whole person.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, in a 1963 address to the American Medical Association discusses the importance of treating a patient as a "human being" and the necessity to examine the doctor-patient relationship. I will suggest that Heschel's examination of the doctor applies equally to the pastoral care giver. "We cannot speak about the patient as a person unless we also probe the meaning of the doctor [and pastoral care giver] as a person. You can only sense a person if you are a person."[72] According to Heschel, the doctor or pastoral care giver, must see her/himself as a whole person in order to view the patient this way. This call for the pastor to look inside oneself in order to see the Other

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[71] Ruth Gais, "Ruth, Naomi, and Levinas's Other: Asymmetrical Pastoral Care," *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly* (Summer 2012): p. 114.
[72] Abraham J. Heschel, "The Patient as a Person," in *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition: Writings from the Bible to Today*, ed. Freeman L. David and Abrams Z. Judith (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999), p. 234.

and provide the most effective spiritual care is at the heart of Pamela Cooper-White's charge in her chapter *The Other Within*,

> By coming to know and to love the stranger(s) within, especially the most vulnerable and aggressive parts of ourselves, we can begin to engage in a kind of internal justice-making, whereby the voices we have silenced within ourselves can come to expression. By learning what they bear for us and how they may have helped us to survive across a lifetime of emotional challenges, we can give them new respect and appreciation – even as we may need to parley conflicting affects and impulses toward a negotiated peace. This kind of inner peacemaking, which recognizes our unconscious complexity and multiplicity, is what makes us most able to meet the demands of external diversity. No longer continually threatened by otherness within ourselves, we can meet and enter into genuine encounters with the others in the outer world.[73]

Cooper-White implores us to preempt our care for the Other with our own self-work aimed at addressing the many different particularities within each of us. She postulates that when we can build and acceptance an appreciation for the Otherness inside each of us, then we will be able to do that for another person. Like Heschel, she suggests that we cannot see the Other as a whole person until we see ourselves the same way.

And when we do, we will be poised to guide the Other towards spiritual healing. As pastoral care givers, once we have seen a person for all of their parts, and not only those that are temporarily most prominent, we can help our patients to access the other aspects of themselves.

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[73] Cooper-White, "The Other Within: Multiple Selves Making a World of Difference," p. 32.

> Rabbi David Leikes lived more than a hundred years. He was esteemed as an authority on rabbinic civil law, and his decisions were admired by all the judges. Once, when the aged rabbi was on his deathbed, a very complicated case arose. His demise was expected any moment. The judges hoped that the ancient rabbi's mind might still be sufficiently clear to aid them, perhaps for the last time. They visited his home and stated their request. The rabbi's children protested vigorously and argued against troubling him, lest thereby his end be hastened. Suddenly the door opened, and the dying rabbi entered. 'Did you know,' he said, 'that we are taught in the Talmud [B. Shabbat 10a] that one who judges a case correctly becomes thereby God's partner? Yet you wish to deprive me of this opportunity!' He gave his decision in the difficult case in a manner so remarkable that it left no doubt as to its correctness. He returned to his bed with the help of his children, and a moment later he died.[74]

The rabbi in this Hasidic tale is able to find peace because he had the opportunity to draw upon parts of himself that were not defined by his body or his illness. His children's understandable instinct to shield him only created a greater distance between himself and the rest of society. The rabbi has a long career and established sense of self based on his professional accomplishments. These elements of his personhood were rendered secondary to his health concerns by his well-meaning but misguided children. As pastoral care givers, we are obligated to celebrate the diversity of the Other by creating space for

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[74] Hasidic Lore. *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition: Writings from the Bible to Today*, ed. David L. Freeman and Judith Z. Abrams (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999), p. 11-12.

each person to demonstrate their whole selves. This opportunity for integration offers a moment of healing for the stigmatized Other.

Prayer

Psalms 71:23

תְּרַנֵּנָה שְׂפָתַי כִּי אֲזַמְּרָה־לָּךְ וְנַפְשִׁי אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ

My lips shall be jubilant, as I sing a hymn to You, my whole being, which You have redeemed.

To the God who sees:

Please, God, see me. As You did for Hagar in the wilderness when she was only a body to Abram and a threat to Sarai. As You saw her, see me too. You looked into her soul and witnessed a displaced traveler, a suffering servant, a scared soon to be mother. Perhaps You also saw an accomplished poet, a skilled healer, and a compassionate listener. My whole being cries out to You, desperate to be redeemed. Your redemption, Your Divine sight, promises me the gift of wholeness. On that healing day, my lips shall be jubilant and I will sing a hymn to You, the God who sees me.

CHAPTER THREE:
I'M MAD AT YOU

Patient Story: Carolyn

In an effort to maximize the learning I did in my internship at Mount Sinai Hospital, I simultaneously participated in a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). The CPE model of learning is based in action-reflection-action. Each unit is made up of a small cohort of 5-7 chaplain interns who reflect on their chaplaincy experiences with the goal of strengthening pastoral awareness and skills. In a session towards the end of the unit, one of my group mates, Cantor Rayna Green, presented an enlightening interaction she had with a patient. Because of their beautiful pastoral encounter, since that class, I have carefully considered again and again the role of anger in a pastoral meeting.

At the time, Carolyn was a 65-year-old woman residing in a post acute rehabilitation center where Green served as Chaplain intern. She was in physical therapy for a heart condition that had necessitated her living in various different care facilities for the last several years. Because Carolyn had lost her independence in recent years as a result of her medical issues and because she lacked a supportive or present family, Carolyn felt profoundly lonely and unhappy. She worried that she was a burden to those around her and struggled to manage the immense pain she carried with her.

Carolyn could also identify that she was very angry. In the past, when Carolyn had tried to express her anger she was met with reactions that both belittled and shamed her for her honest emotional expression. Carolyn reported that her friend with similarly challenging life circumstances instructed her not to waste her time being angry, rather she should use her energy to help other people. Carolyn idealized this response to anger and

shared that she wished she could ignore her anger as her friend does. On a separate occasion, Carolyn confided in a rabbi that she was angry with God to which the rabbi scolded her for her inappropriate reaction. Time and again Carolyn was told not to be angry, yet she remained so and felt deeply ashamed of it. Thankfully, Rayna elegantly took this opportunity to validate Carolyn's anger with God and offered her the chance to speak to God directly about it.

