What a *Shonde*

How shame shapes the way Jews and Jewish communities navigate alcoholism, domestic violence, and racism.

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to explore how Jews and the Jewish community relate to shame. There are many delicate issues that Jews and Jewish communities do not address, all the while these things are happening in every corner of the Jewish world. This work traces the use of shame throughout Jewish history and then delves into the specific topics of how shame influences Jewish responses to alcoholism and addiction, domestic violence, and racism. This paper demonstrates that shame around alcoholism, addiction, and domestic violence appear differently than shame around racism in Jewish communities.

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Introduction

Upon beginning the process regarding what to delve into for my rabbinic thesis, I approached Rabbi Julie Schwartz, the Associate Dean of the HUC-Cincinnati campus and director of the Clinical Pastoral Education program. I explained to Rabbi Schwartz that I really wanted to explore the ways that alcoholism and addiction have been talked about in Jewish communities for the last several decades and the myth that Jews aren't alcoholics or addicts. I know that in the 1990s there was work done on this issue specifically in the reform movement, But living in Cincinnati, I observed a plethora of synagogues and Jewish community centers and yet only two hold Alcoholics Anonymous meetings throughout the entire city. This bothers me because we talked in Rabbi Schwartz's Human Resources class about making sure that our congregants know that it is okay to talk about alcoholism and addiction in our synagogues. One of the ways we can do that is by opening our buildings and holding these meetings so that people can see that they are on our schedules and know that the synagogue is a safe place to come to talk about these issues. Of course, most people who attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings will not go to the place where they worship. However, just having something like that on the schedule can show folks that it's okay to talk about these things.

Rabbi Schwartz then asked me why I thought that there was an issue with how Jews deal with alcoholism and addiction, I answered that I think it's because we have shame around this issue. There's internal shame when it comes to being an alcoholic and there's external shame of not wanting other people in the community, and non-Jews, to know "our business". Then I began to think about other things that Jews hide from the community or the larger world so that we are not seen a certain way. And I began to

realize that there are so many things we don't talk about enough, or don't talk about at all due shame, like addiction and domestic violence. It was then that the idea of the paradigm of shame became more clear, and I wanted to add an exploration of shame and racism to the mix. Alcoholism and domestic violence have layers of shame that come from within the individual, as well as shame around what others will think. It was my theory that Jews don't talk about race and racism because there is deep shame around the part Jews have played in the suffering of others, as well as shame around the fact that many white people don't have the vocabulary to even start this conversation. There is confusion around identities and the incorrect idea that liberal Jewish communities cannot possibly be racist.

Thus the dichotomy was born. As I explored this notion, I wanted to understand where shame comes from psychologically, and where we see it in our Jewish texts. I knew I needed to understand how and why Jews cover things up that may bring shame. I also wanted to delve deeply into the fear that holds us back from showing our whole selves in any given moment, not just in relationship to Judaism. Throughout the writing process, I was able to speak with all different people about their thoughts on shame and guilt in Judaism and where their shame comes from. It was an honor to be present with people as they wrestled with their shame and its deep roots. Writing also brought up my own relationship to shame and the things I hide from my loved ones and my community. By bringing some of these things into the light, they lose their power. It is my hope that anyone reading this who struggles with internal shame will see the benefit of talking about these things in our sacred communities, of allowing space for them, of acknowledging them, and then letting the shame go so that actual solutions can be found.

Chapter One

The Psychology and Jewish Roots of Shame

Studying how the Jewish text sets us up to deal with shame allows us to understand how our relationship with shame has developed over centuries and what, if any, influence the texts have had on how we deal with shame in the community. The idea is to describe shame as a psychological phenomenon and the ways in which shame has been depicted by our historic text. This chapter will lead directly into the next chapter, to explore exactly what the confluence of these two things means.

To start an investigation about how the Jewish community deals with shame and its consequences, we must first begin with a shared definition of what shame is. We will start with the psychological research that has been done for centuries on this phenomenon in the secular world and zoom in on what shame is in relationship to the Jewish community specifically. To understand the origins of shame and the hold it has on humankind, I began with the book *Healing the Shame that Binds You* by John Bradshaw. Bradshaw is considered one of the most influential writers on emotional health in the 20th century. He is an author, a counselor, a theologian, a philosopher and a leader in the fields of addiction and family systems.

First, according to Bradshaw, we must look at shame anthropologically. Blushing, and the origin of blushing, shame, is the emotion that, according to Darwin, is what distinguishes humans from all other animals.[1] Shame is the thing that makes us different from every other type of animal. While other animals have affects (or feelings) that

[1] Bradshaw, J. (2005). Preface to the Revised Edition. In Healing the Shame that Binds You (p. xi). Deerfield Beach: Health Communications.

influence their behavior, just like humans do, we also feel shame. Bradshaw subscribes to the belief originally espoused by Silvan S. Tompkins that human affects are the "motivating source in human behavior." Tomkins was a radical phycologist and thinker who proposed that affects are "biological mechanisms that unfold according to precisely written scripts. When an affect is named, the word 'feeling' is used." When a feeling happens, there is always a context in which it is triggered along with whatever past experiences the person may have. Any emotion is a combination of past and present context as well as any sensory experiences from our memories.[2] So shame is a feeling, an affect, that is a combination of experiences from our pasts that directly influences the ways in which we navigate the world in the present and our fears about the future. All of the authors I read to understand the psychology of shame each made the argument that shame is an important piece of how we live our lives, how we communicate, and how we navigate the world.

According to Bradshaw, "No affect[feeling] is more important to our sense of self or our identity, dignity, and honor. And no affect is more important for our ethical and spiritual life. The affect shame as toxic is a source of most of the neurotic and character-disordered behaviors that we now understand. It is also the source of violence to self and others."[3] Culturally, shame can influence and enforce social norms and basic attitudes of society regarding right and wrong. [4] Shame has both positive and negative influences and is necessary to the functioning of society if it's balanced and well handled.

[2] Bradshaw, J. (2005). Preface to the Revised Edition. In Healing the Shame that Binds You (p. xiii). Deerfield Beach: Health Communications.
[3] Bradshaw, J. (2005). Preface to the Revised Edition. In Healing the Shame that Binds You (p. xv). Deerfield Beach: Health Communications.
[4] Tsuriel Rashi, “Shaming in Judaism Past, Present, Future” (Journal of Religion and Society, 2017), https://dspace2.creighton.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10504/113361/2017-22.pdf. Pg 9

It is when shame gets out of control, that the sense of shame overwhelms a person's ability to be a part of society that shame becomes toxic in nature. It is normal, and it and healthy shame is the way our boundaries stay intact and we can ensure that we remain human and know we are not God. Bradshaw makes the argument that "Shame is a normal human emotion...shame tells us of our limits...Shame keeps our human boundaries letting us know we can and will make mistakes and that we need help. Our shame tells us we are not God. Healthy shame is the psychological foundation of humility. It is the source of spirituality." [5] Healthy shame is crucial to our society and our humanity However, when shame transforms from helping maintain human boundaries to the very core of someone's identity, it is no longer healthy. It becomes toxic when one believes they are flawed at the most basic level.[6] When shame transforms from a healthy human emotion to a state of being that takes over one's entire identity is when shame is no longer the helpful boundary keeper it once was. It becomes toxic, it becomes one's whole identity, and it's dehumanizing.

