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THE USE OF JEWISH METAPHOR IN RABBINICAL COUNSELING

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Cincinnati, Ohio

1987

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DIGEST

Attention in this thesis is focused on the effective use of Jewish metaphors in rabbinical counseling. These metaphors assist the rabbinical counselor in creating a bridge between himself and the counselee. They can also serve to illustrate a particular point of view or merely provide an occasion whereby the counselee can view himself clearly for possibly the first time. Furthermore they enhance the rabbinical counselor's ability to easily and effectively communicate new concepts and values.

A metaphor is another name for a story whose characters represent ideas, values, characteristics, or simply other people. Metaphors come in many different forms: allegories, similes, parables, myths, legends, and histories. The metaphor's use, in all of its forms, has proved an effective means of communication in all cultures from the beginning of recorded history to the present day.

Judaism is no stranger to the use of metaphor. The Biblical, Rabbinic and Hasidic authors were well aware that ideas and values were difficult to communicate rationally, or in a didactic manner; therefore we find these literatures replete with parables and fables.

This thesis will analyze the potential use of Jewish metaphors from these genre of literature to illustrate their applicability in the counseling setting. In addition there is an

examination of how new metaphors can be created by the rabbinical counselor.

The role of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) will be explored to demonstrate its usefulness in interpreting non-verbal communication and in constructing effective counseling metaphors. Although the techniques of NLP are relatively new, they complement and enhance the telling of Jewish metaphors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My first debt - for the idea - is to Rabbi Theodore Falcon, one of my rabbis from Leo Baeck Temple in Los Angeles. I remember how I looked forward to his sermon stories on Shabbat. My mind was set free to wander on the fantasy journeys he guided me on. I visited strange countries and was greeted by intriguing people and animals along the way.

Special thanks is due to those rabbis and educators who responded to my calls for stories and techniques for using metaphors in education and counseling. Michael Shire, the Director of Education at Beth Hillel sent many stories as well as information on storytelling techniques. This material proved invaluable. Rabbis Ted Falcon, Bill Cutter, Stuart Kelman, Gary Zola, Peter Rubinstein, Michael Matuson, Alan Fuchs, and Edwin Friedman provided me with stories and sources for my research.

A debt of a different sort is due to the staff of the College-Institute library who helped me locate important books for my research - in particular, to David Gilner, the Public Services Librarian, who helped clarify issues both related and unrelated to the writing of this thesis.

I am especially grateful to have had the opportunity to have been the student of Dr. Eugene Mihaly, a consummate Jewish storyteller. Rarely do we find a master who not only realizes the importance of stories but who with every bone and raised eyebrow lifts the listener to another place and time.

I am grateful as well to Dr. Robert L. Katz, who advised the writing of this thesis. His warm assurances and gentle manner turned what could have been a high tension enterprise into one of thoughtfulness and ease. He was my guide through the forest of uncertainty.

I owe a debt of deepest gratitude to Matt Reddington, his stories opened my eyes. His spirit breathed new life into me.

To my wife, Marcia, who provides me with another set of eyes, my debt and my love are without measure. She helps me see what I don't see. She helps me hear what I don't hear. She is my guide, my companion, and my eternal love.

I am grateful to my parents and grandparents who have encouraged me, helped me grow, and told me many wonderful stories.

Finally, it is only appropriate to acknowledge Ezekiel, Isaiah, Rabbis Meir, Hillel, Joshua, Rava, Baal Shem Tov, the Great Maggid, Pinhas of Koretz, Lawrence Kushner, and many others who have had the insight into the importance and power of the Jewish metaphor.

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INTRODUCTION

Counseling is not in any way a new role for the rabbi; however, in this modern age we are discovering that more and more of the rabbi's time is being devoted to this area. The rabbi's role as a counselor has grown mainly because of the isolated and mobile nature of individuals in this increasingly atomized and secular world. In an attempt to find roots and personal meaning outside of the nuclear family, individuals are turning to their rabbis for answers in greater numbers.

The modern rabbi finds him/herself faced with congregants who are confronted by problems such as aged parents, intermarriage, alienated children, loneliness, death and dying, financial difficulties, and divorce, to only name a few. In order to deal effectively with these congregants-in-need, the rabbi depends on personal experience, training, referrals, but most importantly, upon Judaism in order to effectuate change in the other person.

Judaism is important because, the individual has come to see the rabbi, not a trained therapist, not an analyst, but the rabbi at the temple. The temple is a place that has become familiar to a Jew (whether a member of the particular congregation or not). It represents a home, an extension of the family. The rabbi within these walls is a source of hope and comfort.¹

¹ Alan Bregman, Rabbinic Counseling: An Exploratory Study on How the Rabbi Attempts to Counsel Congregants, Rabbinical Thesis, (Cincinnati, OH: HUC-JIR, 1968)

Additionally, the rabbi and the temple represent thousands of years of a tradition of peoplehood. Through its words of comfort and enlightenment, security and guidance, Judaism, coming from the lips of the rabbi, can bring solace to those arriving seeking relief.

Leaving the seminary, the rabbi normally has little knowledge and skill in dealing with these issues of emotional concern. Once in their rabbinate some have decided to improve their counseling by enrolling in clinical pastoral training programs, "although more of them," Dr. Robert Katz tells us, "now enroll in counseling practice and in programs in social work, clinical psychology, and family therapy."² Much emphasis has been placed on techniques and therapies from the secular world; consequently those rabbis utilizing these procedures are possibly more effective counselors. Although they may be more effective counselors, are they more effective rabbinical counselors? There is the temptation to over identify with the secular therapist which can lead "to an ambivalence to the mystic and symbolic [and spiritual] components in religion."³ There are also psychological components in religion which cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, in rabbinical counseling it is not necessary to be totally reliant upon religion to the exclusion of secular therapeutic techniques, nor is it necessary to rely on the secular at the expense of the

² Dr. Robert Katz, Pastoral Care and the Jewish Tradition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 18.

³ Ibid., p. 102.

religious. What needs to be kept in mind are the opening words from Buber's I and Thou:

Man's world is manifold, and his attitudes are manifold. What is manifold is often frightening because it is not neat and simple. Men forget how many possibilities are open to them.⁴

We can learn a great deal from the secular world in terms of psychotherapy and counseling; nevertheless, we can not ignore the vast resources of our own religion in providing guidance and insight which not only helps one become an effective counselor, but become an effective rabbinical counselor.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the use of the literary device known as metaphor for improving rabbinical counseling. After explaining the nature of the metaphor and analyzing the literature from the emerging field of Neuro-Linguistic Programing (NLP), we will address the definition and the use of metaphor in literature and language.

We will continue by examining not only metaphors from our Biblical, Rabbinic and Hasidic traditions; but also how stories and parables from these traditions can be transformed into effective counseling metaphors. Finally, just as the Talmudic and Hasidic rabbis created stories and parables from their realms of experience, we will consider how the modern rabbi can create stories from his/her contemporary experience for effective counseling.

⁴ Martin Buber, I and Thou (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 9.

Effective counseling is achieved by the person who has the flexibility to use different appropriate techniques and tools at his/her disposal. A rabbi who wishes to enhance his/her helpfulness and be more effective can do so by deepening his/her sensitivity to the use of metaphor.

Overview

Chapter one will deal with the definition and structure of the metaphor. We will also highlight the use of this and other types of symbolic language in our culture today and come to understand their importance.

Chapter two will illustrate the dynamic nature and potential of the metaphor as it can be used in the counseling setting, drawing on the literature of psychotherapy. This chapter will focus on techniques provided by NLP which can be used to enhance and create metaphors.

The focus of Chapter three will be on the communicative and the dialogic aspect of the metaphor as found in our traditional Jewish sources. The ensuing analysis will examine how the stories, parables and inherent metaphors have been used in the biblical, the aggadic and the hasidic literatures.

Chapter four will create a synthesis between Chapters two and three. This chapter is concerned with the emotional issues of the counselee. It will be demonstrated how stories from the biblical, aggadic and hasidic literatures can be used hand in hand with the modern therapeutic practice of using the metaphor in the counseling setting.

Chapter five will illustrate how contemporary Judaism can continue the tradition of creating therapeutic metaphors. The thesis concludes with a retrospect of the past and a prospect for the future regarding the use of metaphor by the rabbinical counselor.

I.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE METAPHOR

Language, primarily religious language, consists of symbols and images. These symbols and images are often, but not always, found in the parables, stories, myths and fairy tales of a particular genre of religious literature. The language is expressed in these symbolic forms because they tend to be the simplest modes of communication. Our minds are more readily and easily able to absorb the manifest content of a story and its meaning than we are some truth expressed in didactic terms. These symbolic forms of language can enchant, entertain and inform; but of much greater significance, they can provide access to deeper meaning, can stimulate one's imagination, and help develop one's intellect and clarify emotional issues. It is for these reasons that the parable, story, myth, and fairy tale can be utilized as effective tools in counseling.

From the beginning of recorded history myths, stories and legends have been told. Sometimes these stories and tales have been told for the sake of entertainment; but they have often been used as a means of transmitting information - cultural, sociological, historical, philosophical, and religious - from one generation to the next. The story has been used as a medium to express ideas, values, traditions, and truths. According to Malinowski, primitive man developed myths to serve as "moulders,

controllers, and sustainers, of how men live."⁵ Those important forces and phenomena which affected his life significantly - a river, the earth, the sun - were characterized as good. In the same way, there were evil forces such as drought, disease and flood. The ancient myths reflected these characterizations of good and evil forces.

These myths, for the modern eye and ear are expressed as "equalities" - the river is a god, the rock is a god, the tree is a god - not as similarities. The object "river" represents a "god." The language used in expressing the tale or myth is symbolic. That is, it is a representation of another "reality."

Of course every story need not be analyzed and dissected in order to discover some hidden truth buried between the commas of every sentence. At the same time we should not always view what is found on the surface to be the true reality. For example, if we perceive the details of the story of the myth to be true, then consequently, from this perspective, the myth is the correct report of the events as they actually happened in "reality." While this is certainly a possibility, Erich Fromm indicates that:

In the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries in Western culture, a new approach is taking place gradually. The emphasis is put on the religious and philosophical meaning of the myth, and the mani-

⁵ Malinowski, "The Concept of Myth in Literature," L.C. Knights and Basil Cottle, eds., Metaphor and Symbol (London: Butterworths, 1960), p. 125.

fest story is viewed as the symbolic expression of this meaning.⁶

When we look at the Creation story in the Bible, we do not necessarily have to perceive this as an event which actually occurred; rather, it is possibly a description (in the form of a story) of the relationship of human beings to the Divine. Therefore, myths in general probably do mirror the collective memories of a particular people; nevertheless when we read the ancient literature of our Faith (especially the Torah) we realize that it "not only speaks of history but has made history by helping to shape human thought."⁷

It is this realization that language, and more specifically the story, has inspired mystics, philosophers, politicians and others to use it and become skilled in its uses. Furthermore, because ideas, traditions and truths are sometimes difficult to communicate directly, human beings have therefore devised "story telling" to be the most effective means to do so.

Story

The story has the power to more efficiently and effectively communicate meaning in many cases than other forms of communication. The German poet Schiller once said: "Deeper meaning

6 Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc.), p. 195.

7 W. Gunther Plaut and Bernard J. Bamberger, The Torah: A Modern Commentary (New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), p. xxi.

resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life."⁸

The story however is neither the "truth" nor the "reality" of life and life's experience. Rather, the story is a representation of reality. According to Aristotle, "stories seek to imitate reality."⁹ The "fact" expressed in a particular story, myth or tale "appears as the reflection of an external reality, a reality ultimately independent of our subjective intentionality."¹⁰ The language of the story therefore is symbolic. As such it can not "be" the reality, but only "recall" it in some imperfect way.

Symbolic language is a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world....It is a language with its own grammar and syntax, as it were, a language one must understand if one is to understand the meaning of myths, fairy tales and dreams.¹¹

The essence of this kind of language is an "understanding and experiencing of one kind of experience in terms of another."¹² Wilbur Urban, the author of Language and Reality, felt that language is a process of "endless naming." There are

⁸ Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 5.

⁹ George Aichele, Jr., The Limits of Story (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 26.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 72

¹¹ Fromm, p. 7.

¹² Eugene Mihaly, Aspects of Metaphor, Paper delivered at the Literary Club, January 10, 1983, p. 3.

two ways this is done: (1) Transferring one name to another; and (2) actually creating a new name. The establishment of new names rarely has a lasting effect; however using old names in new ways does. This is how new meanings are remembered and known. "Metaphor construction is the most important method of discovering new meanings, fixing and determining them by means of old names."¹³ Therefore new ways of expressing reality are achieved by the transfer of meaning.

Definition and Structure of Metaphor

Metaphor is derived from the Greek word metapherein, "to transfer," a combining of the roots pherein, "to carry," and meta, "over" or "beyond." A metaphor transfers or carries over the meaning in a comparison. In his Poetics Aristotle defined a metaphor as "giving the thing a name that belongs to something else." Webster's defines metaphor as

a figure of speech in which a word or phrase denoting one kind of object or action is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them (as in the ship plows the seas or in a volley of oaths); an implied comparison (as in a marble brow) in contrast to the explicit comparison of the simile (as in a brow white as marble).¹⁴

¹³ Warren A. Shibles, An Analysis of Metaphor in the Light of W.M. Urban Theories (The Netherlands: Mouton & Co., 1971), p. 33.

¹⁴ Webster's Third New International Dictionary, G & C Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass., 1970.

According to Owen Thomas, "the ability to formulate metaphors is sometimes necessary to the comprehension of ideas and almost invariably underlies the perception of beauty, not only in literature, but also in history, philosophy, and the sciences."¹⁵ The metaphor is a powerful linguistic tool which provides an important bridge to understanding. Again it is Aristotle who tells us, "midway between the unintelligible and the commonplace, it is a metaphor which most produces knowledge."¹⁶ This sentiment was expressed in a more humorous vein centuries later by the poet Robert Browning when he said, "a man's speech must exceed his grasp - else what's a metaphor?"