Anger

What does one do when s/he is simply angry at their situation? When s/he is angry for their lot in life, angry for the injustices that have been thrust upon them? In a relationship with another person, if that person acts in such a way that offends or hurts us, we can *tell* them. When there is an offender, we have the ability to confront them. But what if there is no obvious Other for us to address? To whom can we express ourselves? What if earlier in Carolyn's journey she been encouraged to direct her anguish towards God rather than aimlessly and unsuccessfully trying to suppress it? Might a sharing of her anger with God have helped Carolyn connect more closely to those around her?

It is not surprising that Carolyn was taught to suppress her anger. In this country many of us are socialized to internalize and avoid frustration. Deborah Cox, Karin Bruckner, and Sally Stabb, authors of *The Anger Advantage* (2003), explain how this behavioral norm affects women in particular:

> The rise of Victorian ethics in the home led to a focus on self-discipline, where any strong display of feeling by either men or women came to be seen as a sign of weak character. Quarreling between spouses and tantrums by children were

> portrayed as singularly dangerous conditions within the household, to be avoided at all costs...The contemporary anger rules and regulations here in the United States have thus evolved into the following script – anger seems to be the *least* allowable emotion for girls and women.[75]

As a result of these Victorian ethics, any strong emotional reaction became taboo with anger being regarded as the most severe of them all. Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb suggest that this phenomenon occurred in tandem with the Industrial Revolution. This revision of the workplace created environments where, in an effort to control large numbers of employees, behaviors associated with anger were deemed unprofessional. Therefore both in the home and at work, general public expressions of emotion were looked down up, and anger, in particular, was deemed both dangerous and unprofessional. These values have continued to drive the way we cope with anger in the United States today.

Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb highlight how in our contemporary society this norm continues to manifests differently for women and men.

> …teachers punish [girls] more often than boys for expressions of anger and assertiveness. In our study of elementary and middle school children, girls report that their teachers shame them for demonstrating disagreement, but reward boys' shows of anger by attending to the situation that aroused them.[76]

In our society that places a stigma on expressing anger, it is vital to note that women are taught from a young age that anger is a highly inappropriate emotion for them to display.

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[75] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life* (New York: Broadway Books, 2003), p. 33.
[76] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life*, pp. 25-26.

Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb explain above that it initially begins in the home and then is reinforced at school. When young children grow into adolescents, these messages continue to be emphasized and cemented into one's self-perception. By adulthood, women have been taught, "to not express or even feel anger."[77] Ultimately this leaves us with a society where emotional expression is largely discouraged and half of the population has been socialized not to acknowledge or express an emotion that is intrinsic to all human beings.

On the surface, Jewish tradition appears to take a similar position on anger. Ecclesiastes 7:9 teaches us,

Eccl. 7:9 אַל־תְּבַהֵל בְּרוּחֲךָ לִכְעֹס כִּי כַּעַס בְּחֵיק כְּסִילִים יָנוּחַ

Eccl. 7:9 Be not quick to anger, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools!

Ecclesiastes suggests that foolish people become angry and so frequent experiences of anger would qualify someone as unwise. Similarly it is common for Talmudic texts like this one to advise against expressions of anger because it is unfavorable to God.

שלשה הקדוש ברוך הוא אוהבן מי שאינו כועס ומי שאינו משתכר ומי שאינו מעמיד על מדותיו.

> There are three people the Holy One loves: One who does not get angry. One who does not get drunk. One who does not stand on ceremony.[78]

A person who gets angry is compared to one who excessively indulges and one who is prideful. God does not love these people. Text after text contains sentiments like these two where anger is labeled an unhealthy and reckless personality trait.

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[77] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life*, p. 28.
[78] BT Pesachim 113b.

However, a closer look might locate a more forgiving conception of anger within traditional Jewish texts. First, it is essential to point out two independent concepts that are frequently conflated: anger and aggression.

> Anger and aggression are sadly intertwined in our national consciousness. Fear of anger has roots deep in our fear of the aggression that we typically associate with it. Only when we separate anger from hurtful violence do we develop a more realistic view of its role in our emotional lives.[79]

Anger is a natural emotion that all human beings feel. Not all human beings deal with anger in the same way. One response to anger is aggression. While anger is a feeling, aggression is a behavior. Howard Kassinove, a psychologist and anger expert, elaborates, "Aggression…refers to intentional behavior that aims to harm another person. Often, it reflects a desire for dominance and control.[80]" Aggression is a violent behavior that truly can be dangerous to those affected by it. Kassinove suggests that aggressive behavior often stems from a desperate craving for power. In this way, aggression could be used to subjugate and oppress the powerless.

The following are three Talmudic texts we may understand differently when we keep in mind the distinction between anger and aggression. The first is from BT Shabbat 105b.

והתניא ר"ש בן אלעזר אומר משום חילפא בר אגרא שאמר משום ר' יוחנן בן נורי המקרע בגדיו בחמתו והמשבר כליו בחמתו והמפזר מעותיו בחמתו יהא

[79] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life*, p. 15.
[80] Howard Kassinove, "How to Recognize and Deal with Anger," American Psychological Association, 2016, What is anger and how does it differ from aggression, http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recognize-anger.aspx.

בעיניך כעובד ע"ז.

> It was taught, Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar said in the name of Halfa bar Agra in the name of Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri: The one who in her/his heated anger tears garments, in her/his heated anger smashes vessels, in her/his heated anger scatters money, you are to regard this person as an idol worshipper.[81]

This person who is to be labeled an idol worshipper is displaying aggressive behavior. The root used to describe the individual's state of mind is חמה. חמה is generally understood to mean "anger."[82] The term, related to the notion of heat, suggests hot headedness or hot-temperedness. This way of thinking about anger derives from the medieval medical concept of the humors; a choleric was someone who was hot-headed, or hot-humored. In this text we have the benefit of a behavioral description paired with the emotion. Tearing one's clothing, smashing containers, and carelessly throwing away money suggests a person who is exploding with heat, acting violently and erratically. While we may render the word "anger" our sages seem to be warning us not of anger rather of dangerous, over-heated, aggressive behavior.