Before continuing to the difference between healthy and toxic shame, we must stop and understand the difference between shame and guilt and to a lesser extent embarrassment. Ernest Kurtz gives a very easy to understand schematic in his book *Shame and Guilt.* According to Kurtz, guilt is a result of a transgression or violation of a boundary--it is a fault of doing something, whereas shame is a fault of being, of merely existing and failing. Guilt is about an act, that is to say, one is guilty *for doing* something wrong. Shame is about *being* fundamentally wrong and falling short of one's ideals. Guilt feels like a pang and results in a feeling of wrong-doing and a fear of punishment. Shame

[5] Bradshaw, J. (2005). Preface to the Original Edition. In Healing the Shame that Binds You (p. xvii). Deerfield Beach: Health Communications.
[6] ibid

is much deeper like an ache that results in feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness, not good enough, and a fear of abandonment. [7]Embarrassment is often used as a synonym for shame because as children we are reprimanded for public behavior by being told we should be ashamed of ourselves. Embarrassment is about one's shame being seen whereas the shame lies in how a person's being is seen in those moments, about how the self is inherently.[8] The issue is that shame and guilt are often intertwined, making it hard to understand that they are distinct experiences. Most instances that involve doing something wrong also involve falling short of one's ideal, breeding both guilt and shame in the same moment. [9] Distinguishing between shame and guilt surrounding something is easy to do if one notices the accent the speaker puts on certain phrases. Guilt says "what have I *done*?" while shame says, "what have *I* done?" Guilt focuses on what was done while shame focuses on the "self as do-er."[10]

Now that we have established a difference between guilt and shame with Kurtz, we will further examine the ideas of healthy and toxic shame. Bradshaw describes healthy shame and toxic shame in allegorical terms as very similar to HDL and LDL cholesterol. While not a perfect comparison, it helps one to understand that some amount of shame is healthy, just like the right amount of HDL cholesterol is healthy for our bodies. He explains that shame is natural and when functioning properly monitors a

[7] Kurtz, E. (2007). Definitions: Embarrassment, Guilt, and Shame. In Shame and Guilt. (p.5). iUniverse, INC.
[8] Kurtz, E. (2007). Definitions: Embarrassment, Guilt, and Shame. In Shame and Guilt. (p.3). iUniverse, INC.
[9] Kurtz, E. (2007). Definitions: Embarrassment, Guilt, and Shame. In Shame and Guilt. (p.6). iUniverse, INC.
[10] Kurtz, E. (2007). Definitions: Embarrassment, Guilt, and Shame. In Shame and Guilt. (p.7). iUniverse, INC.

person's excitement or pleasure.[11] Shame becomes toxic when it becomes the defining piece of a person's identity. It can also become toxic, Bradshaw says, when misused or "violated by a coercive and perfectionistic religion and culture--especially by shame-based source figures who mediate religion and culture--it becomes an all- embracing identity.[12]" Not only is shame toxic when absorbed as an individual's identity, but it can also be toxic when used and abused by religious bodies and the larger culture. This leads us into the question of how the Jewish community relates to shame and what it means that shame is a piece of our Jewish identity.

Once I had a working definition of what shame is and understood how it may influence individuals, I needed to understand what shaming is and how it affects culture in general, before I could understand its influence on the Jewish community. As I researched how the word shame has been used in Jewish tradition, I started with Hebrew scripture and worked my way through to rabbinic commentary, medieval Jewish life, and finally modern-day experience, as close to chronologically as one can get with texts without definitive dates. What I saw was a pattern of how shaming was used to maintain cultural boundaries, societal norms and ways to control people. As I discovered this, I wanted to understand what exactly shaming is. The phenomenon of shaming is defined as the disclosure of personal information to shame, deride or ridicule them or protest their behavior, to make them the objects of criticism, and to denounce them in public. This practice has been employed over the years by judicial systems, public bodies, communal

[11] Bradshaw, J. (2005). Introduction: Shame as Demonic (The Internalization Process.) In Part 1: The Problem--Spiritual Bankruptcy. In Healing the Shame that Binds You (p. 4). Deerfield Beach: Health Communications.
[12] ibid

leaders, social and commercial organizations, private persons, and sometimes even by parents as part of the education of their children.[13]

First, we will examine the places in which בוש appears in the text to understand how the practice of shaming has developed in Jewish communities and how shame influences the community due to intergenerational experiences. There are other words used for shame such as כלימה but I decided to focus on the shoresh בוש because it is used in both the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic work as well as in modern-day discussions of shame in the Hebrew bible. The Hebrew words בוש ,כלם, and שחפר all appear when the text speaks about shame, and have a wide variety of meanings that relate to the psychological, cultic, religious, and sexual realms.[14] I chose to use the root בוש instead of the many other words used for shame in the Hebrew Bible because it appears to be the oldest word about shame we have in our textual canon. I also chose it because, in its first use in Genesis 2:25, בוש seems to be about something that is done to another person, or done in the presence of another person, which will help later as I explore the way shame plays out in relationships in the Jewish community.

בוש appears mostly in the prophets, in Psalms, and Proverbs. There are two instances of the word in the Pentateuch: In the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:25 and the story of the golden calf in Exodus 32:1. In Genesis 2:25 after God created woman from Adam's rib and the Torah explains their relationship, the Torah says: " ויהיו שניהם ערומים האדם ואשתו ולא יתבששו. The two of them were naked, the man and his woman, and they were not ashamed of themselves."[15] יתבששו is in the hitpael form of the

[13] ibid.
[14] Steibert The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible, pg 45 (Ch is Shame and Biblical Literature)
[15] Translation is my own.

verb, which is usually used reflexively. In this example, conjugated in this way, בוש is a phenomenon about identity, done unto oneself. אדם is not just the Hebrew word for Adam, but the Hebrew word for human being. It is not until the human attempts to be something other than what they were meant to be by eating from the tree of knowledge that they feel shame. When living in Eden, the humans did not feel shame even in their nakedness because they were living most authentically, following the laws God set out for them. When attempting to gain power and knowledge and become more God-like is when shame began to creep in. Shame, as Kurtz explained it in his book, is all about failing to meet an ideal that one sets for oneself- about *being* fundamentally wrong. Once the humans attempt and fail to have the same knowledge as an omnipotent power is when the shame becomes a piece of their identity and they hide their nakedness.[16]

The use of בוש in Exodus 32:1 is in the middle of the story of Moses being up on the mountain as the Israelites began to panic and Aaron collected all of their gold to build the calf idol. "...וירא העם כי־בשש משה לרדת מן־ההר" "When the people saw that Moses was delayed in coming down from the mountain…" While I will not expand upon all the uses of בוש in every way, this particular use seemed so far from the use of the root in every other context and I wanted to understand why. According to Rashi we should "Understand בשש as the Targum does, as an expression denoting 'lateness'... Similar are: (Judges 5:28) '[Why is] his chariot so long (בשש) [in coming]?'; (Judges 3:25) "And they waited until it was late (עד בוש)'.[17]" When conjugated in the piel form, בוש takes on a meaning of delaying something out because something is shame related. After reading Rashi the link between shame and delay still didn't appear, so I went to the Talmud in

[16] Bradshaw, J. (2005). Preface to the Original Edition. In Healing the Shame that Binds You (xviii). Deerfield Beach: Health Communications.
[17] This translation is from Sefaria, and I made some slight changes.

Shabbat 89:6 there is an interpretation of this passage that connects this translation of בוש to shame through the addition of the Satan.

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי מאי דכתיב 'וירא העם כי בשש משה' אל תקרי בושש,אלא בא שש בשעה שעלה משה למרום אמר להן לישראל לסוף ארבעים יום בתחלת שש אני בא .לסוף ארבעים יום בא שטן ועירבב את העולם אמר להן משה רבכם היכן הוא אמרו לו עלה למרום אמר להן באו שש ולא השגיחו עליו ׳מת ולא השגיחו עליו הראה להן דמות מטתו והיינו דקאמרי ליה לאהרן כי זה משה האיש וגו

"Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: what is the meaning of that which is written: 'And the people saw that Moses delayed (בושש)...'(from Exodus 32:1)? Do not read it as בושש, (delayed) rather, [read it as] באו שש בשעה, six hours have arrived. When Moses ascended on High, he told Israel: at the end of forty days, at the beginning of six [hours] I will come. After forty days, the Satan came and brought confusion to the world. He said to them: Where is your teacher Moses? They responded: He ascended on High. He said to them: Six hours have arrived but they did not pay attention. He said to them, Moses died and they did not pay attention. He showed them Moses on his deathbed. What happened to Moses…[18]"

This Talmud passage made it very clear how Moses's delay and shame are intertwined. This interpretation involving the Satan here is both a question of time and a question of identity. Here, the Satan planted doubt in the minds of Israel about their choice of the people to put their trust in Moses and believe that he and God would save them from the wilderness. There is a piece of a deep communal identity that the Satan undermines here. If we read בשש as the text suggests 'באו שש בשעה' the Satan is pointing out that Moses told the people he would return at a specific time and he did not. The Satan then waters the tiny seed of doubt that Moses is the one who will help and save the

[18] Translation is mine.

people by saying that Moses is never coming back and the people are on their own. Once their identity as followers of God and believers in Moses's leadership is in question, then the shame of failing to meet an ideal that they have set for their community set in. In this way, Moses's delay, בשש, is directly connected to the shame the people felt in having put their trust in the wrong leader. This is a communal identity failure, and therefore a direct link to shame. They believed they were bad because Moses's delay meant that they had followed the wrong person. They then had to find a way to deal with the shame of this identity issue and they turned to a false idol for immediate comfort, because everyone who feels shame looks for many ways to avoid feeling that way.