The metaphor is an embodiment of a relationship. The particular type of relationship that it embodies is that of equivalence. In using a metaphor, the listener is aware simultaneously to the likeness and unlikeness of the image used as the foundation for the metaphor and the metaphor itself. In other words when we hear that "a camel is a ship of the desert," it is clear that a camel does not have a keel, is not made of wood or metal and does not have a mast; nevertheless these inconsistencies are disregarded because those aspects of a ship which do relate to a camel in the desert - carries provisions and passengers, has a certain amount of endurance, and travels on a

¹⁵ Owen Thomas, Metaphor and Related Subjects (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 4.

¹⁶ Rhetoric, III, 1410b.

rolling surface not unlike the waves of the ocean - far outweigh them.

Although the metaphor is structured in the form of an equivalence, this equivalence describes a new way in which the subject should be perceived. Sheldon Kopp explains this as happening when an idea is stated in terms of a relationship "where one thing is expressed in terms of another, whereby this bringing together throws new light on the character of what is being described."¹⁷

An effective metaphor therefore must contain elements that will "enable a reader to comprehend quickly certain facts that he might otherwise fail to see,"¹⁸ and at the same time control the impact of the connotations that do not necessarily apply.

Even though a metaphor is used to express something unknown in terms of something known, there can be a flaw in its use. The comparison used in a metaphor expresses a contradiction. We affirm that A is B when it is not. "The good writer must consider not only the meanings he wishes a particular metaphor to convey, but also all the other meanings that a reader might infer from it."¹⁹ In addition a metaphor only occurs when a form of "be" is in the sentence preceded and followed by a nominal. The concrete features of the post-verbal nominal (the "vehicle") are

¹⁷ Sheldon B. Kopp, Metaphors from a Psychotherapist Guru (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1971), p. 17.

¹⁸ Thomas, p. 29.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

transferred to the pre-verbal nominal (the "topic"). When Wallace Stevens says, "A poem is a pheasant," he does mean to imply that it has wings and flies; when a student says, "The test was a bomb," we are not to infer that it has a trigger or an explosive device; when the Psalmist says, "The Lord is my Shepherd," we are not expected to see God walking about in sandals with a rod in hand. Nevertheless, the post verbal nominal does give us new insight concerning the subject. So "The Lord is my Shepherd" indicates characteristics of care, concern, and ownership of God which we may not have known before.

Other Figures of Speech

A simile is a restricted metaphor. There is no total transfer of meaning; rather the relationship between the "topic" and the "vehicle" is one of a comparison using the terms "like" or "as". So when Robert Burns says, "My Love is like a red red rose," it is up to the reader to determine which features of the flower his Love embodies.

The poetic conceit is similar to the simile and the metaphor; however the two nominals that are compared share few semantic features. That is, one may be animate and other inanimate, or one is countable and the other is uncountable. Writers push the language to an absurd level. A typical conceit is "Some

books are to be tasted others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested."²⁰

An allegory is an extended metaphor written on two levels: "the level of story itself; and the allegorical level, at which the characters are actually personifications, generally of abstractions."²¹ The writer's intention in using an allegory is to provide new insights explaining these abstractions which are personified by his characters. In writing an allegory, the ideas precede and beget the images. In writing a metaphor, on the other hand, the images lead to the ideas.

There are other varieties of metaphors such as hyperbole, synecdoche, metonymy, personification, and oxymoron, but their occurrence is relatively infrequent in comparison with the four major forms of figurative language (metaphor, simile, conceit, and allegory).

Metaphor and Our Lives

Although it may appear that creating a metaphor is a contrived process, the metaphor is a necessary part of our lives. The simplest perceptual acts involve a variety of connotative and metaphorical cues. Like primitive man, we appreciate an abstraction in relation to something concrete. We see and hear this phenomenon when adults teach very young children about concepts.

²⁰ Francis Bacon, "Of Studies".

²¹ Thomas, p. 51.

When explaining what love is, an adult might tell a child that love is hugging, or love is kissing. The child is not at a point in his/her development to understand abstractions.

As a person develops, abstractions can be learned and taught. Abstractions can be talked about and defined metaphorically. To define an abstraction metaphorically becomes almost second nature to most people. This is because we, as did primitive man, have a desire or need to define things by characterizing them or "giving a name" to them. And even if this name violates logic, that is we will say A is B when it really is not, there is a human need to do it anyway. Human beings constantly seek to circumscribe the unknown. The way one goes about describing or defining the unknown is by beginning with what is already known. We still function very much like primitive man in this regard. We may no longer look at the "sun is a god" as an acceptable statement of reality; however we may say "the sun is not a god, although it may possess some of the qualities we attribute to a god."

In our attempts to express our thoughts and ideas it is sometimes necessary to incorporate connotations (i.e. implication to a metaphor). For example, one might hear a speaker say "fascism is a cancer." The vehicle in this example is organic. By comparison, one can see that the topic is not organic; rather, it is a type of governmental system. Nevertheless, the speaker is trying to express the concept that this particular kind of government is as disturbing and abhorrent as the disease. Even

though there is a difference which syntactically might make this sentence untenable, the writer is probably successful in attributing implied features of the vehicle to the topic.

Metaphors are a part of our lives in another way. In the simple act of confronting something unknown like a variety of flower, an individual at first attempts to identify it by comparing it to similar flowers that are known. One might ask how the features of the known flower relate to the features of this one. One could then analyze the emotional responses to this flower with the feelings one had concerning the familiar one.

Metaphors in Literature

Although it is not immediately apparent, writers can also take single concepts and place them into different metaphorical forms. Student rights can be described militantly - something to fight for or something to defend; theologically - an endowment from a Creator; judicially - signifying membership into a particular group. Two points are clear from these examples: 1) metaphors are a natural product of our attempt to understand concepts (as well as concrete things) and; 2) one metaphor can not make a concept understandable completely.

One metaphor will emphasize one feature, ignore another, and attribute a totally irrelevant third feature, while a different metaphor might reverse the emphasis and attribute a completely different feature.²²

²² Thomas, p. 23.

Besides using a metaphor to make a concept understandable, good writers may use metaphors to extend our perception regarding a particular event, project or idea. We may have some knowledge of this concept already; however by using a metaphor the writer feels that this understanding will be greatly enhanced. A chain reaction is an example. Even though "chain" is linear and "reaction" is temporal, this picture helps clarify this phenomenon. Another would be the term, genetic code. Code refers to something that is transferred in a secret and mysterious way. And the "breaking" of this code tells us something about the scientists who are working in this field by putting them in a very positive light. Of course there are metaphoric terms which border on the absurd such as "life savers" and "rock wool." Someone not familiar with these products, might find the terms can be very confusing.

The predominant use of metaphors is in the area of liberal arts - history, philosophy and literature. The goal for the use of the metaphor is to help an individual vividly comprehend abstractions. A very clear and simple example of this is in the title of Edward Gibbon's work, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Empires themselves do not decline nor fall due to the force of gravity. There certainly are political and military realities which can lead to the end of a particular socio-political system; but gravity would not be one of the causes.

Finally, metaphors can be used in a psychological and counseling setting. The metaphor has the ability to elicit

reactions and responses from an individual that another technique might not be able to. It allows the individual to participate in the desired changes - even unconsciously.

The ensuing chapter will deal with two important aspects of using metaphor in the counseling setting: 1) the need to be in tune with the person who is sitting in front of the counselor, and; 2) the need to modify the metaphor according to that counselee's needs.

II.

METAPHOR IN PSYCHOTHERAPY AND COUNSELING

Drawing on recent psychotherapeutic literature we can see how the metaphor can be used to clarify emotional issues with which a congregant is struggling. The metaphor can also be used to enlighten the congregant to the possibilities of multiple resolutions to particular problems.

Understanding Our Representations of Reality

Every individual in one way or another conveys some measure of their experience through the use of metaphors. The metaphors are not the realities of the experiences themselves. "Metaphors," according to David Gordon, are solely "a way of talking about experience."²³

Gordon illustrates this with the example of a person who says, "My right arm feels like it's full of lead." This is a representation of this person's experience - it is a metaphor. It is not in fact the literal experience. We wouldn't expect to knock on the arm and expect to hear a metallic sound. The actual experience is only understood by the individual having the experience.

²³ David Gordon, Therapeutic Metaphors (Cupertino, California: Meta Publications, 1978), p. 9.

A problem can arise for the listener attempting to discern what it means for an arm to be "full of lead." It could mean the arm feels "heavy," or "immobile," or "dense." We are presented with the input "My right arm feels like it is full of lead." We must try to make sense out of the metaphor. Our initial response to this person will be based on our understanding of this metaphor. Yet one of the most important aspects of the active listening skill is that we need to become aware of what the other person means when he is using a particular metaphor. Our inability to do this can easily lead to confusion and miscommunication if the two of us are not on the same wavelength. At times it can be like being an invited guest to the Mad Hatter's tea party:

There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. "Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse," thought Alice; "only, as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind."

The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it. "No room! No room!" they cried out when they saw Alice coming. "There's plenty of room!" said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

"Have some wine," the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. "I don't see any wine," she remarked.

"There isn't any," said the March Hare.

"Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it," said Alice angrily.

"It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited," said the March Hare.

"I didn't know it was your table," said Alice: "it's laid for a great many more than three."

"Your hair wants cutting," said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech.

"You should learn not to make personal remarks," Alice said with some severity: "It's very rude."

The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he said was, "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?"

"Come, we shall have some fun now!" thought Alice. "I'm glad they've begun asking riddles - I believe I can guess that," she added aloud.

"Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?" said the March Hare.

"Exactly so," said Alice.

"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.

"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least - at least I mean what I say - that's the same thing, you know."

"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same as 'I eat what I see!'"

"You might just as well say," added the March Hare, "that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like.'!"

"You might just as well say," added the Dormouse, which seemed to be talking in its sleep, "that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe.'!"

"It is the same thing with you," said the Hatter, and here the conversation dropped, and the party sat silent for a minute, while Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing desks, which wasn't much.²⁴

The absurdity of this scene is a metaphor on how Lewis Carroll viewed life. Martin Gardner in his introduction to The Annotated Alice maintained that Carroll felt

that life, viewed rationally and without illusion, appears to be a nonsense tale viewed by an idiot mathematician.²⁵

24 Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland.

25 Lewis Carroll, The Annotated Alice (New York: Bramhall House, 1960), p. 15.

Every character at the tea party is assured that his perception of the party is sound and makes sense; however, the listener - in most cases Alice - doesn't understand what the other is saying. This is not as absurd or unrealistic as it may sound. We have all been the uninvited guest to a Mad Hatter's tea party at some time in our lives. There are those times when we can not seem to communicate our perception of an event to someone else. When we hear different witnesses' accounts of an accident, we sometimes wonder if they all observed the same accident.

These differences and this type of miscommunication are related to the theory that each individual has developed for himself a particular model of the world. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is a modern psychotherapeutic tool which can be used to assist us in understanding the expressed experience of others - their "model of the world". "NLP is the study of the structure of subjective experience....[NLP focuses] on ongoing human experience at those momentary points when any sensory channel begins internal processing and stops using external input."²⁶ If all human beings experienced the world in the same manner, then it would be easy to always know "where the other person is coming from;" however we all have different ways of representing our experience of the world.

²⁶ Steve Lankton, Practical Magic (Cupertino, CA: Meta Publications, 1980), pp. 13-14.

Language is not experience; nevertheless we illustrate and communicate our experiences through the use of language. Language serves as "a representation of experience, like a map is a representation of a territory."²⁷ Therefore, it is through the use of language that we describe, write, illustrate, speak about our subjective experiences. We create a model of our experience by using language as our representational system. Consequently, the counselor needs the proper tools to connect a person's language to the experience represented by their language. In this way, the counselor can better understand the other person's experience and assist that person in better understanding it himself. The Meta-Model is one way in which this is done. "The Meta-Model is a specific set of linguistic strategies for responding in a useful and productive manner to the form of the verbalizations presented by people."²⁸ These strategies assist the counselor to see eye-to-eye with the counselee. One way of accomplishing this is through empathy. Dr. Katz emphasizes the importance of empathy in two ways:

First it helps us to understand the other person from within. We communicate on a deeper level and apprehend the other person more completely. With this kind of communication we often find ourselves accepting that person and entering into a relationship of appreciation and sympathy. In another sense, empathy becomes for us a source of personal assurance. We are reassured when

²⁷ Leslie Cameron-Bandler, They Lived Happily Ever After (Cupertino, California: Meta Publications, 1978), p. 171.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 19. A detailed presentation of the Meta-Model can be found in The Structure of Magic, Volume I, by Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

we feel that someone has succeeded in feeling himself into our own state of mind.²⁹

The key to empathy is an identification with the other person. One of the difficulties is in "over-" or "under-" identifying with that person. According to Richard Bandler, this is most often done through an "active" listening" technique known as "rephrasing." In many cases, when a counselor rephrases the counselee's sentence - in order to understand and identify with the person - he actually distorts what that person was trying to say. The counselor would say, "oh, you mean X!" More often than not, the counselee meant Y.³⁰ In order to avoid this problem, the counselor needs to pay attention to the process words used. These are the words which specify the processes of seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting.

Basically we make contact with the world through our five senses (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, gustatory, and olfactory).³¹ In describing an experience, we make choices (usually unconscious) about which words best represent the experience. The words we pick indicate which sensory channel/s we are using to experience the world. NLP assists the counselor in determining which channel is being used so that counselor and

²⁹ Katz, Empathy: Its Nature and Uses (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p. 7.

³⁰ Richard Bandler and John Grinder, Frogs Into Princes (Moab, Utah: Real People Press, 1979), pp. 7-13.

³¹ There is also a language system which is described in the chapter "Representational Systems" in Structures of Magic II by Bandler and Grinder.

individual can be on the same wavelength. NLP is a new discipline which calls our attention to the fact that people respond to the world differently. This discipline makes us aware that some people can be reached more effectively through one of the five senses than the others.