Another story from Yevamot 96b illustrates conduct that helps us to understand what the Rabbis hope to caution us against.

לא כך היה המעשה בבית הכנסת של טבריא בנגר שיש בראשו גלוסטרא שנחלקו בו רבי אלעזר ורבי יוסי עד שקרעו ספר תורה בחמתן.

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81 BT Shabbat 105b.

82 Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Brooklyn, NY: P. Shalom Pub., 1967), p. 475.

Once, in the synagogue in Tiberias, it happened that Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi Yose differed so sharply concerning a door bolt with a knob at one end that in their rage they ripped a Torah scroll."[83]

Again what is characterized here is not so much anger as aggression. A disagreement over a matter of Torah overheats and gets out of control. Torah, the very symbol of learning and sustenance, is thus damaged and perhaps destroyed because of the rabbis' behavior. Aggression literally threatens the enterprise of Torah. The Rabbis in general champion the notion of מחלוקת, believing that a culture of disagreement and intellectual argument is a way to safeguard and develop the Torah. It is the nature of מחלוקת that those involved might become angry as they passionately defend their positions. The virtue of מחלוקת in rabbinic texts highlights for us the value of anger in the rabbinic sphere. Yet, in this case, the disagreement leads to a physical fight. As a result the Rabbis teach us that limits must be set on what is acceptable and unacceptable in the arena of מחלוקת. Anger or passion are permitted, even valued, but aggression, the behavior displayed by the rabbis in the above text, is dangerous and renounced.

The next Talmudic text portrays a healthy relationship with anger.

וא"ר יוחנן משום 'ר יוסי מנין שאין מרצין לו לאדם בשעת כעסו דכתיב שמות (לג יד) פני ילכו והנחותי לך אמר לו הקב"ה למשה המתן לי עד שיעברו פנים של זעם ואניח לך.

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Yose: What is the proof that one should not try to pacify a person in the hour of his/her anger? The verse "My face

[83] BT Yevamot 96b.

> will go, I will give you rest" (Exodus 33:14), in which the Holy One says to Moses, "Wait awhile until My face of wrath goes away; then I will give you rest."[84]

Rabbi Yochanan teaches here that anger can take time to pass and we should not try to placate someone who is at the height of his irritation. We learn this from the Exodus text where God is angry and requires time for that anger to subside. God models a constructive response to anger – stepping back and allowing oneself the chance to cool down before continuing on. As beings created in the image of God, we are validated by God's anger. If it is acceptable for the Divine to experience anger, than it is for us as well. Additionally, we can be God-like if we manage our anger productively, as God does above. Here anger is not warned against, associated with destructive behaviors, or even labeled as negative. Instead anger is simply described as an emotional experience.

Rabbi Yochanan describes a process of dealing with anger that is beneficial rather than destructive. Addressing anger has many potentially positive outcomes for the one experiencing the anger or the one in relationship with the person experiencing the anger. "The advantages of anger are self-awareness, energy for positive change, self-definition, and balanced and rewarding relationships with friends, family, romantic partners, and coworkers."[85] Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb conducted a ten-year study on women and anger. From that experience, these psychologists created a model called "The Anger Advantage" to help women deal with their anger in constructive ways by tapping into the advantages of anger.

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[84] BT Berachot 7a.

[85] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life*, p. 41.

In *The Power of Anger in the Work of Love*, Beverly Wildung Harrison, outlines a feminist moral theology and explains the role of anger in moral action.

> [Anger] is better understood as a feeling-signal that all is not well in our relation to other persons or groups or to the world around us. Anger is a mode of connectedness to others and it is always a vivid form of caring. To put the point another way: anger is – and it always is – a sign of some resistance in ourselves to the moral quality of the social relations in which we are immersed. Extreme and intense anger signals a deep reaction to the action upon us or toward others to whom we are related.[86]

According to Harrison anger signals to us when something is wrong in our social relationships. Not only when something is wrong but when that something is of moral concern. Harrison teaches us that anger is a crucial source of information. It challenges us to examine the moral fabric of our relationships and determine what has gone awry. Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb take the idea of anger in relationship further.

> …[B]rain research shows that when people become angry, we are all equipped with a brain-based tendency to engage others in some kind of interaction (whether they actually do this or not). So biological evidence supports the idea that anger can actually help us stay connected with others and adjust social relations with those closest to us. Getting angry, like no other emotional experience, serves as a

[86] Beverly Wildung Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers," in *Weaving the Visions: Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1989), p. 220.

> cue for us to engage with the people we care about, to resolve interpersonal problems with them, and to protect ourselves, all at the same time.[87]

Anger is essential for our social relationships. It triggers us to engage with other people and helps us to achieve deeper levels of intimacy.

Just as beneficial as anger can be for us, it can be just as destructive when suppressed. Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb label this anger diversion. Anger diversion is when we solely blame others or ourselves for our anger, when we purposefully ignore our anger, and when we consistently leave our anger unacknowledged waiting for it to simply pass. Anger diversion leads to "low self-esteem, depression, eating/drinking/substance use problems, anger in the body: headache, chronic stomach trouble, sexual difficulties, chronic pain and fatigue."[88] Unacknowledged or under-acknowledged anger has significant physical and emotional repercussions. Each of these symptoms would likely have a major effect on the individual who endures them. Such a list suggests that anger diversion is dangerous. While Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb highlight the personal effects of anger diversion, Harrison points out that there are communal repercussions as well.

> Anger denied subverts community. Anger expressed directly is a mode of taking the other seriously, of caring. The important point is that where feeling is evaded, where anger is hidden or goes unattended, masking itself, there the power of love, the power to act, to deepen relation, atrophies and dies.[89]

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[87] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life*, p. 31.
[88] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life*, p. 41.
[89] Beverly Wildung Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers," in *Weaving the Visions: Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, p. 220.

Harrison proposes a grave set of consequences to anger diversion. A healthy response to our anger demonstrates a commitment to our relationships and our community. She posits that when we do not capitalize on our anger, we lose the tools to make change in our world. While one might easily come to the conclusion that anger thwarts love and connection, we see that the opposite is true. Love and connection require anger for honest and moral relationships.

> Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb outline four skills for someone grappling with anger:
>
> 1) Anger consciousness (awareness of both feelings and needs)
>
> 2) Constructive anger talk
>
> 3) Listening (to others express anger), and
>
> 4) Think tank (thoughtfully holding your anger while you decide how to respond).[90]

These strategies are helpful for the pastoral care giver to study because it is likely that some of those we serve will be angry because anger is a natural reaction to dying. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, the originator of the iconic five stages of grief, developed her model based on her work with terminally ill patients. Anger is the second of Kubler-Ross' five stages. She outlines the various explanations for why a dying person would feel angry:

> The problem here is that few people place themselves in the patient's position and wonder where this anger might come from. Maybe we too would be angry if all our life activities were interrupted so prematurely; if all the buildings we started were to go unfinished, to be completed by someone else; if we had put some hard-

[90] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life*, p. 43.

earned money aside to enjoy a few years of rest and enjoyment, for travel and pursuing hobbies, only to be confronted with the fact that "this is not for me."[91] Kubler-Ross lists just some of the legitimate reasons why someone who is dying might be angry. Carolyn, who was not dying, but was chronically ill, was angry that she had to suffer when others did not. Her life, too, was prematurely interrupted as she resided in the rehabilitation center of a nursing home at the age of 65. When Carolyn expressed her anguish towards God, she found some relief.

The Rabbis valued the relief one could find upon directing their anger towards God and even likened it to prayer.

היה רבי מאיר אומר: שנים שעלו למטה וחוליין שוה, וכן שנים שעלו לגרדום לידון ודינן שוה, זה ירד וזה לא ירד, זה ניצל וזה לא ניצל. מפני מה זה ירד וזה לא ירד, זה ניצל וזה לא ניצל? זה התפלל ונענה, וזה התפלל ולא נענה. מפני מה זה נענה וזה לא נענה? זה התפלל תפלה שלימה נענה, וזה לא התפלל תפלה שלימה לא נענה. רבי אלעזר אמר: כאן קודם גזר דין, כאן לאחר גזר דין. רבי יצחק אמר: יפה צעקה לאדם, בין קודם גזר דין בין לאחר גזר דין.

Rabbi Meir used to say: Two people take to their bed suffering equally from the same disease, or two men are before a criminal court to be judged for the same offence; yet one gets up and the other does not get up, one escapes death and the other does not escape death. Why does one get up and the other not? Why does one escape death and the other not? Because one prayed and was answered, and

[91] Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying ; Questions and Answers on Death and Dying ; On Life after Death*, Reprint ed. (New York: Scribner, 2011), p. 64.

the other prayed and was not answered. Why was one answered and the other not? One prayed with a whole heart and was therefore answered, the other did not pray with a whole heart and was not answered. Rabbi Eleazar, however, said: The one person was praying before the final sentence had been pronounced [in heaven], the other after the final sentence had been pronounced. Rabbi Isaac said: Outcry is good for a person, whether before or after the decree has been issued.[92]

The scenario is posed of two people who lie on a sickbed and two people who appear before a court and in each case one survives and the other does not. Our sages ask, why? They debate whether one prayed more efficaciously than the other. Rabbi Meir suggests that the survivors prayed with their whole hearts whereas Rabbi Eleazar contends that the living prayed faithfully before their diagnosis or capital crime, whereas the other only began to pray after they knew their desperate fate. The text up until now has used the word תפילה to refer to prayer. Rabbi Isaac counters Eleazar and brings the debate to a close when he declares that צעקה is beneficial to those who do so both before and after their fate has been determined. צעקה is a crying out. One might cry out in sadness but s/he may cry out in anger as well. It seems that our sages have kept the text ambiguous to allow for both readings of the verb. Rabbi Isaac teaches that crying out is helpful to a person whether it is done before they fall ill or when they are in the midst of their suffering. The repeated use of תפילה and then צעקה suggests that outcry is a form of prayer. The connection between prayer and outcry is affirmed in Genesis 19:13.

כִּי־מַשְׁחִתִים אֲנַחְנוּ אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי־גָדְלָה צַעֲקָתָם אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה **Gen. 19:13**

[92] BT Rosh Hashanah 18a

וַיְשַׁלְּחֵנוּ יְהוָה לְשַׁחֲתָהּ

Gen. 19:13 For we are about to destroy this place; because the outcry against them before God has become so great that God has sent us to destroy it.

In the above verse, two angels explain to Lot that they have been instructed by God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of the outcry that has been raised against the inhabitants of the cities. It seems that those who have been violated by these perpetrators have cried out to God. Their outcries serve as a prayer to God to which God responds. This listening God is responsive to the pain of the innocents. Although God's reaction here is violent and not one we would encourage patients to pray for, it does demonstrate a God who is actively in relationship. So when a patient is angry on account of the unfairness of it all, expressing that anger towards God is not only beneficial but it can also serve as a kind of prayer. And if expressing one's anger towards God is prayer, then doing so is not only permissible, it is encouraged.

Job: A Case Study in Getting Mad at God

The Book of Job begins with a prologue featuring God and Satan in debate over whether Job, a pious and God-fearing man would continue to serve God faithfully if he did not have such a blessed life. God believed that Job would remain loyal and so Satan was permitted to challenge Job. Job's cattle and all of Job's children were killed. A devastated Job mourns his family but continues to praise God.

1:21 וַיֹּאמֶר עָרֹם יָצָתִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעָרֹם אָשׁוּב שָׁמָּה יְהוָה נָתַן וַיהוָה לָקָח יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ

1:21 "He said, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; God has given, and God has taken away; blessed be the name of God.'"

Soon after Job's demonstration of devotion after the death of his children and destruction of his livelihood, God permits Satan to issue one more test upon Job. This time Satan renders Job desperately ill and for the rest of the narrative until the final verses, Job experiences extraordinary suffering. His wife, who is likely overwhelmed by pain after the death of her children, her cattle, and now her husband's severe condition, suggests that Job speak against God so that he might hasten his death. Job refuses to take the advice of his wife. Job's friends come visit him when they hear of his hardship and sit with him in silence for seven days.

Most of the Book of Job follows as a conversation between Job and the three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, who come to see him. As Job falls deeper and deeper into his torment he expresses greater and greater outrage towards God.