We will now transition to a selection from the book of Ezra. According to Johanna Steibert, author of *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution*, in the "major prophets, all three are substantial collections of texts where shame vocabulary is relatively abundant. All three prophetic books were composed and compiled over an extended period and by several authors and editors[19]"

Ezra 9:6-7

ובמנחת הערב קמתי מתעניתי ובקרעי בגדי ומעילי ואכרעה על־ברכי ואפרשה כפי אל־יהוה אלהי

ואמרה אלהי בשתי ונכלמתי להרים אלהי פני אליך כי עונתינו רבו למעלה ראש ואשמתנו גדלה עד לשמים

At the time of the evening offering I ended my self-affliction; still in my torn garment and robe, I got down on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God, and said, "O my God, I am too **ashamed** and mortified to lift my face to You, O my God, for our iniquities are overwhelming and our guilt has grown high as heaven." This passage from Ezra includes the phrases "בשתי ונכלמתי" words that commonly appear as a set. כלם

[19] Johanna Steibert. The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution

means to be humiliated. Humiliation and shame are two sides of a similar coin, but it seems that humiliation is more external, or is a result of someone uncovering another's shame, whereas shame is generated from within.

We will then move from the Hebrew Bible to the rabbinic texts and to examine בוש by looking at the field of personal injury. "One of the things you can collect from a person who inflicts an injury upon you is בשת, a compensation for the embarrassment caused by the injury. It's discussed in the Mishnah (M. Ketubot 3:4, 7, and 9; M. Bava Kama 8:1 and 3) and in the Talmud on those passages. This is a recognition that "shame" (humiliation?) is a real injury and an attempt to provide the victim some financial relief."[20] Below we will first examine the three passages from Mishnah Ketubot and then the passages from Mishnah Bava Kama.

Mishnah Ketubot 3:4,7, and 9

הַמְפַתֶּה נוֹתֵן שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים, וְהָאוֹנֵס אַרְבָּעָה. הַמְפַתֶּה נוֹתֵן בֹּשֶׁת וּפְגָם וְקְנָס. מוֹסִיף עָלָיו אוֹנֵס, שֶׁנּוֹתֵן אֶת הַצַּעַר. מַה בֵּין אוֹנֵס לְמְפַתֶּה. הָאוֹנֵס נוֹתֵן אֶת הַצַּעַר, וְהַמְפַתֶּה אֵינוֹ נוֹתֵן אֶת הַצַּעַר. הָאוֹנֵס נוֹתֵן מִיָּד, וְהַמְפַתֶּה לִכְשֶׁיּוֹצִיא. הָאוֹנֵס שׁוֹתֶה בַּעֲצִיצוֹ, וְהַמְפַתֶּה אִם רָצָה לְהוֹצִיא, מוֹצִיא :

The seducer pays three forms [of compensation] and the rapist four. The seducer pays compensation for **shame** and blemish and the fine; The rapist pays an additional [form of compensation] in that he pays for the pain. What [is the difference] between [the penalties of] a seducer and those of a rapist? The rapist pays compensation for the pain but the seducer does not

[20] Email from Dr. Mark Washofsky, 2019

pay compensation for the pain. The rapist pays immediately but the seducer [pays only] if he dismisses her. The rapist must "drink out of his pot" but the seducer may dismiss [the girl] if he wishes.[21]

Ketubot 3:7

הַכֹּל לְפִי הַמְבַיֵּישׁ וְהַמִּתְבַּיֵּשׁ. פְּגָם, רוֹאִין אוֹתָהּ כְּאִלּוּ הִיא שִׁפְחָה נִמְכֶּרֶת, כַּמָּה ,אֵיזוֹהִי בּשֶׁת הָיְתָה יָפָה וְכַמָּה הִיא יָפָה. קְנָס, שָׁוֶה בְּכָל אָדָם. וְכֹל שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ קִצְבָּה מִן הַתּוֹרָה, שָׁוֶה בְּכָל אָדָם:

How is [the compensation that is paid for] **shame** [reckoned]? It all depends on the status of the offender and the offended. How is [the compensation that is paid for] blemish [reckoned]? She is regarded as if she were a slave to be sold in the market place [and it is estimated] how much she was worth then and how much she is worth now. The fine is the same for all. And any sum that is fixed in the Torah remains the same for all.[22]

M. Ketubot 3:9

וּפְגָם עַל פִּי עַצְמוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ מְשַׁלֵּם קְנָס. הָאוֹמֵר בּשֶׁת הָאוֹמֵר פְּתִיתִי אֶת בִּתּוֹ שֶׁל פְּלוֹנִי, מְשַׁלֵּם גָּנַבְתִּי וְטָבַחְתִּי וּמָכַרְתִּי, מְשַׁלֵּם אֶת הַקֶּרֶן עַל פִּי עַצְמוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ מְשַׁלֵּם תַּשְׁלוּמֵי כָפֶל וְתַשְׁלוּמֵי אַרְבָּעָה וַחֲמִשָּׁה. הֵמִית שׁוֹרִי אֶת פְּלוֹנִי אוֹ שׁוֹרוֹ שֶׁל פְּלוֹנִי, הֲרֵי זֶה מְשַׁלֵּם עַל פִּי עַצְמוֹ. הֵמִית שׁוֹרֵי עַבְדּוֹ שֶׁל פְּלוֹנִי, אֵינוֹ מְשַׁלֵּם עַל פִּי עַצְמוֹ. זֶה הַכְּלָל כָּל הַמְשַׁלֵּם יָתֵר עַל מַה שֶּׁהִזִּיק, אֵינוֹ מְשַׁלֵּם עַל פִּי עַצְמוֹ.

[21] Translation from Sefaria.org
[22] Translation from Sefaria.org

> He who declares, “I seduced the daughter of so-and-so” must pay compensation for **shame** and blemish on his own admission but need not pay the fine. He who declares, “I have stolen” must make restitution for the principal on his own evidence but need not repay double, fourfold or fivefold. [He who declares,] “My ox has killed so-and-so” or “the ox of so-and-so” must make restitution on his own evidence. [If he said] “My ox has killed the slave of so-and-so” he need not make restitution on his own evidence. This is the general rule: whoever pays more than the actual cost of the damage he has done need not pay it on his own evidence.[23]

In all three passages from Mishnah Ketubot we see that the idea of a shame payment is a valid form of compensation offered to a woman or her family should she be seduced. It is an important realization that this shame was brought to this woman by another person and that she may or may not be feeling it on her own as well. The fact that the rabbis were discussing this type of shame brought on by others, which may be humiliation mixed with the shame of bringing these accounts to the public arena for judgment, means they had a sense of how damaging shame could be. We will see that in the Bava Kama texts below, but this discovery is crucial to the endeavor of understanding why we talk about some things in our communities and not others. It seems to me that a sense of shame, a sense of hiding what it is we do not want to discuss from the Jewish community and the rest of the world, always existed, and part of the rabbis’ job of making sure there was a punishment of some sort meant that they were not okay with it.