This type of analysis is based on a model which emphasizes the "structure of experience;" therefore content questions are not as important as questions directed to the person's representational system. According to Steve Lankton the representational system is the "sensory processing system that initiates and modulates behavior."³² Our senses (including language) represent our experience. We sense the world externally and translate that experience internally. This double process leads to our particular behavior. This internal processing is done through different channels but usually through an individual's most favored channel. This most favored and highly valued sensory channel is known as a "primary representational system."³³

Just as the sensory representations of reality - our maps - do not represent reality, so our use of language to describe our experience of reality based on our sensory representations is also not reality. Therefore the representation of our reality of the world may be impoverished in one form or another. In a counseling setting it may not be worthwhile to search internally for our equivalent meanings by translating the other person's

32 Ibid., p. 16.

33 Ibid., p. 17.

words into our own subjective experience. It might be far more productive to clarify their model of the world and to shift the responsibility back to their shoulders by giving them a wider view that was not perceived before.

If the counselor pays particular attention to the predicates (i.e. verbs, adverbs and adjectives) of the counselee's words then the individual's most highly valued representational system can be determined. The next step is to "speak the person's language" which will result in more effective communication between the counselor and the counselee. When an individual describes an incident visually, the counselor should respond in visual predicates. By consciously selecting predicates to match the individual's predicates, clearer and more direct communication can be accomplished. Responding to the individual on the same level and using the same "channel" (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.) will help greatly in creating rapport and a communication link between the two. The following is a simple example of this process:

| Meaning | Kinesthetic | Visual | Auditory |
|---|---|---|--|
| I understand you. | What you are saying feels right to me. | I see what you are saying. | I hear you clearly. |
| I want to communicate something to you. | I want you to be in touch with something. | I want to show something (a picture of something) to you. | I want you to listen carefully to what I say to you. |

In order to assist in this process, a list of key words in these channels has been provided in Appendix I.

Non-Verbal Cues

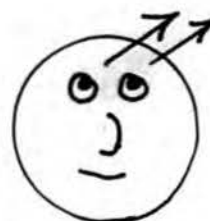
An individual's language is one way to obtain information regarding a speaker's experience. Non-verbal behavior can also provide the same information. According to Leslie Cameron-Bandler, "each of us has developed particular body movements which indicate to the astute observer which representational system we are using."³⁴ In particular, eye movement can be monitored to provide this information. Specific eye scanning movements are related to internal processing of information. The chart found below indicates that the process by which an individual accesses information and then represents it can be determined in this manner. The chart is specifically for a right handed person:

| accessing cue | representational system indicated |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| eyes up and to the left | eidetic (memory) visual imagery |
| eyes up and to the right | constructed visual imagery |
| eyes defocused in position | visual imagery |
| eyes down and to the left | auditory internal |
| telephone postures eyes left or right, same level of gaze | auditory internal |
| eyes down and to the right | kinesthetic |

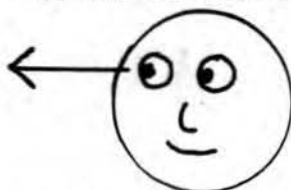
³⁴ Cameron-Bandler, p. 40.



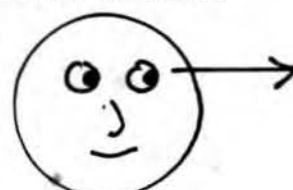
Visual Construction



Visual Eidetic



Auditory Construction



Auditory



Kinesthetic



Auditory Tonal

For left handers these categories are usually reversed i.e. eyes up and to the left - constructed visual imagery, eyes up and to the right - eidetic visual imagery and so on. There are always exceptions. For a fuller explanation of this chart and its uses, refer to any of the books found in the bibliography by Bandler, Cameron-Bandler, Grinder, or Lankton.

The usefulness of attending to representational systems and accessing cues becomes clear when we structure metaphors in the counseling setting. A metaphor which embodies the key predicates of an individual's most favored representational system is more likely to enrich that person's model of the world.

The Strategy of Metaphors

Our objective is to illustrate the power of the metaphor in shaping an individual's experience. One of the most important therapists who has become known as the master of puns, anecdotes, analogies, and stories is Milton H. Erickson. His use and success in using these devices is well known in psychotherapeutic circles. He has described stories as functioning on two distinct levels:

stories that seem to relate to a particular problem that the client recognizes as his own will appeal to the conscious mind. The inherent surface logic of the analogy may thereby engage the client in thinking of conscious resolutions. Also 'when the analogy refers to deeply ingrained (automatic and therefore functionally unconscious) associations, mental mechanisms, and learned patterns of behavior, it tends to activate these internal responses and make them available for problem solving.'³⁵

Metaphors have a way of communicating a message to both the conscious and the unconscious mind. It is a non-threatening method of communicating a particular message. Philip Barker in his latest work, Using Metaphors in Psychotherapy, points out that

properly constructed and told, [stories] are usually more interesting than straight expositions of the points one wishes to make....Well-thought-out and well-narrated stories, told in the right context, can capture the imagination and inspire people to undertake tasks or think about things they would not have considered before. Such stories have the potential to bring people to the sudden realization of things, and

³⁵ Ibid., p. 156.

they can also contribute to a more gradual learning process.³⁶

Stories used as metaphors in counseling are used to expand the limitations of a person's own metaphors. This is first done by the metaphor's ability to provide choices. The listener finds his own solutions by means of determining what the story means or seems to imply about him. Therapeutic metaphors do not usually convey a message or an idea didactically; rather they are constructed to help an individual see himself and his situation differently. Once the listener can view himself in a new light, he becomes free to make new choices.

A second aspect is that the meanings and issues manifest in the metaphor are veiled to a degree and therefore non-threatening and non-confrontational - issues are dealt with indirectly and points are made gently. This reduces the amount of resistance which might normally occur with a more direct approach. According to Barker and others a metaphor reduces the possibility of resistance because the story affects the right hemisphere of the brain rather than the left. Where the left cerebral hemisphere processes logic, reason, literal and sequential aspects of language, the right hemisphere processes metaphorical aspects. It is Barker's contention that for

psychotherapy, if it is to lead to substantial change, has to address 'right-brain' processes. What clients usually need is not a better logical understanding of

³⁶ Philip Barker, Using Metaphors in Psychotherapy, (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1985), p. 17.

their situation, but different emotional attitudes and different ways of interpreting the world around them.³⁷

Reverend Henry T. Close of the Samaritan Center of South Florida found himself preaching in the mode of a story teller because "stories (parables, metaphors, allegories) have a power to communicate what logic and reason cannot duplicate."³⁸ Logic demands acceptance of truth, while a parable invites you to "embrace the truth" and consequently it is less likely that the listener will be resistant or defensive.³⁹ Close suggests that logic addresses the left brain and that contained in the right hemisphere is an individual's world view. When logic is used, one's worldview is bypassed. In addition, logic addresses the conscious mind while the metaphor addresses the unconscious.⁴⁰ Close trusts people's unconscious to utilize what can be useful for them and any excess story is simply discarded. This is a non-intrusive means of communication. It is like planting a seed, according to Close, trusting that some will bear fruit, or like presenting a psychological smorgasbord from which the client can take whatever seems nurturing.

Human beings do have two ways of understanding and communicating according to P. Watzlawick. In his book, The Language of Change he explains:

37 Barker, p. 21.

38 Henry T. Close, "Metaphor in Pastoral Care," in The Journal of Pastoral Care, 38 (December 1984), p. 248.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., pp. 301-302.

Human beings do have two ways of understanding and communicating according to P. Watzlawick. In his book, The Language of Change he explains:

There are thus two languages involved. The one, in which for instance this sentence itself is expressed, is objective, definitional, cerebral, logical, analytic; it is the language of reason, of science, explanation and interpretation, and therefore the language of most psychotherapy. The other...is language of definition. We might call it the language of imagery, of metaphor, or pars pro toto, perhaps of symbols, but certainly of synthesis and totality, and not of analytical dissection.⁴¹

Additionally, the drama and humor of some metaphors enhance the interest of the listener and thereby diminish possible resistance. These aspects tend to draw the listener in quickly and enhances the likelihood that the deeper meaning of the metaphor will reach the unconscious.

A third point is a difficult one for the counselor. No one can be sure how a listener's unconscious will react to any given metaphor. If the listener merely takes the story at face value, nothing is lost. However, the metaphor allows the listener's unconscious to derive or accept meanings that are appropriate for that individual. "Deeper meaning...will depend on the listener's current attitudes and state of mind."⁴² Processes that the listener may not even be aware of may take many meanings from a particular story.

⁴¹ P. Watzlawick, The Language of Change (New York: Basic Books, 1978), pp. 14-15.

⁴² Barker, p. 18.

such therapists as Philip Barker, Milton Erickson, David Gordon and Edwin Friedman, much of therapy can be onerous. By using and creating metaphors the burden of the therapy can be lifted from the shoulders of the therapist. The therapy is no longer an intensive questioning exercise; rather, it is a storytelling exercise which more easily can elicit needed information. Employing metaphors is a challenging, a creative and a pleasure giving process.

A fifth use of metaphors is in establishing rapport. In a culture where stories and fairy tales regularly occur it is easy and very acceptable to include storytelling in counseling sessions.

Finally, metaphors promote better communication considering that our culture uses stories regularly to make points, entertain, inform, persuade, and provoke thought.⁴³

Milton Erickson felt that metaphors could bring about changes that last and are self-reinforcing. According to Erickson, the client identifies with characters in the story or with the story teller. They are viewed as masters who can deal with different challenges. This ultimately leads to increased freedom and creativity for the client. "We can better understand these changes if we look at the stories and their characters as representing inner psychic structures."⁴⁴ Parents in the stories can

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 17-20.

⁴⁴ Sidney Rosen, ed., My Voice will Go With You: The Teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1982), p. 30.

represent guides, sources of love, support, or irrational guidance. Children can represent the child within us - inexperience, eagerness to learn but not knowing how, spontaneity but ignorance, or representing a limited repertoire of behaviors and responses. The listener can identify with the child and gain hope for himself when he hears how the child in the story overcomes blockages to growth and freedom.

Metaphors have many advantages over more direct means of communications. They can suggest things without being confrontational. They can entertain as well as inform. They provide the counselor with many new opportunities to assist the counselee in enriching an impoverished model of the world.

III.

THE METAPHOR AS IT FUNCTIONS IN JEWISH LITERATURE

Every evening after prayer, the Baal Shem went to his room. Two candles were set in front of him and the mysterious Book of Creation put on the table among other books. Then all those who needed his counsel were admitted in a body, and he spoke with them until the eleventh hour.

One evening, when the people left, one of them said to the man besides him how much good the words the Baal Shem had directed to him, had done him. But the other told him not to talk such nonsense, that they had entered the room together and from that moment on the master had spoken to no one except himself. A third, who heard this, joined in the conversation with a smile, saying how curious that both were mistaken, for the rabbi had carried on an intimate conversation with him the entire evening. Then a fourth and a fifth made the same claim, and finally all began to talk at once and tell what they had experienced. But the next instant they all fell silent.⁴⁵

The rabbinical counselor needs to value the uniqueness of each individual person who has come for help. In addition, this person seeks personal identification with "self." Jewish literature is filled with a wealth of material describing the uniqueness of the individual and provides the rabbi with many examples from which to choose.

⁴⁵ The Baal Shem Tov, "The Address" from Martin Buber's Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), p. 55.

Bible

The Bible is a source of such material. Stories from the Bible, which we read as children, need not be relegated to the ears of our youth alone! Within the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures are stories of glory and defeat, images of closeness and alienation, parables of the mighty and the lowly. The entire Scripture, according to Herman Strack,

meant to the Jews the sum and substance of all that is good and beautiful, of all that is worth knowing. Hence it ought to be possible to apply to all conditions of life, it should comfort, exhort and edify, and it must be shown further that it contained everything even though generally.⁴⁶

The symbolic language of parable, simile, allegory and metaphor found in the Bible assists the reader to understand concepts, ideas and values. This language lifts the individual from a world of sense experience to a level of transcendence. "Symbolic language of the Bible constantly appropriates images derived from sense experience and uses them as windows on the transcendent reality which is its concern."⁴⁷ As Buber would see it, the symbolic nature of the Biblical language is born out of the encounter between I and Thou but spoken in person-to-person terms; therefore, the personal-level of this symbolic language of father, teacher, lover, and guide elicit an image of larger pro-

⁴⁶ Herman L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1931), p. 202.

⁴⁷ Thomas Fawcett, The Symbolic Language of Religion (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), p. 31.

portions. These images speak at times of an ideal relationship which one might emulate.

Of particular importance, are the stories within Bible and Jewish Literature which makes reference to the Bible. The Biblical and Rabbinic writers not only give us insight into historical figures and events found in the Bible, but also offer us typologies of Biblical persons. Rather than viewing these stories as simple biographies of historical personalities, we can also view them as manifestations of our human condition. The rabbis hoped that these typologies would help us to decide which to emulate and which not to emulate. For example, Aaron is the great peacemaker. We should follow in his footsteps and "seek peace and pursue it."⁴⁸ Another example is regarding the mitzvah of visiting the sick Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, in his Tur, explains

since it is a mitzvah incumbent upon each person to visit one who is sick, because we infer about the Holy One Blessed be He that He is one who visits the sick when it was discussed in the Biblical passage [Genesis 18:1]: 'And the Lord appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre' teaches that He came to him [Abraham] to visit the sick.⁴⁹

Because God did this, all of us are obliged to practice this Mitzvah.

⁴⁸ Psalm 34:14; cf. Otzar HaTehilim on this verse.

⁴⁹ Yoreh Deah 335.

Aggadah

Included within the Aggadah are parables and allegories, laments, prayers, metaphor and word play. These varied forms describe

principles of faith and belief, moral instruction, words of comfort, and a vision of the ideal world of the future....[The Aggadah is] limited to an explanation of why they were given and what they teach....