7:11 גַּם־אֲנִי לֹא אֶחֱשָׂךְ פִּי אֲדַבְּרָה בְּצַר רוּחִי אָשִׂיחָה בְּמַר נַפְשִׁי

19:13 אַחַי מֵעָלַי הִרְחִיק וְיֹדְעַי אַךְ־זָרוּ מִמֶּנִּי

19:14 חָדְלוּ קְרוֹבָי וּמְיֻדָּעַי שְׁכֵחוּנִי

19:15 גָּרֵי בֵיתִי וְאַמְהֹתַי לְזָר תַּחְשְׁבֵנִי נָכְרִי הָיִיתִי בְעֵינֵיהֶם

7:11 On my part, I will not speak with restraint; I will give voice to the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

19:13 God alienated my kin from me; My acquaintances disown me.

19:14 My relatives are gone; My friends have forgotten me.

19:15 My dependents and maidservants regard me as a stranger; I am an outsider to them.

In the verse from chapter seven, we can see Job reaching a point much distanced from where he began the narrative. Job is experiencing deep suffering and he is motivated to give voice to that suffering. In the language of Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb, Job has a profound sense of anger consciousness. He is aware of the anger he is feeling and his need to outwardly express that anger to God. Job also engages in constructive anger talk.[93] Job uses feeling words and "I" language to express himself. The following verses from chapter 19 remind us as the debate between the friends carries on all that Job has lost and the very legitimate cause he has to be angry. It also makes clear that Job has assigned God full responsibility for his agony.

Job's friends are immediately horrified by the anger Job feels and expresses towards God throughout these chapters. They persistently insist that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. Eventually they tell Job that his misfortune must have come on account of his own impious behavior.

8:1 וַיַּעַן בִּלְדַּד הַשּׁוּחִי וַיֹּאמַר

8:2 עַד־אָן תְּמַלֶּל־אֱלֶּה וְרוּחַ כַּבִּיר אִמְרֵי־פִיךָ

8:3 הַאֵל יְעַוֶּת מִשְׁפָּט וְאִם־שַׁדַּי יְעַוֶּת־צֶדֶק

8:4 אִם־בָּנֶיךָ חָטְאוּ־לוֹ וַיְשַׁלְּחֵם בְּיַד־פִּשְׁעָם

8:1 Bildad the Shuhite said in reply:

8:2 How long will you speak such things? Your utterances are a mighty wind!

[93] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life*, p. 43.

8:3 Will God pervert the right? Will the Almighty pervert justice?

8:4 If your sons sinned against God, God dispatched them for their transgression.

Bildad is shocked and appalled by Job's frustrations. He defends God and even claims that Job's sons must have been killed because of sins they committed against God.

In spite of their response, Job insists upon continuing to express himself. He defends himself and his behavior as a moral imperative.

27:3 כִּי־כָל־עוֹד נִשְׁמָתִי בִּי וְרוּחַ אֱלוֹהַּ בְּאַפִּי

27:4 אִם־תִּדַּבֵּרְנָה שְׂפָתַי עַוְלָה וּלְשׁוֹנִי אִם־יֶהְגֶּה רְמִיָּה

27:5 חָלִילָה לִּי אִם־אַצְדִּיק אֶתְכֶם עַד־אֶגְוָע לֹא־אָסִיר תֻּמָּתִי מִמֶּנִּי

27:3 As long as there is life in me, And God's breath is in my nostrils,

27:4 My lips will speak no wrong, Nor my tongue utter deceit.

27:5 Far be it from me to say you are right; Until I die I will maintain my integrity.

Chapters earlier Job chose to speak his truth and express his anguish. Yet here, his process seems to take on another layer of meaning. Hopson and Rice, in *The Book of Job as a Resource for Counseling*, explain, "Job insists upon the right to fidelity with his experience – at the risk of offending his friends, and even God. He also exercises the right to speak of his experience, despite its convention violating content."[94] Job is obligated to continue this demonstration against God for the sake of his own integrity. At the outset of Job's story, he is described by God as תָּם וְיָשָׁר – blameless and upright.

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[94] Ronald E. Hopson and Gene Rice, "The Book of *Job* as a Resource for Counseling." *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 62, nos. 1-2 (2008): p. 91 http://www.jpcp.org/.

Satan tests Job in an effort to show his capacity for something other than integrity, wholeness and righteousness. In this verse, as Hopson and Rice point out, Job unwaveringly upholds תֻּמָּתִי – [his] integrity. In being subjected to these tests, Job demonstrates that part of his being a תָּם is honesty about his experience. He will not placate God with praise that is not truthful. At this moment, Job speaks to the issue of morality and anger that Harrison teaches about. As, Harrison writes, "anger is…a sign of some resistance in ourselves to the moral quality of the social relations in which we are immersed."[95] Job's anger here is certainly signaling to him an imbalance in his relationship with God.[96] Job feels morally obligated to acknowledge that anger so that he does not perpetuate a false image of the relationship.

Job continues to express his frustration with the Divine as he notes God's absence.

30:20 אֲשַׁוַּע אֵלֶיךָ וְלֹא תַעֲנֵנִי עָמַדְתִּי וַתִּתְבֹּנֵן בִּי

30:20 I cry out to You, but You do not answer me; I wait, but You do [not] consider me.

Job lets it be known that he is searching for God's presence. Job feels abandoned by God in his suffering. Hopson and Rice point out, "Job's act of challenging God presumes the faith it problematizes. In addressing God, Job implicitly acknowledges God's

[95] Beverly Wildung Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers," in *Weaving the Visions: Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, p. 220.
[96] Job's also exhibits anger towards his friends. This is likely a symbol of their lack of empathy for Job's suffering.

presence."[97] Although Job has declared repeatedly that God does not and will not listen to him, he continues to call out in his anger. It is as if, each time Job makes an accusation towards God, he is sending a prayer in hopes of reconciliation.

The debate between Job and his friends ends when the friends are silenced by Job's persistent resolve to express his anger. A younger acquaintance then joins the conversation, Elihu, who also takes offense to Job. In the midst of Elihu's speech, God suddenly appears.