[23]Translation from Sefaria.org

M. Bava Kama 8:1

הַחוֹבֵל בַּחֲבֵרוֹ חַיָּב עָלָיו מִשּׁוּם חֲמִשָּׁה דְבָרִים, בְּנָזָק, בְּצַעַר, בְּרִפּוּי, בְּשֶׁבֶת, **וּבְבוּשֶׁת**. בְּנָזָק כֵּיצַד.... **בּוּשֶׁת,** הַכֹּל לְפִי **הַמְבַיֵּשׁ וְהַמִּתְבַּיֵּשׁ. הַמְבַיֵּשׁ** אֶת הָעֹרֹם, **הַמְבַיֵּשׁ** אֶת הַסּוּמָא, **וְהַמְבַיֵּשׁ** אֶת הַיָּשֵׁן, חַיָּב. וְיָשֵׁן שֶׁבִּיֵּשׁ, פָּטוּר. נָפַל מִן הַגָּג, וְהִזִּיק וּבִיֵּשׁ, חַיָּב עַל הַנָּזָק וּפָטוּר עַל הַבּוּשֶׁת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דברים כה) וְשָׁלְחָה יָדָהּ וְהֶחֱזִיקָה **בִּמְבֻשָׁיו**, אֵינוֹ חַיָּב עַל הַבּוּשֶׁת עַד שֶׁיְּהֵא מִתְכַּוֵּן:

He who wounds his fellow is liable to compensate him on five counts: for injury, for pain, for healing, for loss of income and for **shame(indignity)**...'**Indignity'**: All is according to the status of the one that inflicts **indignity** and the status of the one that suffers **indignity**. If a man inflicted **indignity** on a naked man, or a blind man, or a sleeping man, he is [still] liable. If a man fell from the roof and caused injury and inflicted **indignity**, he is liable for the injury but not for the **indignity**, as it says, "And she puts forth her hand and grabs him by **the private parts**" (Deuteronomy 25:11), a man is liable only when he intended [to inflict indignity].

M. Bava Kama 8:3

הַמַּכֶּה אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ וְלֹא עָשָׂה בָהֶם חַבּוּרָה, וְחוֹבֵל בַּחֲבֵרוֹ בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים, חַיָּב בְּכֻלָּן. הַחוֹבֵל בְּעֶבֶד עִבְרִי, חַיָּב בְּכֻלָּן חוּץ מִן הַשֶּׁבֶת, בִּזְמַן שֶׁהוּא שֶׁלּוֹ. הַחוֹבֵל בְּעֶבֶד כְּנַעֲנִי שֶׁל אֲחֵרִים, חַיָּב בְּכֻלָּן. בּוּשֶׁת רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, אֵין לָעֲבָדִים:

If a man struck his father or his mother and inflicted no wound, or if he wounded his fellow on Yom Kippur, he is liable for all five counts. If he wounded a Hebrew slave, he is liable on all five counts, except loss of income if it was his

slave. If he wounded a Canaanite slave (non-Jewish slave) he is liable on all five counts. Rabbi Judah says: “Slaves do not receive compensation for **indignity**.”

There is so much richness in this text that allows us to discuss the idea of shame and how the rabbis viewed it. First, we understand that there are five categories of personal injury that require compensation by the offending party. Indignity is the translation used here, but the Hebrew is all based around בוש. The payment, as we can see here, with help from Bava Kama 8:3, is based on the socio-economic status of each individual, which is another topic entirely. It is important to acknowledge, however, that shame can often be used as a means to hold power over someone, as well as dehumanizing others. The end of this passage seems unrelated, and yet, adds a different dimension to the conversation of shame. First, we have to look at Deuteronomy 25:11-12. It says, “if two men get into a fight with each other and the wife of one comes up to save her husband from his aggressor she and she puts out her hand and seizes the other man by the genitals, (12) you shall cut off her hand; show no pity.”[24] These two verses are about how to deal with a punishment for a crime that has caused somebody deep shame. In fact, in the Hebrew, the word used here for genitals comes from the same root as the word for shame. It says בִּמְבֻשָׁיו, literally, "by his shame". This is another conversation about shame around body and identity and we saw that with some with Adam and Eve and their nakedness. In this mishnah, we see that if it's an accident, if a man is falling and causes an injury to another man and also exposes him therefore causing or shame, the shame was an accident and therefore he is not liable to pay for the punishment of causing somebody else shame, only for the injury. In Deuteronomy 25, exposing the other man fighting her

[24] Translation from sefaria.org with some changes.

husband is a purposeful act according to Rashi and Ibn Ezra. This means that she should be punished with the idea that she caused shame on purpose.

These texts take us back to the question of how we deal with revealing shame in public spaces. We must synthesize this knowledge of our texts and psychology and understand that we have to tread lightly when somebody comes to us with something that causes them shame, might bring shame on their families. It is something that we will discuss further, but it allows us to understand that human beings are fragile in this are and therefore explains why we are not so willing to deal with some of the deepest shame-causing issues in our community.

Chapter Two

From Psychology and History to Modern Day Impact on the Jewish Community

In the second chapter, I will transition from the psychology of shame and its historical relevance in our text to exploring how the mixture of these two things has affected our community. In this section, I will try to describe how shame has affected the Jewish community. I will explore how lessons about shame and guilt are transmitted generationally through our text and our shared memory. I will look at the ways in which we choose not to talk about things and attempt to describe those moments, trying to decipher if we are afraid of "airing our dirty laundry in public" because of how other Jews will look at us or because of how non-Jews will look at us. By bringing together the two different concepts in chapter one, I will use chapter two to explore the confluence of these things and their effects on the community.

By the end of this chapter, I will enumerate ways in which we view shame and how we let it influence our lives and have a direct effect on our communities. From this point, I will transition to some specific examples in chapters 3 and 4. Shame in Jewish tradition, both in the community and in text, affects how we deal with problems in our community. I plan to delve into the topics of alcoholism and addiction, domestic violence and racism. In the next two chapters I will explore the idea that while we have dealt with the general idea of alcoholism and addiction in our community, we haven't dealt with the shame that they bring to us. There is already a paradigm of how to deal with these things in our communities, though the conversations may not be explicit enough to show people that they don't have to feel shame surrounding these topics. However, in chapter four I

am going to delve into the question of racism in the Jewish community, a much less explored topic. I believe it is both the shame we feel about racism in general and the shame we feel about not knowing how to talk about it that keeps us from addressing the issue in the Jewish world.

I wonder if we hold on to shame because it feels good. Not that it feels good to think "I am bad," but it's more of a "the devil you know" situation. We do everything we can to make sure that our situation has homeostasis in our lives. So, therefore, the unknown freedom and the unknown feelings that come with letting go of shame are scarier than the idea of living with that shame forever. We don't want to be uncomfortable and we know how it feels to live in this way and therefore we keep on living in our generational shame. It does seem that shame is extremely generational. It's passed down. We don't want non-Jews, not to mention other Jews, to know what our secrets our family holds and more than that we don't even want our other family members to know what secrets we hold onto. In family systems theory we know about the idea that a family secret causes everybody to act in certain ways so that that secret can be maintained.[25] It means that a family goes to great lengths to hide certain things from one another to maintain the status quo. So a secret or something shameful, something that brings guilt, something that reminds us that we are bad even though it's painful to hold onto, is almost worse to let it go. Because then one has to worry about the ways in which one has to address all the new issues that come up once the shame has been brought to light. One of the most important pieces of the analysis of the texts that we have seen is the idea that shame has existed for centuries. Whether it is shame brought onto oneself or shame that one brings on to the community or shame that the community signs to a

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person this idea has existed for centuries and it has existed in our text since the very beginning. The Torah is our DNA of sorts and therefore the idea of shame has existed since the very beginning of our people.

When I think about the connection between modern-day shame and guilt and how we look at it now versus what our text says, I think we have to look at things a little differently. The big thing that has not changed between the time the text was written and modernity is that shame is used often as a communal tool to make people act a certain way. Bradshaw talked about healthy shame versus unhealthy shame. But there's more than that here. We have societal pressure, communal pressure and religious culture pressure can lead to us needing to hide what is really going on in our lives. People who struggle with addiction or alcoholism struggle with a lot of shame because of the internal dialogue coming from within. There is a compounding force at work with that shame; the external societal pressure that adds another layer of shame to the already devastating nature of this disease. Instead of encouraging people to reach out to the community and say they are struggling and asking for resources and support from those around them, our lack of conversation around these issues affirms the shame that people already feel. Those folks will gravitate to their own most comfortable situation, that is to say, they will turn inward and isolate themselves from the rest of the population. Their internal voice will be the loudest voice they hear, and that voice will tell them how horrible they are and how much shame they should feel. As a society, and as a Jewish community, we have failed these people, because they need to hear how much they are valued as their shame is telling them they are fundamentally bad for struggling with something. We have allowed it to be okay not to talk about the things that bring us shame. Every time we allow these

topics to go unspoken, we are reinforcing the idea that people cannot bring their full selves to the Jewish world.