The moral teaching of Aggadah reflects not only the points of view and the spiritual outlook of the scholars who strove to improve the moral state of mankind, but also the political, social, and ethical conditions of the periods in which they lived.⁵⁰

This literature fills in the gaps and describes what the Bible does not tell us. It supplies missing dialogue and events. It was written, of course, to resolve confusions in the text but at the same time it bridges the gap between faith and despair for the people Israel. It brings a continuity back to a tradition thought lost in the exile. So too, it can have an impact on the modern Jew. The literature can help repair the fragmentation and alienation experienced by contemporary man..

The rabbis were well aware of the power of the story to express sensitive issues in a comforting way. The mashal or parable is a vivid example to this sensitivity. In Kohelet Rabbah, the rabbis tell us

Let not the Mashal be lightly regarded, for by means of it a man can understand the words of Torah. It is like a king who has lost a pearl and finds it with the aid of a candle worth only a centime. Solomon clarified the Law by means of parables. R. Nahman, R. Jose, R.

⁵⁰ The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia, 1959 ed. s.v. "Aggadah."

Shila and R. Hanina illustrated the idea thus: The wise king tied a rope at the entrance of a labyrinth-like palace, and was able to find his way out of it; he cut a path in a wild thicket of reeds; he fashioned a handle for a heavy case of fruit so that it could be lifted; he formed a handle for a cask of hot liquid so that it could be moved; he joined rope to rope, and was able to draw water from the deep well. Thus from word to word, from Mashal to Mashal, Solomon attained the uttermost secret of the Torah.⁵¹

The parable speaks to us metaphorically. In a unique way, it suggests multiple meanings explaining an experience which we at one time only saw rationally or empirically to have of only a single dimension. Parables represent the divine as an authority figure - as king, father, or employer. Man is presented as a subordinate figure - as servant, son, or employee. Neither Man nor the divine are explicitly mentioned. The vision of the relationship between humanity and divinity is not communicated in a cosmic, eternal or a theocratic manner but in terms of human existence. The modality of the Rabbinic - and even the Biblical - parable consists in conveying the message in a realistic, everyday manner. The drama is not between humans and God, but between a subordinate figure and an authority figure.⁵²

Hasidic Stories

The rebbe, or Hasidic master, was looked to as a source of

⁵¹ Kohelet Rabbah on 2, 11, etc.

⁵² Patte, Daniel, ed., Semiology and Parables (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1976), p. 169 ff.

guidance. The rebbe, even though he had magical powers, displayed important counseling techniques according to Lenore Bohm:

He seeks to enter into the realm of the hasid's pain, he does not ask for, but willingly hears confessions, he attempts to strengthen the hasid's will to live, he physically touches the hasid when so moved, and responds to him personally, individually. The rebbe observes the hasid's body language and demeanor and listens for speech patterns....⁵³

What Ms. Bohm fails to mention is the rebbe's strategic use of story (actually metaphor) to assist the listener/hasid in understanding the important concept the master is attempting to impart.

A story never needs to be explained. The answer and the help are fully contained within it. A rabbi whose grandfather was a disciple of the Baal Shem illustrates this point:

My grandfather was lame. Once they asked him to tell a story about his teacher. And he related how the Holy Baal Shem used to hop and dance while he was so swept away by his story that he himself began to hop and dance to show how the master had done. From that hour on he was cured of his lameness. That's the way to tell a story!⁵⁴

Unlike many of the stories and parables told by the rabbis of the Talmud, those stories of the Hasidim were transmitted with no explanation of the meaning at the end. There was an understanding that different listeners will hear something different; each will benefit from what he thought he heard. The rebbe had

⁵³ Lenore J. Bohm, An Historical and Sociological Analysis of the Counseling Aspect of the Rabbinic Role, Rabbinic Thesis (Cincinnati, OH: HUC-JIR, 1982), p. 11.

⁵⁴ Martin Buber, Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), pp. v-vi.

the ability to speak in such a way that the listener is enraptured. This is evident in the story of Dov Baer of Mezritch, the great Maggid entitled "In the Maggid's House:"

The rabbi of Rizhyn said: "Many a time, when my ancestor, the holy maggid, taught at table, his disciples discussed what their teacher had said, on the way home, and each quoted him differently, and each was positive he had heard it in this, and no other way, and what they said was quite contradictory. There was no possibility of clearing up the matter because when they went to the maggid and asked him, he only repeated the traditional words saying: 'Both, these and those are words of the living God.' But when the disciples thought it over, they understood the meaning of the contradiction. For at the source, the Torah is one; in the world her face is seventyfold. If, however, a man looks intently at one of these faces, he no longer has need of words or of teachings, for the features of that eternal face speak to him."⁵⁵

The storyteller in this story is the embodiment of the Torah i.e. the source of knowledge. Each story that the storyteller tells has many faces or interpretations. They arise solely from the listener's conscious and unconscious ability to uncover meaning. Depending on motivation, state of mind and background, two listeners to the same story may "hear" and internalize very different messages.

Storytelling

There is an art to storytelling just as there is an art to the story itself. From soul to soul truth passes by means of the story. It is educational. It can be instructive. But mostly it

⁵⁵ Buber, The Early Masters, pp. 102-3.

must stir the emotions. Therefore it is not the story itself that is most important; the storyteller has an act of equal value.

The storyteller must be a person of wisdom who can discern the audience's needs and meets them. The point, unlike the early Hasidic masters, is not to always be the intermediary between others and God; rather through the story the teller can impart the wisdom to educate oneself. To re-establish the potential to envision a world of possibilities as opposed to impossibilities.

Just as the rabbinic counselor must be aware of the body language of the counselee, we must be aware that our body language is appropriate for the story and will have the proper effect on the counselee. We need to be aware of our voice to accentuate points and important episodes. This is done through pitch, articulation, flexibility and emotion.

Furthermore, we need to be aware that the stories we choose to tell may have a particular meaning to us and an entirely different one to the counselee. The deepest meanings of these stories like the meanings of the fairy tales we remember as children are different for each person. Each person extracts different meanings from the same story depending on his needs and interests at various moments.⁵⁶

There are a wealth of stories available in our Jewish tradition. In order for them to be an effective tool, we need to

⁵⁶ Refer to Bettelheim's analysis of fairy tales and their affects on children in his latest work, The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.

know them well and come to know well the person who is listening to them.

IV.

SCENARIOS: THE RABBI'S USE OF METAPHOR AND NLP

There are metaphors available to the rabbinic counselor which allude to the emotional issues troubling congregants. It is not necessary to select metaphors from Jewish literature to illustrate all of these applications; however, in order to understand the type of stories available and the manner in which they can be told we will discuss some major issues which people bring to the rabbi.

It is important to reiterate that the therapeutic metaphor is just one device of many available to the rabbinical counselor. Some rabbis may not be good storytellers; nevertheless, the therapeutic metaphor provides added flexibility to the counselor. When other techniques or counseling aides prove unsuccessful, the metaphor might be of some service.

The issues which will be discussed here will be: 1) Family; 2) Self-worth; and 3) Jews-by-choice. The texts which will be used are from the Midrash HaAggadah and Hasidic Stories. The stories will be changed slightly according to an NLP analysis of the congregants and the situation. The complete text translation can be found in Appendix II along with an expanded listing of the categories of emotional issues. In addition, the Appendix includes other stories which are applicable to these and other issues.

Methodology

Each story will be preceded by a case scenario. The story will then be followed by an analysis of the congregant and a "possible" explanation for the metaphor. This is only a "possible" explanation because no one knows how any particular listener will react to any given metaphor.

In most cases the metaphors told in a rabbi's study will not be didactic; rather they will be used to assist the listener better to understand him/herself and derive a variety of solutions. For this reason the conclusions or morals which are found in the original texts of some of these aggadot have been removed. These rational explanations of the rabbis could weaken the enchantment of the story as well as its potential to evoke an emotional resonance.

The story can be effective because in a non-threatening way it can make or illustrate points, suggest potential solutions to problems, help people recognize themselves, seed ideas, increase motivation, and control the therapeutic relationship.⁵⁷

To check the effectiveness of a particular metaphor, it is important to ask the listener how he responds to the particular story. If clarification is necessary, it can be achieved in terms of a simile, "do you think this is like....?"

Although the stories will be found under the given headings of "family," "self-worth," and "Jews-by-choice," it will become

⁵⁷ Barker, pp. 28-30.

clearly obvious that these categories are very arbitrary settings. A given story might be categorized in different ways. For example, the story of "The Bird's Nest" of the Baal Shem Tov is not only appropriate in marital counseling, but also in counseling the bereaved and the alienated individual.

The cases presented are in an incomplete form. They are theoretical and not actual cases from counseling settings. They are provided to furnish us with the basic idea of how a metaphor can function in the counseling setting.

Cases

"FAMILY"

Scenario

Wife feels unappreciated. She feels that her husband goes to work in the morning or on business trips. When he returns home he expects his meal, his mail, and everything to be normal. She feels that he doesn't hear anything she has to say. He doesn't see anything wrong with their living conditions.

Story

In the middle of town stood a small but sturdy synagogue. It had only one floor and pews with hard backs for seating. This one morning at the very front of the synagoge before the ark of the Covenant the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples stood in deep prayer. All wore their tefillin and prayer shawls and bobbed back and forth mumbling the ancient words they recited every day of their lives.

This particular morning the Baal Shem Tov stood in the House of Prayer an extraordinarily long time. All the disciples had finished and had already removed their prayer shawls and phalacteries. The Baal Shem continued without them, bobbing and praying silently in the early morning light. The disciples

waited a good long while, and then walked out of the synagogue and went home. After several hours when they had attended to their various duties, they returned to the House of Prayer and found him still deep in prayer. He finished his prayers, turned to them with a solemn expression on his face and said: "I shall tell you a parable."

You know that there are birds of passage who fly to warm countries in the autumn. Well, the people in one of those lands once saw a glorious many colored bird in the midst of a flock which was journeying through the sky. Its wingspan touched horizon to horizon. Its colors were of the rainbow. The eyes of man had never seen a bird so beautiful. The bird came to rest on top of the tallest tree and nested in the leaves. When the king of the country heard of it, he bade his servants to fetch down the bird with his nest. He ordered a number of men to make a ladder up the tree. One was to stand on the other's shoulders until it was possible to reach up high enough to take the nest. It took a long time to build this living ladder. The weight of each man was very great as the burden increased with each one climbing above the next. Those who stood nearest the ground lost patience, shook themselves free and everything collapsed.⁵⁸

Analysis

In the original text before the Baal Shem Tov said "I shall tell you a parable," he began by saying "By going away and leaving me alone, you dealt me a painful separation. I shall tell you a parable."⁵⁹ Because this is the intention of both the story and the parable, it was left out in the above version with the hope that the husband would catch the point as it applies to him.

In using the above story the following equivalence is made by the counselor:

⁵⁸ Based on the Baal Shem Tov's, "The Bird's Nest" in Buber's The Early Masters, pp. 54-55.

⁵⁹ Refer to Appendix II for the complete text.

Baal Shem Tov _____ Prayer Group _____ Disciples
Wife _____ Mutual Respect _____ Husband

AND

Servant on top _____ Bird _____ Departing Servant
Wife _____ Mutual Respect _____ Husband

In the first part of this two-fold story, the Baal Shem Tov expresses indirectly the importance of the group staying together in prayer. When they went off to do their chores they neglected to consider the importance of their presence to their master. In the same way, the husband neglects the importance of his presence and appreciation of what she is doing at home.

In the second story, the greatest treasure for the king is the beautiful bird. Metaphorically, for the couple the bird represents the highest goal of this couple's marriage - mutual respect. Just as the upper servant is dumped when the one below leaves, so too does the wife feel dumped when she feels that her husband takes her for granted.

This particular story could be effective because the husband is drawn in twice. First there is the story about the disciples and then the parable about the human ladder. If he did not grasp the idea with the first story, in all probability he would by the second.

The disciples and the men at the bottom of the ladder represent the husband, while the Baal Shem Tov and the men at the top of the ladder represent the wife. Besides the question of

"painful separation" in the case of the scenario and the story, it should be significant to determine what prayer in the story and the bird in the parable represent to the husband and wife. What are they striving for together?

Furthermore, the story was changed from the original. This was to address it to the husband who is visual-kinesthetic. The husband perceives the outside world visually and then internalizes this input kinesthetically in order to check his feelings. The images of the original story were elaborated using visual and kinesthetic process words.

Finally, we should note that while the husband is visual-kinesthetic and the wife is auditory-kinesthetic. This difference may indicate why they have difficulties communicating with each other.

"Self-Worth"

Scenario

A person has very low self-esteem. He hears about all of his other friends who are successful. He feels like a failure.

Story

I want you to listen to what I have to say.
"In the Middle East there are two great rivers. One is called the Euphrates, and the other is the Tigris.

The smaller rivers of the world inquired of the Euphrates: 'Why is your sound not audible? Tell us why we can not hear you. 'My deeds make me known,' quietly replied the Euphrates. 'When a man plants a plant by me it matures in thirty days. When he plants vegetables by me, they are full-grown in three days.'

Then the smaller rivers of the world went to inquire of the Tigris: 'Why is your sound audible? Why can we hear the great rush of your waters upon the banks? The Tigris answered with a shriek: 'May my voice be heard that I may be seen.'

The smaller rivers of the world then approached the fruit-bearing trees and uttered their question: 'Why is your sound not audible? Tell us why we can not hear you. 'We do not need it' was their hushed reply. 'As our fruits testify for us.'