38:1 וַיַּעַן־יְהוָה אֶת־אִיּוֹב מִן סְעָרָה

38:1 Then God replied to Job out of the whirlwind.

God answers Job and his detractors by discussing the wonders of creation and challenges him repeatedly by asking, "Can you…[do what I can do]?" However God never reproaches Job for his anger or his expression of anger. Hopson and Rice point out "…to speak of God rightly also involves the presumption of Divine containment, that God will contain whatever outrage and grief the sufferer experiences."[98] As readers of the Book of Job, we do not know how God will respond to Job's confrontations especially as Job promises only to offer complete honesty. When God does emerge and engages with Job in conversation yet does not rebuke Job for his anger, it is then that we learn that God was able to contain Job's outrage and grief. In this moment, Job knows that he is in a relationship with a God who can bear his anger. Job is so moved by God's presence and presentation to him that he says,

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[97] Ronald E. Hopson and Gene Rice, "The Book of *Job* as a Resource for Counseling," p. 91 http://www.jpcp.org/.

[98] Ronald E. Hopson and Gene Rice, "The Book of *Job* as a Resource for Counseling," p. 93 http://www.jpcp.org/.

42:3 מִי֮ זֶ֤ה ׀ מַעְלִ֣ים עֵצָ֣ה בְּלִ֣י דָ֭עַת לָכֵ֣ן הִגַּ֣דְתִּי וְלֹ֣א אָבִ֑ין נִפְלָא֖וֹת מִמֶּ֣נִּי וְלֹ֣א אֵדָֽע

42:4 שְׁמַע־נָ֣א וְאָנֹכִ֣י אֲדַבֵּ֑ר אֶשְׁאָלְךָ֥ וְהוֹדִיעֵֽנִי

42:5 לְשֵׁמַע־אֹ֭זֶן שְׁמַעְתִּ֣יךָ וְעַתָּ֗ה עֵינִ֥י רָאָ֑תְךָ

42:6 עַל־כֵּ֥ן אֶמְאַ֗ס וְנִחַמְתִּ֥י עַל־עָפָ֗ר וָאֵֽפֶר

42:7 וַיְהִ֗י אַחַ֤ר דִּבֶּ֨ר יְהוָ֜ה אֶת־הַדְּבָרִ֤ים הָאֵ֨לֶּה֙ אֶל־אִיּ֔וֹב וַיֹּ֥אמֶר יְהוָ֖ה אֶל־אֱלִיפַ֣ז הַתֵּימָ֑נִי חָרָ֤ה אַפִּי֙ בָּךְ֙ וּבִשְׁנֵ֣י רֵעֶ֔יךָ כִּי֩ לֹ֨א דִבַּרְתֶּ֜ם אֵלַ֗י נְכוֹנָ֤ה כְּעַבְדִּי֙ אִיּֽוֹב

42:3 Who is this who obscures counsel without knowledge? Indeed, I spoke without understanding Of things beyond me, which I did not know.

42:4 Hear now, and I will speak; I will ask, and You will inform me.

42:5 I had heard You with my ears, But now I see You with my eyes;

42:6 Therefore, I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes.

42:7 After God had spoken these words to Job, God said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “I am incensed at you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about Me as did My servant Job.

Job has found peace in his relationship with God after responsibly dealing with his anger. We ascertain that God accepted and valued Job’s harsh honesty both because God does not punish Job and because God expresses disappointment in Job’s friends for speaking falsely about Godself. Myriam Klotz understands these challenging verses:

> He begins to reach peace when he feels again the presence of God in his life. It is not that God has provided any answers to Job in his suffering. In fact, when God becomes present to Job, God explains that human beings can never fully comprehend the ways of the Infinite and Powerful One. The Simple affirmation of God's presence with Job in his suffering is what comforts him.[99]

God communicates a deep commitment to this relationship by continuing to show up for Job after he challenges God. Job's humbles himself, comes down from the energy burst of his anger, and finds with relief a God who is present and can hold the burden of his suffering. Job's anger served as a signal to himself and to God about what troubled him in his relationship with God. Job's anger indicated a deep need within himself to be supported by God's imminent presence.

Ultimately God restores Job's wealth and blesses him with more children. In this way, the Biblical text does not reflect the reality of the sufferers around us. It is a fantasy ending that most sufferers, unfortunately, do not attain.

Pastoral Application

Hopson and Rice highlight valuable lessons for the pastoral care giver from the Book of Job, noting that as a result of his ordeal and his anger,

> Job's relationship with God achieved a new level of intimacy. Attending to spiritual pain and suffering involves healing and sustaining functions of pastoral care. It involves the pastoral care-giver providing the space for the sufferer to speak one's truth, ask challenging questions of God, and God's representatives,

[99] Myriam Klotz, "Wresting Blessings: A Pastoral Response to Suffering," in *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional & Contemporary Sources,* ed. Dayle Friedman, 2nd ed. (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013), p. 9.

> indict the God of goodness along the way to encounter with the God of abyss, who holds the universe, and discover empathic and authentic acceptance.[100]

When pastoral care givers create the space for healthy and productive expression of anger, spiritual healing is possible for patients. It is our job to both encourage open dialogue with God and sometimes to model it. Pastoral caregivers can teach productive strategies for accessing anger such as constructive anger talk and anger consciousness. During a pastoral visit with a patient who is exhibiting anger, it falls to the spiritual caregiver to ask (either internally or out loud) what this person's anger is signaling? Ariel Goldberg, rabbi and chaplain, points out that "If patients fear that they are acting heretically, the chaplain can validate that God can accept their emotions, as in the case of Job."[101] He suggests that patients may intuit that it is anti-religious to speak angrily towards God. With those who belong to a religion that includes the Book of Job in its canon, the pastoral care givers can assure them with the example of Job.

Cox, Bruckner, and Stabb underscore another potential role for the pastoral caregiver.

> Once we have followed anger's lead and explored our most important relationships, we may choose to stay in them or to leave – but the outcome isn't really the point. The point is that anger prompts us to explore our relationships

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[100] Ronald E. Hopson and Gene Rice, "The Book of *Job* as a Resource for Counseling," p. 97 http://www.jpcp.org/.