From biblical times until this moment the thread about shame or guilt is exactly as Bradshaw says- some shame helps with healthy boundaries, while most shame and guilt are used to control people. There is an important connection between boundaries and society and shame and guilt. Boundaries are a necessity for society to function so that people understand where their limits are. Rules and regulations are necessary. *Dina d'malchuta dina*- the law of the state is the law- that is to say, Jews are required to follow not only halacha but also civic laws as well. Without the law, people would turn on one another. As Rabbi Hanina said in Pirkei Avot 3:2, "Pray for the welfare of the government, for without fear of it, people would swallow each other alive."[26] We need structure, we need to impose it on ourselves because as human beings it is our inclination to live in a lawless, animalistic way. This is an important part of ourselves to which we should connect, but it does not help create a society that sees each human being as a part of a society and humanity. So we see the thread that connects various biblical characters and the shame they spoke about to the rabbis and reflects on how our communities deal with things they find shameful now. However, we have to do some untangling. We can't just say that everything we see in Bava Kama in chapter one is correct. I don't think it's enough to expect to only pay a monetary reparation after humiliating someone or exposing another person's shame. Shame is much worse than a monetary payment can make up for, but you are punished for shaming someone.

We have this joke about Jewish guilt-but that comes from somewhere legitimate. The idea of Jewish guilt is a modern-day cultural phenomenon. The stereotype of the

[26] Translation is mine.

neurotic Jewish person who is crippled with anxiety and guilt and the overbearing Jewish mother are tropes that are very common in popular culture. In the *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, Simon Dein, professor of Mental Health Sciences at the University College in London, authored "The Origins of Jewish Guilt: Psychological, Technological and Cultural Perspectives" to explore how Jewish culture is directly influenced by guilt.

When we think about the next portion of this exploration, we aren't just thinking about the history and the biblical text, we also need to understand how the idea of shame has transformed from setting up a healthy society to reinforcing the notion that people should hide who they are from one another within the community and from society at large outside of the Jewish world. Shame is lessened when one shines a light on it, there is no way around that fact. How then do we, as Jews, allow people to live in shame and guilt and isolation and allow shame to play an active role in shaping our communities? If we are talking about these things, we are lessening the burden for others. It's not just about us as individuals, but about our burden as a society and the way the heaviness of shame isn't really just about one person but is being carried by everyone in the society- every person they come into contact with, everything they do in our communities is affected by this. Everyone deserves to feel freedom, everybody deserves to experience the world in a free way, a way that connects them to God and one another. But when shame plays into the relationship and a person is carrying around a deep secret or something that causes them shame, you go into yourself and you get stuck there. If we aren't willing to even have the simple discussions of these deep-seated realities in our communities.

Chapter Three

Alcoholism and Domestic Violence and Shame in the Jewish Community

Alcoholism and Domestic Violence are directly related to shame- within the Jewish community, within the self, and within the community at large. Alcoholism and domestic violence have an interesting relationship with the concept of shame. Shame related to these two things is not just an external problem like we've seen thus far in Jewish history and psychology. It's not just a question of how people will look at one another. It's also a question of internal monologue. The thing about shame as it relates to these two things is that the shame comes from within.

For example, alcoholism causes isolation because the narrative in the person's head is that it's their fault and therefore they can't share it with anybody because nobody understands what they're going through. That's the reason that groups like Alcoholics Anonymous or group therapy or rehabs work. They put people in connection with one another to understand that their disease number one does not define them and number two does not make them some kind of unique or weird creature. In many AA rooms, they say "I suffer from terminal uniqueness." The reason uniqueness is terminal in this case is that without connecting to somebody else, without understanding that you are not the only one suffering, without having some reason to connect or to grow, a person could die alone suffering from their disease. And that's the antithesis of what our community should look like. Unfortunately, we are seeing more and more people die from overdose, especially here in Ohio. Unintentional drug poisoning, or drug overdose, became the

leading cause of death in Ohio beginning in 2007, surpassing car crashes for the first time. This trend, according to the Ohio Department of Health, has continued through 2018, the last year of data collected. [27]

To continue talking about this, we have to understand a few things. The first and most important is that alcoholism and other forms of addiction are not a failure of willpower. It's not an issue in the past or some other kind of trauma or somebody wanting to get away from it all that causes somebody to become an alcoholic or an addict. Those things can rapidly increase the degree to which somebody uses a substance or can introduce a person to using a substance as a form of coping mechanism, but alcoholism and addiction are diseases. I use the word alcoholics and addicts interchangeably throughout this paper because the brain chemistry is the same. Many studies show us that alcoholism and addiction are related to genetics. One such study, done at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, suggests that 18 significant genetic markers are associated with heavy usage of alcohol or alcoholism.[28]

An integral part of treating alcoholism and addiction is dealing with the shame that comes along with those things. One of the major pieces of this is understanding that the Jewish population in America is not in any way exempt from the same statistics as every other population in America regarding alcohol or any addiction. However, there is

[27] "Ohio Department of Health Drug Overdose," Ohio Department of Health, 2018, https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/violence-injury-prevention-program/Drug-overdose/.

[28] University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, "Study Reveals Genes Associated with Heavy Drinking and Alcoholism: Unique Genetic Variants May Inform Future Treatments for Each Alcohol Disorder," ScienceDaily, April 2, 2019, https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190402124314.htm.

not one exact number about awareness of this problem. [29] In the past, people have said that Jews aren't alcoholics, and internally Jews use the phrase "shikker is a goy [30] But Dr. Gary P. Zola, an American Jewish History expert, professor, and head of the Jacob Rader Marcus American Jewish Archives, always says what is happening to America is happening to the Jewish people.[31] And that is no different in this situation.

There are alcoholics and addicts of all varieties in our community just like every other community in this country. However, Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski talks about the idea that because we were persecuted and forced to live in shtetls for so long, we have this proclivity to avoid showing our weaknesses.[32] Rabbi Twerski is a Chasidic rabbi and leading psychiatrist in the field of alcoholism and chemical dependency. He has published most of the work regarding Jews and addiction. We have this mentality that has come here to this country with us from the old country about not letting others see us in any weak light. This comes from centuries of oppression, from needing to guard one another against the outside world. This mentality has traveled with us to this country in a way that does not allow for an open conversation about alcoholism and addiction.

Famously, the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Alcoholics Anonymous program are based in Christianity. There is no getting around the idea of the history of that program is from the Oxford Group. However, we know that there are so many

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[29] Melanie Baruch, Abraham Benarroch, and Gary E. Rockman, "Alcohol and Substance Use in the Jewish Community: A Pilot Study," *Journal of Addiction* 2015 (2015): 1–4, https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/763930.
[30] Abraham J. Twerski, *Shame Borne in Silence - Spouse Abuse in the Jewish Community.* (New York: Urim Publications, 2015). P. 12
[31] Dr. Gary P. Zola, "Introductory Material & Background to Early Jewish Settlement on the North American Continent," (August 21, 2017).
[32] Abraham J. Twerski, *Self-Discovery in Recovery* (Center City, Mn: Hazelden, 1984).

Jewish principles in the steps, especially the idea of a personal relationship with God. Because we are no longer living shtetl life but have maintained the mentality, we are more inclined to cover up our flaws.[33] We as Jews do not have the same relationship to alcoholism and addiction issues as non-Jews in this country. We can see that just by looking around Cincinnati, a city with a Jewish population of 32,100.[34] However, there are two recovery meetings at institutions of these once a week. There's an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting at one of the synagogues on a Wednesday and then an Overeaters Anonymous meeting at one of the synagogues on a Friday morning. And that's it. Every single other meeting of any recovery program is happening in some kind of church or a hospital and most of the hospitals in this area are related to the Catholic faith in some way.