Finally the smaller rivers of the world asked the non-fruit-bearing trees: 'Why is your sound audible?' 'Would that we could make our voice heard so that we might be seen,' they answered."60

Analysis

In using the above story the following equivalence is made by the counselor:

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| Tigris | _____ | Deeds | _____ | Euphrates |
| Non-Fruit-Bearing Trees | _____ | Deeds | _____ | Fruit-Bearing Trees |
| Not Voicing Success | _____ | Deeds | _____ | Voicing Success |

The Tigris makes noise just so that it will be noticed, otherwise it serves no purpose. The Euphrates on the other hand maintains fertile soil for crops and thus does not need to call attention to itself. In the same way there are people of no substance who are noticed only because they call attention to themselves. Just because people notice does not imply that these individuals are successful. The moral of this story seems to be that the people of worth are those who quietly and effectively provide for others. This analysis follows for the metaphors concerning the trees as well.

This midrash indicates that there are two types of people in the world those who have to tell everyone how great they are, and

those whose deeds speak for them. Because someone is better known or makes more money does not mean that he is more successful than others. Sometimes those that have to tell everyone how well they are doing are either not as successful as they portray themselves to be or they are hiding an inadequacy in themselves and are looking for praise from others.

The individual is auditory-kinesthetic, so the midrash was expanded somewhat to include greater auditory predicates.

"Jews-by-Choice"

Scenario

A person who is interested in Judaism and the possibility of converting comes to see the rabbi. This person is also concerned about how Jews-by-Choice are viewed by other Jews. Each time she mentions conversion her voice quality changes. It is a different voice.

Story

God loves the convert exceedingly. What can we compare this to? There is an old story about a king who had a number of sheep and goats which went forth every morning to the pasture, and returned in the evening to the stable. One day a stag joined the flock and grazed with the sheep, and returned with them. Then the shepherd said to the king, 'There is a stag which goes out with the sheep and grazes with them, and comes home with them.' And the king loved the stag exceedingly. And he commanded the shepherd, saying: 'Give heed unto this stag, that no man should beat it. Furthermore, when the sheep return in the evenings, the stag should be given food and drink.' Then the shepherds said to him, 'My Lord, you have many goats and sheep and kids, and give us no directions concerning these, but about the stag you give us orders day by day!' Then the king replied: 'It is the custom of the sheep to graze in the pasture, but the stags dwell in the wilderness, and it is not their custom to come among sheep and goats and kids. But to this stag who has come to us and lives with us, should we not be grateful that he has left the great

wilderness, where many stags and gazelles feed, and has come to live among us? It behooves us to be grateful.'61

Analysis

In using the above story the following equivalence is made by the counselor:

King _____ Love for _____ Stag
God _____ Love for _____ Convert.

The stag represents the convert. The story indicates at the very least that there is a difference in lifestyle between a Jew and a non-Jew. The sheep, goats and kids symbolize the Jewish community. The king, as always in these parables, represents God. As an aside, the last few lines of the story have been omitted from the original text. They conclude the story with an explanation of the metaphor and a proof text that converts are welcome ("Love ye the stranger"). This can be brought into the discussion following the telling of the story.

The voice change is very important. The rabbi should ask whose voice this person used. In most cases this may be a parent. The rabbi needs to help the individual clarify who it is specifically. This can be done in the following manner: Ask the counselee to close his eyes and listen to the voice inside his head. Next, the rabbi should tell the person that while listening to the voice he should attempt to see the mouth moving and

61 Numbers Rabbah, Naso, 8, 2-4]

the lips forming words. Finally ask the person to observe the entire face.

Once this is done, the person should play themselves and the parent as the stag who has gone to the pasture and the one that is left in the wilderness. This dialogue should assist the rabbi and the individual in seeing and hearing what tensions may exist regarding the conversion.⁶²

Having the parent and child playact through the story can reduce the tension of the situation. Of course, if the rabbi feels that that tension is important, then the two can create an enactment without the story. Also, after the story has been told, the rabbi can ask the parent what his impression is of this situation.

Summary

There is an ease and a simplicity to rabbinical counseling when a story is told. The rabbinical counselor need not probe so intently. He has only to wait to see what naturally bubbles to the surface in response to the story. He must however be an active listener in order to choose a story which the counselee

⁶² It is important to realize that there are individuals who determine their actions based on voices they hear in their head. Some individuals hear more than one voice. It is important to distinguish who is speaking in order for the individual to make a decision based on a full understanding of a situation. These voices are their protection from harm; so they should not be shunted aside. They also should not be adhered to religiously either.

will identify with. Sometimes this is done by taking the counselee and his situation and matching them with a story with parallel characters and themes. Other times the counselor picks a story from instinct and listens for the counselee's response which might provide clues for further therapy.

Using the stories from our tradition provides an added dimension. There is a familiarity which leads to an increased bonding between counselor and counselee. But more striking, these stories can root the individual in his faith and raise him up to meet the presence of the Divine. In describing the aim of the aggadot, George Foot Moore said it "is to bring heaven nearer to men and again to lift men up to heaven," and its mission is "the glorifying of God and the comfort of Israel."⁶³ In telling these stories, the rabbinical counselor brings the counselee closer to himself and to the Divine.

V.

METAPHOR AND CONTEMPORARY JUDAISM

As the previous chapter illustrates, the rabbinical counselor has many stories from our tradition from which to choose. Some of these stories find their roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. Others find their roots in the experiences, the culture, and the times of the rabbis who wrote them.

This chapter will demonstrate how the metaphors of the rabbis and the Bible can be transformed and reshaped so that a congregant in the 20th century can grasp them more readily. In addition, we will indicate ideas for rabbis to create entirely new metaphors based both on the Hebrew Scriptures and on personal experience, culture and needs of the day.

The rabbis understood that in order to console, comfort and educate through this medium, the listener had to understand the metaphor used. It is unlikely that a metaphor will be effective if told in a language that the listener can not fully understand. For example, if we are speaking to a farmer, it is appropriate to use terms that he will understand. One can be very specific about details regarding farming and nature. If, however, the listener has little understanding of this reference, then a story beyond the most general reference to nature may go over his head. So when Resh Lakish (3rd c.) said: "Saul was like a block of a

sycamore tree,"⁶⁴ we wouldn't know that the rabbi was trying to say that this is a man who is barren of thought and empty of merits. This simile works if we understand that a sycamore typifies ignorance and worthlessness on account of its barrenness.⁶⁵

The modern rabbi is faced with a dilemma. The rabbi needs to be aware that stories, parables and metaphors utilizing images of kings, vineyards, and certain species of animals may be difficult for the modern ear to appreciate. Therefore, it becomes necessary to either create new stories entirely, or cast the classic parables in contemporary terms.

Re-Creation

It is not difficult to re-create a story for the modern listener. This can be done without forsaking the essence of the story. This is by far the easiest way to find a metaphor that is appropriate for a given situation. It is just a matter of updating the images and sounds of the story. An example of this approach is shown in the following story concerning the death of the son of Rabbi Hiya:

A king had a vineyard. He hired laborers to tend it. Now, there was among the laborers one who worked better than all the others. When the king saw how diligently this laborer worked, he took him by the hand and began to stroll with him up and down.

⁶⁴ Jer. Avodah Zarah, II, 40c.

⁶⁵ Asher Feldman, The Parables and Similes of the Rabbis (Cambridge: University Press, 1924), p. 122.

But when, in the evening, the laborers came to receive their wages, the king paid that man as much as he paid the others.

When the other laborers saw this, they complained and said: "Your Majesty, while we have labored the whole day long, this man has only worked for two or three hours. Is it right that he should receive the same wages we do?"

But the king replied: "Why are you angry? This man has done as much work in two or three hours as the rest of you have done in a whole day."⁶⁶

All we need to do is substitute the president of a corporation, the salesman, his fellow salesmen, and some business firm for the king, the laborer, the fellow workers, and the vineyard. This salesman just happened to log more calls and sales than anyone else.

The rabbinical counselor should examine the person/s in front of him/her in order to determine how best to recreate a parable or story. If the counselee is a doctor or a lawyer, it is important to recreate a story in terms they can appreciate.

Biblically Inspired Creativity

The rabbis created some forms of Midrashim in order to explain ideas, and elaborate values. on occasion they would create something totally new to explain an important concept or Jewish value. This is the case in the following example:

When Jacob was about to lay himself down to sleep upon a rock for a pillow, he found to his surprise that there were twelve rocks where he stood, each bearing the name of one of the tribes in Israel. And the

⁶⁶ Canticles Rabbah VI, 2; cf. to Appendix II, "Death and Dying" for the complete text.

twelve rocks began quarreling amongst themselves. Each said: "on me must the righteous one place his head."

And God caused the twelve rocks to become one - a symbol of the unity of Israel.⁶⁷

This metaphor typifies the problem caused by incessant argumentation within a family. The quarreling is unrewarding and divisive. By everyone disagreeing, proclaiming, "I am right, it should be my way," everyone loses. Individual rights are perceived as more important than the need to fulfill the desired goal.

An example of a modern Midrash using the Biblical text one might use in response to a teenager who is frustrated when he can't perform his tasks perfectly:

When God created this world, He had already created and destroyed hundreds of worlds before he was satisfied. But when He began to create this one he used all of his resources. He brought the firmament and the waters together. Then He separated the waters from the waters. And God created the Heaven. He created the land and all of the vegetation and said, "this is good." He made the animals of the skies, the seas and the land and said, "this is good." And only when God made man did He say, "this is very good!"

So, if God with all of His powers and resources could, in creating the world, only say, "this is good," and only once did He say, "this is very good," how much the more so should we mortals not be so hard on ourselves for not being perfect.

And if this were not enough, God tried to destroy all that he had made by the flood.⁶⁸

When God created the world, most of the time He perceived His work as "good." Only once did He perceive it to be "very

* 67 Hullin 91b.

68 idea from discussions with rabbis Peter Rubinstein and Alan Fuchs.

good." Never did God say any of it was "perfect." Therefore, if God is not perfect, why should we expect ourselves to be perfect?

Creating New Metaphors

There are fundamentally two ways in which the rabbinical counselor can create a new metaphor. He can simply deal with the gist of the issue and tell a story that suggests the theme. Another way is to systematically structure the metaphor so that it contains all the elements of the counselee's situation. In either case it is not necessary to choose a story based on the Biblical, Rabbinic, or Hasidic literature. The story becomes a "Jewish story" because it is being told by a Rabbi.

An example of the former would be the case of a couple giving preferential treatment to one son over the other.

There was an ape who lived with two small apes upon a rock near a bush. He loved the little one and hated the older. A hungry leopard came forth from his lair, and the ape trembled with fear for himself and the one he loved, seeing that the feline leaped from the mountain of leopards and approached with great ferocity, to destroy and devour, and roared towards his prey, and beat a straight path in his fury and wrath. And the ape said: 'Let me be bereaved of him whom I hate, I shall hide my face from him, and he will serve as the leopard's food.' And he took him and flung him on his back, his intention being thus expose him first to the leopard. But the small one, upon whom he took pity, he placed under his belly, as he ran to escape. And when he saw that the leopard came nearer and nearer, he wanted to throw off him whom he carried on his back, but that one felt that this was his intention and held on right to the fringes of his hair, desperately trying to save his own life. And when the ape saw that his intentions were frustrated, his reins and heart turned to the ape he hated, and his hatred

changed into love, and he took pity on him as a man takes pity on the son who serves him.⁶⁹

This story deals with the main issue and not with any specifics concerning the family.

In order to develop a metaphor which contains all the elements of the situation we need to take the following steps:

1. examine the problem;
2. locate all nouns (people, places, things) in the problem;
3. locate all processes (verbs, adjectives, adverbs) in the problem;
4. select the content of the metaphor (person, animal, abstract, etc.);
5. create a noun in the metaphor for each noun in the problem;
6. create a process in the metaphor for each process in the problem;
7. design the story line to provide a solution or desired response.⁷⁰

Conclusion

Rabbis need to be sensitive to the issues and problems with which the congregant and his family faces. The question then arises, how do we become sensitive to these issues? How do we respond to the aches and pains of our congregants? As Dr. Katz

⁶⁹ Berekhya haNaqdan, Mishle Shu'alim; found in Gates to the Old City, pp. 593-4; rf. to Appendix II, "Alienation" for complete text.

⁷⁰ Lankton, p. 155; for examples refer to his chapter on the "Structure of Metaphor."

has pointed out in his most recent book, Pastoral Care and the Jewish Tradition, some rabbis feel that the proper way of responding is by choosing a role. There are many roles that our tradition has passed down to us. We can be the mocheach, the moral judge, or the menahem, the giver of care, the consoler, or possibly even the talmid chacham, the disciple of the wise, the objective teacher and guide.⁷¹ If he simply chooses a "role" in order to help the congregant solve the problem or issue, we miss the important aspect of rabbinical counseling which marks true success. Earl Grollman focuses on the key to successful rabbinical counseling when he says the "support for emotional injuries is given in a healing relationship with the other and with God."⁷² It is not only the content of the session which is important. Also needed is the ability to identify with the other and for that other person to understand that the rabbinical counselor empathizes with him and his problem.

Metaphor and Neuro-Linguistic Programming enhance the rabbi's ability to become more sensitive to the other person. The metaphor and the techniques derived from NLP assist the rabbi to be more attentive to the manifest content of the other person's story as well as to the un verbalized cues. These cues can then be appreciated by the rabbi who can better understand the counselee's story, and the person himself in a clearer light.

71 Katz, Pastoral Care and the Jewish Tradition, p. 21.

72 Grollman, p. xv.

The rabbi can now have more sensitivity to exactly what the person is saying. In addition, the rabbi can speak to the individual in a more intimate, direct, and meaningful way. Metaphor provides the rabbinical counselor with a greater ability to make deeper, more personal contact by not only speaking to the other person's conscious, rational-thinking mind, but also to the other person's subconscious, abstract-thinking mind as well. The communication is enriched and concepts are better understood.

Through a grasp of the power of the metaphor and some techniques of NLP, the methods of communication which we took for granted, we can now appreciate how they were and were not effective. We can now deliberately use them in a designed and planful way.

We bring our Jewish stories and psychotherapy together in order to enrich our counseling. We can bring them together in order to create a mirror "reflecting back to the congregant the needs and conflicts which he has been unable to recognize in himself."⁷³ We can bring them together to help our congregants seek fuller and more meaningful lives.