[101] Ariel Goldberg, "Singing in the Night: The Book of Job, the Search for Meaning, and the Vocation of the Chaplain," (2014), Unpublished, p. 18.

more deeply. Our anger may then inform us that this relationship is workable or that it is not.[102]

Once the patient has accessed their anger with God and found ways to express it, it may be time to assess the relationship. The pastoral care giver in work with a patient, can help the patient evaluate whether or not their current relationship with God is sustainable. Is the God that the patient is in relationship with able to contain their anger the way that God was for Job? If a person's theology is one of an unforgiving God and this person is feeling substantial anger towards that God, it may be appropriate for the chaplain to help the patient leave that relationship and develop a theology more conducive to containment and presence.

Because it might be a challenging or new concept for some to express their outrage towards God, it might also be helpful for the pastoral care giver to offer other examples of this. Patients may choose to read the words of the text as their own outlet or they may be inspired by the content or style. The following are three different resources.

Psalm 13

Ps. 13:1 לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

Ps. 13:2 עַד־אָנָה יְהוָה תִּשְׁכָּחֵנִי נֶצַח עַד־אָנָה | תַּסְתִּיר אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי

Ps. 13:3 עַד־אָנָה אָשִׁית עֵצוֹת בְּנַפְשִׁי יָגוֹן בִּלְבָבִי יוֹמָם עַד־אָנָה | יָרוּם אֹיְבִי עָלָי

Ps. 13:4 הַבִּיטָה עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהָי הָאִירָה עֵינַי פֶּן־אִישַׁן הַמָּוֶת

[102] Deborah L. Cox, Karin H. Bruckner, and Sally D. Stabb, *The Anger Advantage: The Surprising Benefits of Anger and How It Can Change a Woman's Life*, pg. #31.

Ps. 13:5 פֶּן־יֹאמַר אֹיְבִי יְכָלְתִּיו צָרַי יָגִילוּ כִּי אֶמּוֹט

Ps. 13:6 וַאֲנִי ׀ בְּחַסְדְּךָ בָטַחְתִּי יָגֵל לִבִּי בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ אָשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי גָמַל עָלָי

Ps. 13:1 For the leader. A psalm of David.

Ps. 13:2 How long, O God; will You ignore me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

Ps. 13:3 How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand?

Ps. 13:4 Look at me, answer me, O God, my God! Restore the luster to my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

Ps. 13:5 Lest my enemy say, “I have overcome him,” my foes exult when I totter.

Ps. 13:6 But I trust in Your faithfulness, my heart will exult in Your deliverance. I will sing to God, for God has been good to me.

The psalmist cries out in anger to God saying, Where are you? How long must I suffer? Heal me! It seems that the psalmist feels abandoned by God in his/her suffering. This comes to a culmination in the fourth verse, when the psalmist demands to be seen by God. Only once God answers her/him will healing be possible. However, once the psalmist expresses the pain and the anger s/he feels as a result of severe illness, s/he does find healing, even without a clear response from God. The psalmist reports jubilance and relief. Perhaps once the psalmist expresses his/her angry feelings, s/he encounters a God who can accept and hold this anger, and as a result healing is made possible.

BT Berachot 31b (The Rabbis vocalize Hannah's prayer)

רבש"ע מכל צבאי צבאות שבראת בעולמך קשה בעיניך שתתן לי בן אחד.

Master of the Universe! Of all the hosts and hosts that You have created in Your world, is it so hard in Your eyes to give me one son?

רבש"ע אם ראה מוטב ואם לאו תראה אלך ואסתתר בפני אלקנה בעלי וכיון דמסתתרנא משקו לי מי סוטה ואי אתה עושה תורתך פלסתר שנאמר זרע ונזרעה ונקתה (במדבר ה, כח).

Master of the Universe! If You will look, it is well, but if You will not look, I will go and shut myself up with someone else [another man] in the knowledge of my husband Elkanah [who will be jealous and suspect me of adultery]. And as I shall have been alone [with a man other than my husband] they will make me drink the water of the suspected adulteress [but I will be innocent] and You cannot falsify Your Law, which says, "She shall be cleared and shall conceive seed" (Numbers 5:28).

This text is fascinating and challenging. Hannah actually threatens God that she will act immorally by pretending to have an affair in order that she can partake in the Sotah. The Sotah is typically looked upon as damaging towards women, because only a woman can be accused of adultery and made to endure the humiliating ritual. Additionally, the punishment if she is found guilty is severe, the Biblical text[103] explains that her body will become deformed. However, Hannah uses the biased ritual to her advantage. Because of her innocence, Hannah knows she will merit the reward for passing the test of the Sotah –

[103] Numbers 5:22.

impregnation. Hannah, then, threatens to trick God into giving her a child. Her anger manifests in the initial outcry to God at the outset of the text and continues with a carefully crafted plan to manipulate the situation. In our own lives, it would be inappropriate and unfair to manipulate those we are in relationship with. Yet, the Rabbis give us permission, to unleash some of that hostility towards God as we are processing our grief and anguish.

Deuteronomy Rabbah 11:10

אמר משה לפני הקב"ה: רבש"ע גלוי וידוע לפניך יגיעי וצערי שנצטערתי על ישראל עד שיהיו מאמינים לשמך כמה צער נצטערתי עליהם במצות עד שקבעתי להן תורה ומצות. אמרתי כשראיתי בצרתן כך אראה בטובתן ועכשיו הגיעש טובתן של ישראל אתה אומר לי לא תעבור את הירדן הזה? הרי אתה עושה תורתך פלסתר דכתיב (שם כד): ביומו תתן שכרו ולא תבוא עליו השמש כי עני הוא ואליו הוא נושא את נפשו ולא יקרא עליך אל ה' והיה בך חטא. זו היא שילום עבודה של מ' שנה שעמלתי עד שיהיו עם קדוש ונאמן?

Moses said before the Holy One: Master of the Universe! The labors and pains which I have devoted to making Israel believe in Your name are manifest and known to You, to what trouble I have gone with them in connection with the precepts in order to fix for them Torah and precepts. I thought: Just as I have witnessed their woe, so too I would behold their reward. But now that the reward of Israel has come, You say to me, “You shall not go over this Jordan” [Deut 31:2]. Behold You make a fraud of Your own Torah, as it is written: “You must

> pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and urgently depends upon it; else he will cry to God against you and you will incur guilt" [Deut 24:15]. Is this the reward [I get] for the forty years labor that I went through in order that [Israel] should become a holy and faithful people?