The messaging here is the problem; the idea that our communities aren't even open to hosting a meeting is problematic. Many people who are addicts or alcoholics don't necessarily want people to know that they're involved in these programs and therefore they will often go to a meeting that is not in their home church or home organization or the place they work. Just by holding those meetings in our buildings, part of our message to our communities is that it's OK to be an addict. More than that, these meetings open a path to talking about these issues and about how Jews suffer from the same types of addiction and alcoholism as everybody else in this country. It is our community's responsibility to take care of one another. Part of this means being open to understanding when somebody says they are an alcoholic or an addict. This means

[33] Abraham J. Twerski, *Self-Discovery in Recovery* (Center City, Mn: Hazelden, 1984).
[34] Janet Aronson et al., "The Cincinnati Jewish Community Study," 2020, https://cdn.fedweb.org/fed-31/2/Community%2520Study%25202019%2520Report.pdf?v=1578950705.

knowing what signs to look for, and understanding how to navigate a conversation with somebody. Part of this is about training our clergy to make sure that they understand the warning signs and know how to respond when somebody comes to them. Because the last thing we want is somebody to say they have a problem and to be caught off guard or say "just don't use." By the time somebody comes to a clergy member and says they have an issue with addiction, they have been suffering for much longer than you might think. And for the response to be "just have less," that is not an acceptable way to deal with any sort of confession of that magnitude. The first thing is to say to somebody that they are loved. And that they can understand that they will remain part of the community whether or not they seek any kind of treatment. They have to understand they are a valuable member of the society and community, and they have to understand that their life is valuable enough to deal with this problem. Or perhaps they are feeling completely powerless or unable to deal with life as it is, and that is a great time to reach out to one of these groups and say I have somebody who could benefit from this program. Many Jews feel uncomfortable going into churches because of our history as we have not always been welcome because of so many different stigmas. So if all of these meetings are held in churches, it makes them less accessible for the Jewish community.

We have to be talking about these things openly because it is only through talking about them openly that people can understand that they are safe and they are OK if this is something they are struggling with. Because what we know is that the internal monologue of the alcoholic or addict says this is their own fault, that they are a failure, or caused this problem. Just like if somebody in the community is stricken with cancer, the community rallies around them and says we love you, we support you, let us help

your family, so too should be the response for alcoholism and addiction because alcoholism and addiction are diseases like cancer.[35] However there the other layer of the internal monologue which prevents alcoholics and addicts from reaching out to their communities for support. We also have to get rid of the mentality that we cannot allow non-Jews to see our dirty laundry. No alcoholic or addict should ever feel shame from their community because they are already putting that on themselves in a way that is so unhealthy and so degrading, it keeps them in their disease actively using their substance is much longer than is necessary.

As previously mentioned, I believe that shame is related to alcoholism and addiction and domestic violence in the same way. While domestic violence is perpetrated against someone and alcoholism or addiction is not, the shame spiral is the same. The victim has this internal monologue that says 'I deserve this treatment, or I can fix this person, or I don't want anyone to see this person in a different light than they do.'[36] In his book *The Shame Borne in Silence* about spousal violence in the Jewish community, Rabbi Twerski delved into this conversation. We often hear the same message about domestic violence that we do around Jews and alcoholism. That Jews 'don't.' That because of their relationship to Torah or because of their relationship to community, the myth is that spousal abuse doesn't occur in the Jewish community. But I will repeat the wise words of Dr. Gary P. Zola once again and say 'anything happening in America is happening in the Jewish community.' That is the case here too. We don't have statistics on

[35] Alcoholics Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous : The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism*, 4th ed. (1939; repr., New York City: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2008). Pg 18.
[36] Abraham J. Twerski, *Shame Borne in Silence - Spouse Abuse in the Jewish Community.* (New York: Urim Publications, 2015). P. 23

any of this information because people are reluctant to report, or they don't want people outside of the Jewish community to know.[37] The underlying inner monologue in a domestic violence situation is just as damaging as the underlying inner monologue of the alcoholic or the addict. What happens is this cycle of abuse that plays into the theory that they deserve the treatment or they can't tell anybody because nobody will understand. Once somebody reaches out to a community member to tell them what they are experiencing, it has probably been going on for a very long time. Twerski says when somebody walks into his office and says this is what's going on with my spouse, often it's been going on for years and years and they have just reached a point in which they cannot deal with it any longer. Often when somebody reports spousal abuse the response is complete bewilderment.[38]

And the abuser will often be somebody who seeks power. This is a conversation about power and about why somebody would take their anger out on someone else in this way. The person who is the abuser is often seeking control and seeking power in every situation, including their relationships. And the way they do that is by isolating the victim, often taking away their friends and family controlling where money is spent and how it's spent, or who the person can interact with. Like with alcoholism and addiction, domestic violence and the cycle of violence thrives on isolation. Because when a victim is not isolated they may hear that what they are experiencing is not normal. But isolation leads the victim to believe that they don't have anybody else they could rely on. And once a victim thinks that they are alone in a situation with the perpetrator, they often start to

[37] Abraham J. Twerski, *Shame Borne in Silence - Spouse Abuse in the Jewish Community.* (New York: Urim Publications, 2015). P. 37
[38] Ibid, 33.

rationalize the behavior or perhaps seek to explain it in a way that makes sense for them, because they think they have no other choice.

Twerski talks a lot about how he thinks a woman should prepare for marriage by making sure she can have a job quickly, that she has a bank account set up at separate from her husband, that she is financially savvy and knows to look for warning signs are. He primarily works with the Chasidic community, which is a different situation than the modern reform experience. But in Reform circles, we have the myth that Reform Jews, because we are liberal. After all, we believe in women's rights and are staunchly egalitarian and would not perpetrate this kind of violence. The reality is that it is happening in liberal, conservative and orthodox communities just like everywhere across the country. Because it's not about religion, it's about power. The shame comes in because there's this myth around Jews that they don't abuse their spouses or that due to chosenness, we have something special and were different and were raised differently. But the reality is that if somebody grew up in an abusive home, or experienced abuse as a young person, they are more likely to be an abuser and to develop a culture in their homes where they are abusing someone. It's not about how the other person deserves and we need to move past the idea of 'it's my fault.' Because it's not, it's all about power.[39]

[39] Ibid 37

Chapter Four

Racism and Shame in the Jewish Community

In this next chapter, we will explore how racism and shame are connected to the Jewish community. It may seem like an odd transition to go from domestic violence and alcoholism to racism. However, it is shame that underlies the Jewish community's issues with these topics. An inability to speak about them, to accept people where they are, to acknowledge that these issues exist in our communities- this is what perpetuates the myth that “Jews aren’t.” To be very clear I am not claiming that shame causes racism. Unlike alcoholism and domestic violence, racism, while it may not be talked about, is not caused by some inner sense of shame. On the contrary, it seems that race and racism are not addressed in Jewish communities because there is shame around the very notion of racism and not having the language to even discuss what that might mean. I think there is shame about the Jewish history surrounding race. There is also a deep sense that white Jews balk at the idea that Jewish institutions could ever be racist. “How could we possibly be racist? We’re Jews, we’re not really white.”