⁷³ Katz, "Counseling, Empathy, and the Rabbi," in Rabbinical Counseling, p. 11.

APPENDIX I

PROCESS WORDS FOR THE THREE MAJOR REPRESENTATIONAL SYSTEMS

This list of words helps the counselor tune his senses toward the structure of the counselee's experience. The adverbs, adjectives and verbs which a person selects are known as "predicates." These predicates reveal an individual's representational which he is presently using. When he says, "I hear what you are saying," he is informing the counselor that he is receiving information auditorily.

Most people normally use only one representational system. This is especially true for individuals who are suffering stress.⁷⁴ By listening carefully to the counselee's predicates, the rabbinical counselor can match predicates with him and thereby achieve greater bonding and rapport.

| <u>Auditory</u> | <u>Visual</u> | <u>Kinesthetic</u> | <u>Unspecified</u> |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Asked | Watched | Burdened | Think |
| Complain | Envision | Hurt | Thought |
| Mumble | Gape | Run | Develop |
| Silenced | Sighted | Muffled | Process |
| Chatter | Expose | Sweep | Sense |
| Mention | Glow | Tremble | Discover |
| Noisy | Detected | Plush | Evaluate |
| Echo | Inspected | Scramble | Allow |
| Questioned | Foresee | Slipped | Judging |
| Stammered | Staring | Pressured | Aware |
| Disagree | Obscure | Crumble | Believe |
| Cry | Clear | Bounce | Know |
| Humming | Dark | Brushing | Assume |
| Hear | Look | Digest | Understand |
| Vocal | Spy | Pushed | Decide |
| Request | Snapshot | Force | Guess |
| Silent | Vision | Mushy | Allows |

⁷⁴ Lankton, p. 19.

Utter
Argue
Shriek
Melodic
Shouting
Gurgling
Recite
Sang
Lecture
Shrill
Sobbed
Expressed
Translate
Sighs
Grumble
Quiet
Discuss
Tell
Inquire
Loud
Announce
Chat
Repeat
Answer
Resonant
Cheer

Mirror
Picture
Appear
Preview
Bright
Sparkling
Peering
Reflect
Blindly
Eyed
Shiny
View
Reveal
Gaze
Blurred
Veil
Glance
Show
Perceive
Exhibit
Graphic
Banish
Shadow
Imagine
Smile
Survey

Break
Trample
Smooth
Shaky
Hugging
Crouching
Pull
Skipped
Grind
Rotten
Held
Stuffed
Weigh
Fits
Soft
Hold
Touch
Decay
Build
Feel
Twist
Hard
Suffered
Thick
Carry
Grasp

Agree
Realize
Many ways
Learn
Apply
Use
Motivate
Perceptive
Admire
Delight
Beautiful
Attractive
Regard
Concealed
Recognized
Amaze
Surprise
Free
Create
Appreciate
Enjoy
Wish
Wonder

APPENDIX II

ANTHOLOGY OF BIBLICAL, RABBINIC, HASIDIC AND CONTEMPORARY METAPHORS

The following are stories from the Bible, Rabbinical literature, Hasidic literature, and contemporary Jewish literature. They are divided into categories of typical counseling issue areas. Following each story is a subjective analysis as to its appropriateness for its given category.

Not all individuals will agree to the above categorizations of stories since this is my subjective experience.

FAMILY/MARRIAGE

A Roman matron asked Rabbi Yosse ben Halaphta: "In how many days did God create the world?"

He answered: "In six days; for thus it is written in Exodus 31:17: 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth.'"

"And what has He done since?"

"He unites the couples and arranges the marriages. He decides whose daughter is to marry whom."

"But that," remarked the matron, "is something that even I can do! I own many manservants and many maidservants, and I can couple them quite easily."

To which Rabbi Yosse replied: "You might consider this to be an easy thing. Yet for God this task is as difficult as the splitting of the Sea of Reeds."

Rabbi Yosse went on his way. The Roman matron, for her part, had a row of one thousand manservants confront a row of one thousand maidservants. then she commanded: "So-and-so is going to marry so-and-so; and so-and-so is going to marry so-and-so!" This was to happen that very night.

The next morning, the couples thus paired appeared before the matron - one with a smashed skull, another with a missing eye, a third with a broken leg. This one said: "I do not like that woman!" That one said: "I cannot stand this man!"

The Roman matron sent for Rabbi Yosse ben Halaphta and said to him: "Your Torah is absolutely right: and what you have told me is really true!"

But Rabbi Yosse merely replied: "That is what I have been telling you. You might consider the arranging of marriages to be an easy task. But for God it is as difficult as the splitting of the Sea of Reeds."¹

ANALYSIS: A marriage does not survive on the basis of a simple bond or vow. It may require a feeling that this is "a marriage made in heaven;" but also it requires the understanding that although it was made on high, it needs to be maintained and nurtured down here. If not, someone may possibly end up not necessarily with a broken bone; but rather possibly with a broken heart.

It once happened that a certain woman in Sidon lived with her husband for ten years without giving birth to a child. Following the law that, in those days, governed such matter, they went to Rabbi Simeon be Yohai to arrange for a divorce.

The Rabbi said to them: "By your life! Just as you had a festive banquet when you got married, so you should not separate now without first having a festive banquet."

They followed the Rabbi's advice and prepared a great banquet.

During that banquet, the woman gave her husband more to drink than usual. When he was in high spirits, he said to his wife: "Little daughter, you may take with you out of my house whatever you like best; and then return to the house of your father."

What did she do?

After he had fallen sound asleep, she ordered her manservants and her maidservants to take him and the bed upon which he was sleeping to her father's house.

About midnight the man awoke. When his intoxication had

¹ Jakob J. Petuchowski, Our Masters Taught (New York: Crossroad, 1982), pp. 89-90; cf. Pesikta de Rav Kahana, piska 2, ed. S. Buber, pp. 11b-12a; cf. Genesis Rabbah LXVIII, 4, ed. Theodor-Albeck, pp. 771-73; Leviticus Rabbah VIII, 1, ed. Margulies, pp. 164-66.

worn off, he looked around in astonishment. "Little daughter," he said, "where am I?"

"You are," she replied, "in my father's house."

"But what business do I have in your father's house?"

She replied: "Don't you remember your telling me last night that I may take with me whatever I like best when I return to my father's house? Nothing in the whole world do I like better than you!"

They then went again to Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai. The Rabbi prayed for her, and the woman became pregnant.²

ANALYSIS: The rabbis' explanation of the verse nagilah ve-nismecha bo: "'we will be glad and rejoice in Thee' - if woman can say to mortal 'there is nothing in the whole world I like better than you' and is visited and made fertile by God, all the more will Israel be visited when it says this to God Himself."

There are times when a couple struggles very hard to bear children. This creates a high degree of tension and affects the metabolism and chemicals of the body preventing pregnancy. By focusing on their love and not on becoming pregnant, this may return the body to stasis.

"The Bird's Nest"

The Disciples left the Baal Shem in prayer. They returned and he said to them: "By going away and leaving me alone, you dealt me a painful separation. I shall tell you a parable."

You know that there are birds of passage who fly to warm countries in the autumn. Well, the people in one of those lands once saw a glorious many-colored bird in the midst of a flock which was journeying through the sky. The eyes of man had never seen a bird so beautiful. He alighted in the top of the tallest tree and nested in the leaves. When the king of the country heard of it, he bade them fetch down the bird with his nest. He ordered a number of men to make a ladder up the tree. One was to stand on the other's shoulders until it was possible to reach up

² Canticles Rabbah I, 4, ii.

high enough to take the nest. It took a long time to build this living ladder. Those who stood nearest the ground lost patience, shook themselves free, and everything collapsed.³

ANALYSIS: Refer to pages 47-49 of the thesis.

SELF-WORTH

For this reason a single human being only was created at the time of Creation: to teach you that whoever destroys a single life, Scripture reckons it to him as though he had destroyed a whole world; and whoever saves a single life, Scripture reckons it to him as though he had saved a whole world.

Also for the sake of peace among human beings, so that a man should not say to his fellow: "My father is greater than your father."

Also to prevent the heretics from saying that there are many divine powers in heaven, each one responsible for the creation of a different human being.

And also to proclaim the greatness of the Holy One, praised be He. If a human being stamps several coins with the same die, they all resemble one another. But the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, praised be He, stamps all human beings with the die of the first man; and yet not one of them resembles the other.

Therefore every human individual is obligated to say: "For my sake was the world created!"⁴

ANALYSIS: Every individual is unique. Every individual has a special gift. Because we are all created in the Divine image, we can not stand by idly while another image of God attempts to harm himself - we are responsible for each other. There is self-worth in this altruistic enterprise.

R. Joshua of Siknin said in R. Levi's name: [The rivers] said to the Euphrates: 'Why is thy sound not audible?' 'My deeds make me known,' it replied; 'when a man plants a plant by

³ Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760). Story found in Buber's, The Early Masters, pp. 54-55.

⁴ Petuchowski, p. 15; cf. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5.

me it matures in thirty days; when he sows a vegetable by me, it is full-grown in three days.' Said [the rivers] to the Tigris: 'Why is thy sound audible?' 'May my voice be heard that I may be seen,' answered he. Said they to the fruit-bearing trees: 'Why is your sound not audible?' 'We do not need it,' they reply, 'as our fruits testify for us.' Said they to the non-fruit-bearing trees: 'Why is your sound audible?' 'Would that we could make our voice heard so that we might be seen,' they answered.⁵

ANALYSIS: Refer to pages 50-51 of this thesis.

Were it not for the leaves the fruit would not ripen. The grapes pray for leaves, for without leaves there are no grapes.⁶

ANALYSIS: The Talmud is referring to scholars who cannot exist without common laborers who can minister to the scholars' material needs. In the same way, society can not exist without those who are willing to do menial tasks. These individuals should not be denigrated nor taken for granted. Additionally, this would include a spouse who takes care of the home and children so that the breadwinner can earn the "bread."

The Emperor's daughter once said to R. Joshua ben Hananiah: "Ho, Glorious Wisdom in an ugly vessel!"

He replied: "Why does thy father keep wine in an earthen pitcher?" How else should we keep it?" asked the Emperor's daughter. "People of your rank," said the Rabbi, "should keep their wine in vessels of gold or silver."

The Emperor's daughter persuaded her father to transfer the wine from earthen to gold and silver vessels. The wine, however, turned sour. The Emperor summoned the Rabbi and inquired why he had given such poor counsel. R. Joshua answered: "I did so to show to thy daughter that wisdom like wine is best kept in a plain vessel." "But," continued the Emperor's daughter, "are there not handsome scholars as well?" "Yes," answered the Rabbi,

5 Bereishit Rabbah, 16, 3.

6 Hullin, 92.

"but they would have been greater scholars had they been unhand-
some."7

-Taanit, 7a.

ANALYSIS: Don't judge a book by its cover. Teenagers especially need to understand that they do not have to look like Cybil Shepherd in order to be a success. If they are not beautiful, they have many other qualities that can make them more attractive than the most beautiful person in the world.

So Isaac departed from there [Gerar] and encamped in the wadi of Gerar, where he settled. Isaac dug anew the wells which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham and which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham's death; and he gave them the same names that his father had given them....

From there he went up to Beer-sheba. That night the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Fear not, for I am with you, and I will bless you and increase your offspring for the sake of My servant Abraham."8

ANALYSIS: How does a person find his actual individuality when he is dominated by the genius of his father? If he works in his father's business, how will he achieve merit for just carrying on? This passage indicates that it is not necessary to create something new. The task is to hold steady or as the Bible puts it

they have to dig again the wells that the fathers dug before them and that have become blocked up. The father digs wells and creates new facts; time, enemies, and habit gradually fill these wells with silt. It is the son's task to go back and dig the wells again, to

7 Ta'anit, 7a.

8 Genesis 26:17-24.

release the living waters and let them flow as they will.⁹

Maintenance (of a business, for example) is an important and significant contribution; therefore it is written: "These are the generations of Isaac." Steinsaltz sees Isaac as

the symbol not of the power that breaks through limitations and creates, but of the power that conserves and maintains things in their place. Isaac endeavored to preserve the old forms, in order to keep them from getting spoiled. He showed a marked inclination toward stability, did not try any new experiments or create new forms, kept himself constantly within the aspect of the awe of God, which later, in the Kabbalah, became known as the "fear of Isaac."¹⁰

"Differences"

Rabbi Rafael asked his teacher: "Why is no face like any other?"

Rabbi Pinhas replied: "Because Man is created in the image of God. Every human being sucks the living strength of God from another place, and all together they make up Man. That is why their faces all differ from one another."¹¹

ANALYSIS: We are all unique both in appearance and deed; nevertheless, the Divine is part of all of us.

"Imitation of the Fathers"

The maggid of Zlotchov was asked by one of his disciples: "In the book of Elijah we read: 'Everyone in Israel is in duty bound to say when will my work approach the words of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?' How are we to understand this? How

⁹ Adin Steinsaltz, Biblical Images: Men and Women of the Book (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984), p. 34.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 35.

¹¹ Pinhas of Koretz, d. 1791. Found in Buber's The Early Masters, pp. 126-127.

could we ever venture to think that we could do what our fathers could?"

The rabbi expounded: "Just as our fathers invented new ways of serving, each a new service according to his own character: one the service of love, the other that of stern justice, the third that of beauty, so each one of us in his own way shall devise something new in the light of the teachings and of service, and do what has not yet been done."12

ANALYSIS: Individuals can be just that - individuals. We need not follow in the ways of others. We can reinterpret Scriptures and guiding principles in order to formulate how we will live our lives.

"The Query of Queries"

Before his death, Rabbi Zusya said "In the coming world, they will not ask me: 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me: 'Why were you not Zusya?'"13

ANALYSIS: Each person has been given a soul and an essence. Each person should live according to them and not someone else's.

LIFE

People are like blades of grass; they sprout and they wither.14
-Erubin, 54.