Moses knows that he will die before the Israelites will enter the Land of Israel. Moses calls upon the text of Torah to highlight the injustice that has been perpetrated on him by God. Deuteronomy 24:15 teaches us to pay a worker his/her earnings in haste. We do this out of respect for the laborer and her/his needs. If this commandment is violated, then the employee will call out to God and the employer will have committed a sin. Moses compares himself to the laborer because he led the Israelites through the wilderness for 40 years according to God's instruction. Yet, Moses will not be paid his wages – entry into the Land of Israel. As his superior, Moses accuses God of sinning against him. Notably it was Moses' own temper that inhibited his entry into the Land. In an effort to produce water in the wilderness in Numbers 20, Moses strikes the rock instead of speaking to it as God had instructed him. Additionally, before striking the rock, Moses derides the groaning Israelites. Ultimately it is this aggressive behavior that leads God to ban Moses from entering the Land.

Unlike the previous two chapters where healing comes from something God does – being present, seeing and naming – this chapter is about what we do –expressing ourselves to God and the healing that comes from this action. Janet Ramsey teaches that we can learn the following from Job, "These three movements are precisely the dynamics we wish to see in the lives of sufferers. They need the courage to lament, the integrity to

speak honestly with God, and active participation in their eventual healing."[104] However, I suggest, that the courage to lament and the integrity to speak honestly with God themselves constitute the "active participation in their eventual healing."

Prayer

Psalms 13:4

הַבִּיטָה עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהָי

Look at me, answer me, O God, my God!

To the God with whom we are in relationship,

May we have the strength to acknowledge the righteous and unrighteous anger within us. Please help us to use that anger to draw ourselves closer to those who are most precious in our lives, including You, O God. May we have the courage to call out to You, like Job did, when You have truly disappointed us. And for You we pray as well. We pray, God, that You, with whom we are angry, have the capacity to bear the weight of our pain, our frustration, and our cries. We need You. For, You are our God, there is none else.

[104] Janet L. Ramsey, "First Do No Harm: Pastoral Care Informed by Job," *Word & World* 31, nos. 4 (Fall 2011): p. 368.

CONCLUSION

Pastoral care begins with the basic assumption that each of us have needs that stretch beyond the physical realm. Pain is not relegated to the body; it also distresses the mind and the spirit. Pastoral care aims to uplift and provide spiritual accompaniment, religious imagery, and theological responses as beneficial and possibly healing to the sufferer. As a spiritual caregiver, I set out to construct three distinct God images because I believe that this kind of response to pain can help bring about spiritual healing.

In chapter one I explored the notion of the Shekhinah as God-She who heals through her emotive and empathic presence. She responds to the loneliest among us and can offer them some companionship in the abyss of isolation. Whether they feel lonely because they lack a supportive community or because the many voices at their bedside are unhelpful or even damaging, the Shekhinah is nearby. She can always be depended upon to show up and she promises not to be an added emotional burden on the sufferer. Spiritual caregivers have the benefit of learning from the model of care the Shekhinah espouses. We can emulate her vigilant present and her emotional openness. In the process, when a visit to the bedside is fraught with pain, she can be a support for us as well.

The Other of chapter two combines two separate understandings of Otherness. On the one hand everyone that we encounter is Other to us. By nature of being a separate person from me, you are Other to me. These boundaries between self and Other are essential to maintain out of respect for the self. In contrast, the Other is also a way to refer to the stigmatized Other, someone who is known only to us for precisely what makes her/him different. People who are sick often become the stigmatized Other either

because their illness is uncomfortable and possibly even threatening to those around them or because their loved ones endlessly perseverate on their medical condition. It becomes essential then, to honor and validate the whole self, both in protecting diversity and not allowing oneself to be distracted by it. The God who Sees can respond to the Other with the gift of Divine sight and Divine naming. The God who Sees honors the Other by bearing witness to the entirety of their personhood and names that experience for them. As pastoral caregivers, we too, can embark on the challenge of whole person seeing. We too can name our observations so that those we work with know they have been seen. Equally as important, we name our observations to serve as a reminder to ourselves to continue looking beyond the surface level and the stigma towards wholeness.

The third chapter acknowledges the very real anger experienced by many who are seriously ill and dying as well as the pressure to suppress that anger by countless outside influences – particularly for women and girls. Although many Jewish textual sources seem to indicate that anger is an unfavorable emotional response, a closer examination demonstrates that it is really aggressive behavior the rabbis seek to warn against. Anger, when managed constructively, serves as a connector and a signal to evaluate the relationship one is in. The Book of Job functioned as an insightful case study into a way that one can be in relationship with God and be able to freely, safely, and productively express anger within that relationship. The pastoral care giver then gives the sufferer permission to feel anger towards God, helps her/him to articulate that anger, and aids in the development of a theology of a God accepting of anger.

Throughout this project, I aimed to add to the corpus of theological responses to suffering. In doing so I sought to construct pastoral and feminist God images that would

aim first and foremost to provide comfort to the sufferer. These theological reflections are a starting point for those who are in pain. They may be taken on as a personal theology, they may offer resources that resonate with the sufferer, or they may inspire one's own creative thinking. In this way, this thesis would grant permission to all Jews to take ownership of our tradition and to develop a personal theology steeped in Jewish text that is reflective of personal values.

Prayer

Psalms 51:17

אֲדֹנָי שְׂפָתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתֶךָ

My God, open my lips, and let my mouth declare your praise.

May this only be the beginning. Open our lips so that our mouths may continue to praise Your name. We praise You through our study. We praise You through our creativity. We praise You through our compassion, our patience, and our vulnerability. We praise You in moments of connection, moments of certainty, and moments of doubt. We praise you with our questions, our insights, and our love. May the day come when all who suffer find peace, wholeness, and healing. Until that day, O God, my God, I pray for Your God-like strength to be present, to see wholly, and to be honest. And when I fall short, I thank you for your understanding.

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