While we will address the claim that white Jews don't often see themselves as white, I want to first deal with some terminology. Language and the nuance around language are imperative to this conversation as it allows for the most thorough investigation of this topic. Throughout my first draft of this work, I used the words "Jews of Color" exclusively to speak about non-white Jews. Upon learning at the CCAR Connect 2020 with Lindsey Newman, the Director of Community Engagement at Be'chol Lashon, I have chosen to use the terminology "racially and ethnically diverse Jews." In

her talk entitled "Building Racially Diverse Communities", she reminded all of the participants that we are not just talking about Black Jews, which is who typically comes to mind when with the words Jews of Color. We are talking about Jews with all kinds of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Our terminology is lagging behind the data, which is often the case. [40] When the words “Jews of Color " appear in this work, it is because the source used that terminology. But please know that I, and all of the sources I have cited to compile this data, mean this phrase to include Black, Asian, Latinx, multiracial, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews. Racially and ethnically diverse Jews make up between 12 and 20% of the Jewish community in our country. [41] This number comes from the Jews of Color Field Building Initiative. “The Jews of Color Field Building Initiative is a national effort focused on building and advancing the professional, organizational and communal field for Jews of Color. The Initiative focuses on *grant making, research and field building, and community education*, and hosts the nation’s first ever philanthropic and capacity building fund expressly dedicated to responding to racial injustice through helping further establish, fortify and building-out the field of support for Jews of Color.” [42]

Ilana Kauffman, the Executive Director of The Jews of Color Field Building Initiative, is often met with pushback around these statistics. She explains that people will ask her“if that’s the case why are there Jews of Color at my organization? Why is that not

[40] Lindsey Newman, “Building Racially Diverse Communities,” (March 24, 2020).
[41] Ari Kelman, Aaron Hahn Tapper, and Aliya Saperstein, “Counting Inconsistencies: An Analysis of American Jewish Population Studies, with a Focus on Jews of Color,” May 2019, https://jewsofcolorfieldbuilding.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Counting-Inconsistencies-052119.pdf.
[42] Jews of Color Field Building Initiative, “ What We Do: Jews of Color Field Building Initiative,” January 11, 2019, https://jewsofcolorinitiative.org/what-we-do/.

something that I see?" Regardless of how much money we put into studies and how much time we spend reaching out to Jews of Color, many don't see Jewish institutions as safe spaces in which they can embrace all aspects of their intersectional identities.[43]

White passing is something that a lot of Jews like to claim. This is extremely damaging to the identity and individuality of racially and ethnically diverse Jews. However, as stated above, language allows us to be nuanced about this discussion, and I realize that white Jews do not see themselves as being the same as White Anglo Saxon Protestants in this country. April N. Baskin has provided the best language I have experienced around this topic. April N. Baskin is the principal of Joyous Justice Consulting and also serves as the Racial Justice Director of the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable. She uses the language that white Jews are *conditionally* white. White Jews are white until it's no longer convenient or until all minorities are persecuted. A white Jew has the privilege to remove their Jewish garb and just seem like another white person. This is a different life experience than a Jew of Color because they can remove all of their garb and yet cannot take off their skin[44]. That's just the reality. It's painful for racially and ethnically diverse Jews to hear a white Jew claim they are not white because it undermines their multicultural intersectional identities as Jews.[45]

Often, white Jews claim to be non-white and cite the history of the liberal Jewish movement's involvement with the civil rights movement as a way to back up that claim. It becomes easy for liberal white Jews to recoil at the very idea that Jewish communities

[43] Ilana Kauffman, Jews of Color Field Building Initiative and Race, November 19, 2019.
[44] April N. Baskin, "How to Close the Widening Gap Between Jews of Color and White Jewish Leadership.," (March 5, 2019).
[45] ibid.

are, or can be, inherently racist because they point to Rabbi Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel and his relationship to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Rabbi Heschel was an incredible figure and is certainly a point of pride for all Jews. He coined the idea of praying with one's feet, as he talked about marching with Dr. King. However, that relationship, and that march, was in the 1960s, and yet Jews to this day claim there is no way that the Jewish community could be racist because of this history. Unfortunately for all of us, we cannot rest on our laurels. We cannot say that looking at our past is an acceptable way to explain how we currently act because the two are incongruous. We cannot make any progress this way. It's not an acceptable way to build any relationship.

I acknowledge that Jews were not always treated like the white people around them. It was not until the post-war era, and really through the 1960s, that Jews began to be lumped in with all other white minorities. We've all seen the signs on businesses that said 'no Jews allowed'. We know that there were neighborhoods, cities, country clubs, and careers from which Jews were expressly excluded. The history of the racial identity of Jews in this country is similar to that of many white minorities and tells the story of our country's evolving efforts to keep Brown and Black people in poverty and segregation. In accepting the Irish, the Catholics, the Jews, and the Italians as white, it meant there was a clearer racial divide. This allowed for power and money to be hoarded, for advantages like educational and monetary benefits GIs received and other social services to apply to all whites and not to Black and Brown people. It was another way to segregate and control the population.[46] Due to this new racial make-up in the post-war era, Jews were rising to the middle class, gaining money, contributing to white flight and

[46] Karen Brodkin Sacks, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, Nj: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

redlining, and becoming landlords. While all of these things are painful to discuss, they are the reality of Jewish history in this country. These things are also topics that white Jews feel shame around. This shame around race and white American Jews is not just related to behavior in the 1960s, but it goes back to before the founding of this country. There is shame around the reality that Jews owned slaves, that Jews ran and benefited from the slave trade, that some Jews are monetarily sound because their families used free labor to build their wealth. Importantly, there is shame around not even knowing where to begin the conversation and shame around having turned a blind eye to these realities.

Just like alcoholism and domestic violence, our community not dealing with racism very clearly comes from shame. Shame in racism, however, is not the foundational cause. Unlike alcoholism and domestic violence, which have some connection to the idea that the people involved are inherently bad because of their inner monologue or the disease they are experiencing or the cycle they are caught in, the shame surrounding racism is a different situation. Racism in our communities is real. We see it. We see it every single time we choose to put a police officer in front of a synagogue. Because people of color, especially Black folks, walk into a space with a police officer and immediately their lives are in danger. [47]And yet Jewish institutions seem to prioritize the comfort of the congregation over the literal lives of the Jews of Color among us. No person should ever feel like walking into their own house of worship is putting their life on the line. I'm from Pittsburgh. I understand what it means to lose people in my

[47] David A. Harris, *A City Divided : Race, Fear and the Law in Police Confrontations* (London, Uk ; New York, NY: Anthem Press, An Imprint Of Wimbledon Publishing, 2020).

community to violence and hatred. I understand what it means to be touched by gun violence intimately in a way that other people I hope will never have to experience. But I still don't want a police officer in front of my synagogue because what that says is that the comfort of the white people inside is more valuable and more important than the safety and lives of any other folks who might want to walk in the door. And that is unacceptable.

The active decision to allow our institutions to remain as white as they are knowing full well the percentage of Jews in our country who are racially and ethnically diverse, that is racism. And we don't talk about it because I don't think we have the language. We don't believe that this is our reality and therefore we don't discuss it because we don't think it's a problem. Or we understand that as white Jews we have a different level of privileges than anybody else of color but we don't have the skills or the ability to talk about it. We are missing the language and that hinders our communication. I do think that there are Jews who are feeling some shame well as they realize how much this system of white privilege has benefited white Jews in the long run. That's why Jews who get to take off their Jewish identity when they are uncomfortable and put it back on when it's convenient to have been able to benefit from that experience. Once Jews were white, Jews no longer had to fight for themselves to have basic rights the way that people of color continue to have to fight in this country every day. And I think there is some real shame in our communities as we have woken up to the fact in the last 10 or 15 years and have looked around asking what happened to our relationship to communities of color? Where are all the people who we claim to have relationships with us who don't want to have relationships with us now?

We used to have this very strong connection with black communities and especially black church communities because we could understand what oppression felt like. Now, as Jews have become more assimilated and white, our oppression feels further away. I acknowledge that this is not the case, as the holocaust and even very recent anti-Semitic events have demonstrated. Eric Ward, the Executive Director of the Western States Center and author of "Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism," often states in his talks to Jewish communities that this is not the 'oppression Olympics'.[48] This is not a conversation to say that the oppression of the Jews has not been bad or that the Holocaust was more or less damaging than slavery in and this country. That's not what this is. This is a conversation about getting over all of those things that stigmatize the conversation around race and being willing to do the hard work to be vulnerable in spaces. We must be willing to say that we don't understand certain aspects of what anti-black racism looks like or feels like. We have been tied up in a relationship with black folks for a long time and it is a relationship that has been severely damaged over the last 50 years and needs to be rebuilt in so many ways. However, our conversation right now is about how we in the Jewish community need to get over that shame of not having the right words. We have to get over the shame of not feeling like we are adequate enough to have a difficult conversation. We need to acknowledge that we, as a majority white mostly liberal community, have hidden behind our liberal values for many years to avoid doing the hard work of engaging with these challenging conversations. It is our responsibility now to acknowledge that we have had a part in upholding a system that has been chipping away at the dignity and humanity of people in

[48] Erik K. Ward, "Anti-Semitism and White Nationalism," (March 5, 2019).

this world. That has been segregating, disenfranchising, and making sure that people of color cannot get ahead.