ANALYSIS: Nature metaphor for lifespan.

12 Yehiel Mikhal of Zlotchov, "the Maggid of Zlotchov," d. about 1786. Found in Buber's The Early Masters, p. 147.

13 Meshullam Zusya of Hanipol, d. 1800. Found in Buber's The Early Masters, p. 251.

14 Erubin, 54.

"What You Pursue"

Rabbi Pinhas used to say: "What you pursue, you don't get. But what you allow to grow slowly in its own way, comes to you. Cut open a big fish, and in its belly you will find the little fish lying head down."¹⁵

ANALYSIS: If you chase after something you will not get it. It is not necessary to be aggressive to achieve your aims with others. Allow others to develop and they may come to you.

R. Levi explained: "The hen when its young are tiny, gathers them together and places them beneath its wings, warming them and grubbing for them. But when they are grown up, if one of them wants to get near her, she pecks it on the head and says to it: 'Go and grub for yourself.'

"So during the forty years in the wilderness the manna fell, the well came up for them, the quails were at hand for them, the clouds of glory encircled them, and the pillar of fire led the way before them. When Israel were about to enter the Land, Moses said to them: 'Let everyone of you take up his spade and go out and plant trees.' Hence it is written: When ye shall come to the land, ye shall plant."¹⁶

ANALYSIS: Both of these metaphors can be used to indicate that there is a time in everyone's life when they have to leave their parents' home and create a life for themselves.

This world is likened to a man who has three friends, one of them very close indeed so that they do not part from each other by day or night. The second loves him greatly but not like the first. The third loves him somewhat and sees him from time to time. The time came when the king sent for him, and he was very much afraid and trembled and was apprehensive because of his awe before royalty. He went to take counsel with the first friend and said: "The king has sent for me and I fear greatly and

¹⁵ Pinhas of Koretz. Found in Buber's The Early Masters, p. 129.

¹⁶ Leviticus Rabbah 25, 5.

desire your counsel and aid, so come with me to the king." He answered that he would not accompany him at all. He went to the second, who told him that he grieved for him very much indeed and would accompany him as far as the gateway of the palace but would not enter. He went to the third, who replied: "I grieve with you and in order to ease your distress I shall accompany you and appear before the king, and I shall argue your case before him."

The first friend is silver and gold, and that was the friend whom he trusted most, concerning which King Solomon, may he rest in peace, said in his Proverbs (11:28): "He who trusts in his wealth shall fall." He should trust only in His Blessed Name alone for He is the essential Wealth and everlasting Possession, as it is written in the Book of Job (22:25): "And the Almighty shall be your treasure and precious silver unto you." The second companion is a man's wife and children who accompany him to the grave but do not enter and return from there. The third friend is the charity and good deeds. That is the friend who will accompany a man beyond the grave and will go ahead of him and argue his case on his behalf.¹⁷

ANALYSIS: People gauge success in life in many different ways. The three most measured are financial success, family life, and by the deeds done in life by an individual. This story places their weight of importance in proper perspective.

Dispirited Israelites after years in the desert come up the Jordan valley to the lush oasis of Jericho.

-Bible

ANALYSIS: Things will look brighter in the future even if there seems to be no hope at the moment. This metaphor models a weary, unending journey but ends with something exciting beautiful and rewarding. Life is also a series of journeys like this. After the Israelites entered the land everything was not as wonderful as they had anticipated. Their future was full of wars, internal strife and famine.

¹⁷ Kad ha-Kemach, No. 1, pp. 6-7. Found in Bin Gorion's *Mimekor Yisrael*, vol. 3 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 1322-1323.

QUARRELS

When Jacob was about to lay himself down to sleep upon a rock for a pillow, he found to his surprise that there were twelve rocks where he stood, each bearing the name of one of the tribes in Israel. And the twelve rocks began quarreling amongst themselves. Each said: "on me must the righteous one place his head."

And God caused the twelve rocks to become one - a symbol of the unity of Israel.¹⁸

ANALYSIS: Refer to page 58 of this thesis.

Rabbi Meir was in the habit of delivering discourses on Sabbath evenings. Among his listeners there was a certain woman.

Once the discourse took a very long time, and the woman stayed until the end. When she returned home, she found that the light had already gone out. Angrily her husband wanted to know: "Where have you been?"

She replied: "I sat listening to a preacher."

Her husband now adjured her, saying: "You are forbidden to enter this house until you have spat in the preacher's face!"

She stayed away from home one week, two weeks, three weeks. Finally her neighbors said to her: "Are you still quarreling? Come, let us go with you to the preacher."

When Rabbi Meir saw her coming, he was able, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, to understand the whole sequence of events.

He said: "My eye hurts. Is there, perhaps, among you an understanding woman, capable of whispering a charm over my eye?"

Now the woman's neighbors said to her: "if you were to go and spit into his eye, you would be able to annul your husband's adjuration."

The woman went, and sat down in front of Rabbi Meir. But she was afraid of him, and she said. "Rabbi, I really have no experience in whispering charms over eyes."

But the Rabbi said: "Nevertheless, do spit in my face seven times! Then I shall be healed."

She did so.

After that, Rabbi Meir said to the woman: Go home now, and

¹⁸ Hullin 91b. cf. Rashi, Genesis 28:11.

tell your husband: 'You demanded of me to spit in the preacher's face once; I have done it seven times!'"

After the woman had left, his disciples said to Rabbi Meir: "is it proper to let the Torah be brought into such contempt? Could you not simply have asked one of us to whisper a charm over your eye?"

But Rabbi Meir replied: "Is it not fitting for Meir to attempt to imitate his Creator? For Rabbi Ishmael had taught: Great is peace, because the Name of God, though written down in holiness, was, according to the divine commandment (Numbers 5:11-31), to be blotted out in water, if only peace could thereby be restored between husband and wife!"¹⁹

ANALYSIS: Sometimes in the measurement of the greatest good we need to swallow our pride. Our pride will heal. A tear in a marriage may not.

THE AGED

R. Joshua b. Levi said: "Honor and respect the elderly (lit. the old man) whose physical and mental powers are broken; for it was said both the full Tablets and the broken tablets had a place in the Ark."²⁰

ANALYSIS: The young and the old are of equal value. The quality of each may be different; however, that does not negate that the "broken tablets" (i.e. "the elderly") have a worthwhile contribution to make.

R. Jose b. Kisma said: "Two are better than three and woe for the one thing that goes and does not return." "What is that?" Said R. Hisda: "One's youth." When R. Dimi came, he

¹⁹ Petuchowski, pp. 93-94; cf. Leviticus Rabbah IX, 9, ed. Margulies, pp. 191-93; cf. p. Sotah I, 4, ed. Krotoshin, p. 16d; Numbers Rabbah IX, 20.

²⁰ Berakot 8b.

said: "Youth is a crown of roses; old age is a crown of willow-rods."²¹

ANALYSIS: Two, refers to two legs. Three, refers to two legs plus a cane. Finally willow-rods are a heavy burden. This metaphor refers to youth which can not be recaptured ("one thing goes and does not return"), and the difficulties that come with old age.

Hadrian once passed along the paths leading to Tiberias and saw an old man standing and digging trenches to plant shoots of fig-trees. He said to him: "Grandfather, grandfather if you had begun your work early (i.e. youth) then you would not have to work late (when older)! He said to him: "I have worked early and am working late, and let the Lord of Heaven do as pleases Him!" He said to him: "How old are you this day?" He said to him: "100 years!" He said to him: "You are 100 years and yet are standing and digging trenches to plant shoots of fig-trees. Do you ever hope to eat from them?" He said to him: "If I am worthy I shall eat, and if not, then as my forebears have worked for me so will I work for my children." (He does eat the fruit seven years later and brings basket of fruit to Hadrian who rewards him with a basket of gold).²²

ANALYSIS: An elderly person is able to work as long as he finds the work worthwhile to himself and others.

Pharaoh asks Jacob's age. He answered: "The days of the years of my sojournings are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojournings."²³

ANALYSIS: Longevity is the reward for a good life.

²¹ Shabbat 152a.

²² Leviticus Rabbah 25, 5.

²³ Genesis 47:9.

Once upon a time a man who was very rich felt himself aging and ailing. And so he called his only son to him and said: "My son, I am growing old and I find it difficult to run my business myself any more. You and your wife are very energetic and intelligent people. I will give you all my cattle and sheep, and you and she will take care of them. You will not have to wait till I am dead to achieve prosperity."

The son kissed his father, thanked him for his kindness, and promised to take care of him. He gave his father a fine room in his house and a servant to take care of his needs. And his ventures soon prospered. When a son was born to him the young man was full of joy. And the mother thought of nothing but the son's future, and how to ensure that he would have a lot of money set aside for him when he grew up. Thinking this way they grew very selfish and stingy.

More and more they tried to save money. Little by little they denied the old man more and more. At first they took away the old man's attendant, then they took away his room. By now they had grown very rich and they invited many fine guests to their home. They were ashamed to have the poor old doddering man sit down to dinner at their fine table.

"You have spilled your soup over everybody, idiot!" the wife would scream at him, in front of all their fine guests. You belong in the stable! And indeed soon they made room for him there.

But even that place was soon taken away from him, for their cattle and horses had grown so numerous that they needed every bit of the stable to stall them, and the old man, now sunk deep in years, was flung into one corner stall, and left lying there among rags and rubbish. He was by now almost forgotten by everyone, and neglected by all - by almost all.

But one person did remember him. That was the little grandson. He would go each day to visit his grandfather. He had to do this secretly, for his mother would not let him go in his fine clothes to that filthy corner of the stable, and she would scream at him and at the old man if she knew that the grandfather had kissed and embraced him, and she would have thought it an even worse crime that the boy had returned his kisses and caresses, and that the child clasped loving arms around that ragged and beggared grandfather.

One day the father saw his son playing some strange game using two large heaps of blankets. He hurried over for a few minutes to play with his little boy. He could not afford much time for him nowadays, because he was too busy making a lot of money.

"What are you doing there, my son?" he asked kindly.

"Oh, I'm playing father and son," said the little boy, not looking at his father, but busily arranging the two piles of blankets.

"What kind of game is that?" asked the father.

"Well, I take a pile of blankets from the house and I place them in this heap. And then I take the rags and the rubbish out of the miller's cellar, and out of the kitchen, and what is left over from the horses' bags of oats, and I pile them in this pile."

"And why do you call this game 'Father and Son'?" he asked the boy.

"Oh, I'm the Son and you are the Father," said the boy. "And I am saving these rags for you when you get old like grandfather, and these rich and expensive blankets I shall keep for myself so that I can always be warm and happy."

Then the man awoke to what he had been doing to his own father, and he kissed his son and thanked him for having opened his eyes to the terrible sins he had been committing.

-101 Jewish Stories, pp. 169-170.

ANALYSIS: What goes around comes around. We need to take great care in making decisions which affect other people's lives.

JEWS-BY-CHOICE

It once happened that a certain gentile came before Hillel and said to him, "Make me a proselyte, on condition that you teach me the whole Torah, while I stand on one foot." Hillel said to him, "What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah, all the rest is commentary; go and learn it."24

ANALYSIS: Although this precept of Hillel is vital to Judaism, one should not forget all the other values, Mitzvot and traditions which this religion encourages all Jews to understand and practice.

God loves the convert exceedingly. What can we compare this to? There is an old story about a king who had a number of sheep and goats which went forth every morning to the pasture, and returned in the evening to the stable. One day a stag joined the flock and grazed with the sheep, and returned with them. Then the shepherd said to the king, 'There is a stag which goes out with the sheep and grazes with them, and comes home with them.'

And the king loved the stag exceedingly. And he commanded the shepherd, saying: 'Give heed unto this stag, that no man should beat it. Furthermore, when the sheep return in the evenings, the stag should be given food and drink.' Then the shepherds said to him, 'My Lord, you have many goats and sheep and kids, and give us no directions concerning these, but about the stag you give us orders day by day!' Then the king replied: 'It is the custom of the sheep to graze in the pasture, but the stags dwell in the wilderness, and it is not their custom to come among sheep and goats and kids. But to this stag who has come to us and lives with us, should we not be grateful that he has left the great wilderness, where many stags and gazelles feed, and has come to live among us? It behooves us to be grateful.²⁵

ANALYSIS: Refer to page 52 of this thesis.

DEATH AND DYING

Rava said to Rav Nachman, "Show yourself to me [in a dream after you die]." He showed himself to Rava. Rava asked him, "Was death painful?" Rav Nachman replied, "It was as painless as lifting a hair from a cup of milk. But were the Holy One, blessed be He, to say to me, 'You may return to that world where you were before,' I would not wish to do it. The fear of death is too great."²⁶

ANALYSIS: This metaphor allows a person an opportunity to talk about the fear of death and the possibility that death may not be as painful as he might expect.

A certain non-Jew asked R. Joshua b. Karchah: "Do you not maintain that the Holy One, blessed be He, sees into the future?" "Yes," the rabbi replied. "But it is written, 'And the Lord regretted that He had made people on earth, and His heart was saddened?' (Genesis 6:6) The rabbi asked, "Have you ever had a son?" He replied, "Yes." "And what did you do when he was born?" He answered, "I was overjoyed and made everyone else joyous." The rabbi asked, "And yet did you not know that he would eventually die?" He answered, "At the time when one should

²⁵ Numbers Rabbah, Naso, 8, 2-4.

²⁶ Mo'ed Katan 28a.

be joyous - be joyous. And when it is time to mourn - mourn." The rabbi said, "So, too, with the Holy One, blessed be He, mourned for His world before bringing the Flood, for it is said here, "And it grieved Him."27

ANALYSIS: This metaphor indicates that there is a God of compassion and a God who by His grief is involved in the world. This particular story need not be told from the words of R. Joshua b. Karchah; rather this might be even more powerful if the counselor actually spoke to the bereaved person in this manner.