This is hard. Acknowledging the shame, bringing it out to the light will do what acknowledgment of any other type of shame will do, make it less painful. Just like with addiction and just like domestic violence bringing shame around racism out into the light means that we can start to address it. People are dying from racism, just like they are from alcoholism and abuse. With alcoholism and addiction, people die because they don't feel like they have a safe place to go and ask for help. People die from racism in states with Stand Your Ground laws, in police confrontations, in health systems with bias, in the school to prison pipeline, in generational poverty, and the devaluing of humanity. Our synagogues and our Jewish communities should be places that are safe enough for people to go and say 'I have a problem. I'm going to die if I don't deal with it, I need help.' Yet many Jews don't even walk in the door because it doesn't feel safe. Because every microaggression is painful. Because we don't understand how to open ourselves up and say we have been a part of this and that must be painful for you because you are a part of us you are a part of other communities we have work to do here. I believe that we can do it. Amazing people are doing this work about Jews of Color who are Jews of Color. They are training people, helping the Jewish community have these conversations, and being vulnerable in ways that we should not ask a Jew of Color to be, because white Jews should be baring the workload.

And for those who after all this, may not believe that racially and ethnically diverse Jews exist or still question why they are not involved in our institutions, I'd like to share a story. This is not my story, but it is a very public story about an incident that

happened at the Union for Reform Judaism Biennial in December of 2019. Author and television and film producer Marra Gad was scheduled to speak at the Biennial about her experience as a multiracial Jew and her new book *The Color of Love, A Story of a Mix-Race Jewish Girl.* I am going to leave her experience in her own words instead of any summary I might choose to include here.

> "For those of you who are not aware, one week ago, I arrived at the Union for Reform Judaism Biennial Conference in Chicago, and from moment one, things did not go as any of us had hoped they would.
>
> When I went to pick up my credentials, I was told that the "REAL" Marra Gad needed to pick up her badge. And when I replied that I was the real Marra Gad, I did not receive an apology. Instead, the person behind the desk said, "Really!?"
>
> When I was eventually given my very bright orange badge that clearly said PRESENTER across the bottom….
>
> I was assumed to be hotel staff. Twice. While wearing my bright orange badge. And told that I needed to do more to get room service orders out more quickly.
>
> I was aggressively asked repeatedly WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? And when I would reply that I was a featured speaker on Shabbat afternoon, I was then asked what I could possibly have to speak about.

I ended up in an elevator filled with attendees who elected to whisper about me. What I was doing there. And, again, what I could possibly be presenting about. LIKE I WASN'T THERE.

Stared at. Confronted. Whispered about. And assumed to work for the hotel....It all grew so uncomfortable for me to be out with the general population that I had to be escorted from place to place by URJ staff (to whom I remain profoundly grateful), who saw for themselves the looks that I received simply being in the hallways. When others were at Shabbat services….or dinner….or song session…I was in my hotel room alone. Crying. Because I did not feel comfortable and safe being out with my own people.

I shared these stories during my session, and while most people asked very thoughtful questions and were empathic and supportive, as a final moment, a woman chose to interrupt the discussion to forcefully demand to share what she had been thinking about the entire hour. And she used her time to turn everything around on me, stating clearly, offensively and without apology that I could have made it all better for myself if I had chosen to confront the people in the elevator and EXPLAIN MYSELF. Create comfort for them. I should have made it a "teachable moment" and taught them that I was Jewish.

Now, with some days behind us, I'm receiving messages from truly big hearted, well intentioned people asking if….

Rest has helped me "put it behind me."

If the many loving messages I have received "erased what happened."

Saying that I will hopefully heal “quickly” because we have work to do.

I have received private messages suggesting that the woman who believed that it was my job to have done better with the horrible people that I encountered was simply being ignorant. And that she just “didn’t understand” and perhaps I shouldn’t be so outraged.

And all of this further upset me. A lot. To spend time swimming in this level of racism, intolerance and aggression was traumatic for me. To see me be attacked in the room was traumatic for my family. And it felt like people just didn’t understand how tremendously painful all of this really was.

And then, 2 of my trusted friends with whom I was discussing all of this and who also happen to be rabbis, suggested that most people really don’t understand what the experiences at Biennial felt like for me. Because they cannot. Because it would not happen to them. Because they are white. And I am not. And for a moment, that made sense.

But, as I continue to consider the question, I would offer that Jews should absolutely understand because of what it feels like to be on the receiving end of anti-semitism.

Racism, anti-semitism, homophobia, anti OTHER ism…. they are all abuses of the soul. And to be on the receiving end of it is a trauma. And it is a trauma that Jews know very well.

Jews know what it feels like to be stared at. Whispered about. Not made to feel welcome. To feel unsafe.

If someone aggressively says that we Jews can do better in the face of anti-semitism and puts it back on us - which, as we know, happens - we are OUTRAGED. We don't chalk it up to them not understanding and let that soften the experience for us.

We know that rest does not make anti-semitism better. Nor does it with racism.

We do not rest and put anti-semitism behind us. Ever. Nor should we with racism."[49]

Ms. Gad's experience at the URJ biennial was, unfortunately, not the first time she experienced racism in the Jewish community. And the visceral responses that came at her when she shared her experience seemed to come from a deep place of shame, and of expecting her to do the work that white Jews need to do to rectify this situation. There is a sense of anger that comes with shame sometimes. People will lash out when they are feeling helpless or unsure. No one should have to bear the brunt of that shame the way she did. I know this is just one story. And I know that Rabbi Rick Jacobs, the head of the URJ, made a public apology that was thoughtful and caring. But this should not be Ms. Gad's problem. This is a problem for white Jews to address. White Jews must move past shame and fear to acknowledge what wrongs have been done and how white Jews continue to benefit from these wrongs.

At the end of the day, it is our responsibility to do something about this issue just like it is our responsibility to make our community safe to talk about the other two issues

[49]Marra Gad, "' Friends, with Another Shabbat about to Begin, I'd like to Share Some Thoughts,'" Facebook, December 20, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/marra.gad/posts/1062561097421537.

addressed in this paper. Shame is a killer and the minute that we can take away its power and acknowledge the part that we have played and what we have to do from here, we can move forward and fix our relationships.

Conclusion

The dichotomy between types of shame became clear as my research moved through its various stages. There is internal shame that prevents people from seeking help in the first place, like in alcoholism and domestic violence. In those cases, beyond the fear of what the Jewish community and the larger world might have to say, there is a deeply rooted internal monologue that says the person deserves the life they are living. Shame is both an internal and external experience, both of which could delay the person suffering from taking any action.

Around racism in Jewish communities, however, shame takes a different form. While it is likely that some shame exists for people individually internally about their relationship to race and racism, there is a much more communal aspect to the shame. There is denial, of course, that racism exists in Jewish communities. Once there is some acceptance of this blatant reality, shame is what is stopping Jewish communities from rectifying this issue. There is shame around not having the words to even begin conversations that is combined with fear about saying the wrong thing. There is also shame upon the realization that white Jews have benefitted from their whiteness while perpetuating systems that oppress people of color. Once coming to this realization, there is shame in not knowing how to proceed. The main suggestion I have to avoid this state of paralysis and to conquer this shame is to begin conversations. These conversations must be between white Jews who feel this sense of shame and who are willing to work through it for the betterment of all Jews. If we want our institutions to reflect who Jews actually are in this country, institutions must make commitments to deal with their own racism while fighting the racism upon which this country was founded. The shame

around race and racism in our Jewish communities is keeping communities from being whole, from being safe for every Jew, and from being the Jews we profess to be.

It is my hope that through this work, Jews will start to talk about these issues. Having conversations is the first step. I am so proud of the work the URJ is doing surrounding race and racism, though there is a long way to go. It has been my personal experience that shame starts to shrivel up as we talk about the things that bring us shame and people continue to accept us. Combining the psychology and our textual history of shame shows us the roots of shame, and how that influences the Jewish relationship to shame. This relationship must change for people to be truly free and beings deserve freedom, love, and acceptance.

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