Story of Abraham and Sarah: They lived together for many years, worked as a team, as partners, as leaders committed to an ideal. They underwent a name change together - a rebirth. They shared a child who would transmit their ideal throughout the generations through his descendants. Abraham goes to great pains to give her a proper burial.

-Bible

ANALYSIS: Certain aspects of this story might help the individual get in touch with his feelings. Furthermore, like Abraham, after the death of a beloved spouse, one must go through great pains to see and accomplish what is yet still undone.

"Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah" (Gen. 23:1). It is written, 'The Lord knoweth the days of them that are without blemish; and their inheritance shall be for ever' (ps. 37:18). As they are unblemished, so are their years unblemished: At the age of twenty she was as at the age of seven in beauty, and at the age of a hundred she was at the age of twenty in sin.28

ANALYSIS: This indicates that she lived a complete life and

27 Genesis Rabbah 27:4.

28 Genesis Rabbah 58:1.

throughout her life she retained the innocence of her youth and the beauty of her childhood.

...the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife [Bathsheba] had borne to David, and it became critically ill.

David entreated God for the boy; David fasted, and he went in and spent the night lying²⁹ on the ground. The senior servants of his household tried to induce him to get up from the ground; but he refused, nor would he partake of food with them. On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell David that the child was dead; for they said, "We spoke to him when the child was alive and he wouldn't listen to us; how can we tell him that the child is dead? He might do something terrible."

When David saw his servants talking in whispers, David understood that the child was dead; David asked his servants, "Is the child dead?" "Yes," they replied.

Thereupon David rose from the ground; he bathed and anointed himself, and he changed his clothes. He went into the House of the Lord and prostrated himself. Then he went home and asked for food, which they set before him and he ate. His courtiers asked him, "Why have you acted in this manner? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but now that the child is dead, you rise and take food!" He replied, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I thought: 'Who knows? The Lord may have pity on me, and the child may live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again?"³⁰

ANALYSIS:

Your loved one is dead. It may not be fair, but it is a fact that has to be accepted. You cannot bring that person back again to life. You can, however, learn from the wise king. Courage is not the absence of fear and pain, but the affirmation of life despite fear and pain.

No matter how great your pain, there is hope and help in the future. As your sense of humor returns and you find yourself laughing, you're feeling better. As you begin to make major decisions about your life, you're getting better still. When you are able to take out the mementos of your beloved and smile through your tears at memories of happiness together, you're much

²⁹ Some Septuagint mss. add "in sackcloth; cf. I Kings 21:27.

³⁰ II Samuel 12:15-23.

improved. And when you learn that no one can bring back your loved one, that it's your job to pick up and go on living, then you'll know you are truly growing and recovering yourself.³¹

It has been taught:

Three participants are involved when a child is formed in its mother's womb: the Holy One, praised be He, the father and the mother.

From the father come the white substances of the body, like the brain, the nails, the white of the eyes, the bones and the sinews.

From the mother come the red substances of the body, like the blood, the skin, the flesh, the hair and the black of the eyes.

The Holy One, praised be He, His Name be exalted, provides the following ten things: life-sustaining spirit and soul, facial expression, sight, hearing and speech, the ability to lift up one's hands and to walk with one's feet, and wisdom and insight, counsel, knowledge and strength.

When the hour of death arrives, the Holy One, praised be He takes away His contribution and leaves the parents their contributions.

When the parents weep, the Holy One, praised be He, says to them: "Why do you weep? Have I taken away anything that belongs to you? I have taken away only what belongs to Me."

But the parents reply: "Sovereign of the Universe, as long as Your contribution was combined with our contribution, our contribution was preserved from the maggot and the worm. Now that You have withdrawn Your contribution from ours, our contribution has been cast away and left to the maggot and the worm."³²

ANALYSIS: This metaphor describes the division of responsibility for a human life. It was written to hopefully lift the burden of the death of a young child from the shoulders of the parents.

³¹ Earl A. Grollman, What Helped Me When My Loved One Died (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), pp. 149-150.

³² Petuchowski, pp. 23-24; cf. Ecclesiastes Rabbah V, 10, ii.

"The Fox and the Vineyard"

As man came out of his mother's womb
so must he depart at last,
naked as he came.
He can take nothing of his wealth
to carry away with him.

(Ecclesiastes 5:14)

Genibha said:

This can be compared to a fox who found a vineyard. But the vineyard was surrounded by a fence on all sides. The fox did indeed find a hole in the fence, through which he wanted to enter. Yet the hole was too narrow, and he did not succeed. What did he do? He fasted for three days, until he became quite slim; and thus he managed to get through the hole.

Then he ate the grapes. But, doing so, he again became fat.

That is why he did not succeed in getting through the hole when he wanted to leave the vineyard again. So he fasted for another three days to become slim; and, when he had done so, he managed to get out of the vineyard.

Once outside, he turned toward the vineyard and lamented: "O vineyard, O vineyard, how good you are, and how good are your fruits! All that is within you is beautiful and praiseworthy! But of what use are you? The way one enters you is also the way in which one leaves you again."

And so it is with this world! 33

ANALYSIS: You can't take it with you.

When Rabbi Bun, the son of Rabbi Hiyya, died, Rabbi Zera delivered the eulogy. He took as his text Ecclesiastes 5:11: "A worker's sleep is sweet, whether he has much or little to eat."

I will tell you to whom Rabbi Bun can be compared.

A king had a vineyard. He hired laborers to tend it. Now, there was among the laborers one who worked better than all the others. When the king saw how diligently this laborer worked, he took him by the hand and began to stroll with him up and down.

But when, in the evening, the laborers came to receive their wages, the king paid that man as much as he paid the others.

When the other laborers saw this, they complained and said: "Your Majesty, while we have labored the whole day long, this man has only worked for two or three hours. Is it right that he should receive the same wages we do?"

33 Ibid., pp. 26-27; cf. Ecclesiastes Rabbah V. 14.

But the king replied: "Why are you angry? This man has done as much work in two or three hours as the rest of you have done in a whole day."

Thus, too, Rabbi Bun has accomplished more in the realm of the Torah during his twenty-eight years than a diligent student could ordinarily accomplish in a hundred years.³⁴

ANALYSIS: This is a gentle sensitive parable appropriate for a person who although young, accomplished a great deal in those few years. Possibly appropriate for the parents of a young person who had a terminal illness for a few years before he died.

One Sabbath, when Rabbi Meir was sitting in the House of Study in the afternoon, expounding the Scriptures, his two sons died.

What did his wife do? She laid both of them upon a bed and covered them with a sheet.

At the termination of the Sabbath, Rabbi Meir returned home. He asked his wife: "Where are my two sons?" She answered: "They went to the House of Study." But Rabbi Meir said: "I looked for them in the House of Study, but I did not see them there."

After he had been given the cup of wine for the prayer marking the termination of the Sabbath, and had recited the appropriate benediction, Rabbi Meir asked again: "Where are my two sons?" His wife replied: "They must have gone somewhere and must be coming home soon."

She then served him his dinner. He ate it and recited the Grace after Meals.

After he had concluded the Grace, his wife said to him: "Rabbi may I ask you a question?"

Of course, little daughter," replied Rabbi Meir, "ask!"

She related: "Some time ago, a man came here and gave me a treasure to keep for him. Now he has come again, this time to take it back. Must I return it to him or not?"

Rabbi Meir was quick to answer: "But of course, little daughter, you must return it to him. If one undertakes to keep something for someone, one must return it upon demand!"

She said to him: "Rabbi, do you really think that I would not do so - even without your ruling?"

Then she took him by the hand and led him upstairs to the

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 29-30; cf. Canticles Rabbah VI, 2; cf. Ecclesiastes Rabbah V, 11, v; p. Berakhoth II, 8, ed Krotoshin, p. 5c; Matthew 20:1-16.

room where the two dead sons were lying on a bed. She removed the sheet with which she had covered them.

When Rabbi Meir saw that his two sons were dead, he wailed and cried: "My sons, my sons! My Masters, my Masters!" ("MY sons" - because they were so well behaved. "My Masters"- because they have enlightened me through their study of the Torah.)

Now his wife spoke to him: "Rabbi, did you not yourself tell me that one must return a treasure that one has been keeping to its rightful owner? Well, the rightful owner has come, and He has reclaimed His treasure."

At that, Rabbi Meir quoted the words of Job (1:21): "The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away; praised be the name of the Lord."³⁵

ANALYSIS: Timing is very important to Rabbi Meir's wife in this story. She literally and figuratively takes him by the hand to slowly face the reality of the grief. The parable might be very appropriate for the parents of a child who has been slowly dying of a terminal disease, and realizing the short time ahead, had made the most of it by contributing to others and achieving goals before he died.

SUICIDE

Rabbi Hananiah ben Teradyon was found by the Romans studying Torah, publicly holding gatherings of pupils, and keeping a scroll of the Torah next to his heart.

They wrapped him in the scroll, placed bundles of branches round him, and set him on fire. Then they brought tufts of wool that had been soaked in water and placed them near his heart so that he should not die quickly....

His disciples called to him, "Rabbi, what do you see?"

He answered, "The parchments are being burned, but the letters are soaring on high."

"Open your mouth, so that the fire will penetrate you," they said.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 30-31; cf. Midrash Mishle, ch. 31, ed. S. Buber, pp. 54b-55a.

He answered, "Let Him who gave me my soul take it away, but no one should injure oneself."³⁶

ANALYSIS: Even under the utmost stress, pain and agony, human life is God's most precious gift. One should not feel that they can appoint the time of their own death.

[A group of rabbis] were walking along a road. They discussed the following question:

How do we know that the duty of saving a life supersedes the Sabbath laws?....

Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, answering the question, said: "If we may disregard the Sabbath laws in order to perform a circumcision, which affects only one member of the body, how much more should we disregard those laws for the whole body when it is in danger?"....

Rabbi Yose ha-Gelili says: "When the Bible says, 'Nevertheless you must keep my Sabbaths,' (Exodus 31:13) the word nevertheless implies a distinction. There are Sabbaths on which you must rest, and there are Sabbaths on which you should not rest."

Rabbi Simeon ben Menasya says: "Behold it says: 'You shall keep my Sabbath, for it is holy for you' (Exodus 31:14). This means, the Sabbath is given to you, but you are not surrendered to the Sabbath."

Rabbi Nathan says: "Behold it says: 'The Israelite people shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout the generations' (Exodus 31:16). This implies that we should disregard on Sabbath for the sake of saving the life of a person so that person may be able to observe many Sabbaths."³⁷

ANALYSIS: "The duty of saving an endangered life (pikkuach nefesh) suspends the operation of all the commandments of the Torah."³⁸

³⁶ Avodah Zarah 18a.

³⁷ Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, tractate "Shabbata," ch. 1.

³⁸ Birnbaum, A Book of Jewish Concepts.

ALIENATION/LONELINESS

Nebuchadnezzar asked Ben Sira: "Why does the Angel of Death hold sway over all creatures save the offspring of Milham the Bird?" And he answered: "When Eve ate of the Tree of knowledge and gave to her husband so that he ate with her, she grew envious of the other creatures and gave them all to eat. She noticed Milham the Bird and said to him: 'Eat of what your comrades have eaten.' But he told her: 'Is it not enough that you have transgressed before His Blessed Name and have been the cause for the future death of others, but you come to me and try to entice me to disregard the commands of the Holy and Blessed One so that I should eat and perish? I shall not listen to you.'"

A Divine Echo immediately resounded and said to Eve and Adam: 'You received a command and did not keep it but sinned, and came to Milham the Bird to cause him to sin as well, yet he would not do so but feared Me even though I gave him no command, but he observed My decree. Therefore he shall never know the taste of death, neither he nor his offspring.'

In due course the Holy and Blessed One told the Angel of Death: 'You have authority over all creatures and their seed except the offspring of a bird whose name is Milham, who are not to taste death.' Then the angel said to Him: "Lord of the Universe! Keep them far away because they are righteous, otherwise they will learn from the behavior of the remaining creatures and sin before You, though they are not supposed to know sin.' Thereupon He gave the angel permission and he built them a great city and declared: 'It has been decreed that neither my sword nor any other sword shall rule over you, and you are not to taste death till the end of all ages.' 39

ANALYSIS: Even though a person can be alienated by colleagues and friends for doing the right thing, he should not allow the potential of alienation to deter him from continuing in this manner.

----- "More Love"

When Rabbi Pinhas and his disciples discussed wicked or hostile persons, they recalled the advice the Baal Shem Tov once gave to the father of a renegade son: that he should love him more.

"When you see," they said, "that someone hates you and does you harm, rally your spirit and love him more than before. That

is the only way you can make him turn. For the whole of Israel is a vehicle for holiness. If love and unity prevail among them, then the Divine Presence and all holiness is about them. But if God forbid! - there should be a schism, a rift appears, and through the opening holiness falls down into the 'shells.' And so, if your neighbor grows remote from you in spirit, you must approach him more closely than before - to fill out the rift."⁴⁰

ANALYSIS: Allowing anger to dictate feelings and actions can result in a bad situation made worse.

"Hide and Seek"

Rabbi Barukh's grandson Yehiel was once playing hide-and-seek with another boy. He hid himself well and waited for his playmate to find him. When he had waited for a long time, he came out of his hiding-place, but the other was nowhere to be seen. Now Yehiel realized that he had not looked for him from the beginning. This made him cry, and crying he ran to his grandfather and complained of his faithless friend. Then tears brimmed in Rabbi Barukh's eyes and said: "God says the same thing: 'I hide, but no one wants to seek me.'"⁴¹

ANALYSIS: This is a metaphor of loneliness to be told to help an individual visualize his predicament and then talk about it.

The Ape and the Leopard

There was an ape who lived with two small apes upon a rock near a bush. He loved the little one and hated the older. A hungry leopard came forth from his lair, and the ape trembled with fear for himself and the one he loved, seeing that the feline leaped from the mountain of leopards and approached with great ferocity, to destroy and devour, and roared towards his prey, and beat a straight path in his fury and wrath. And the ape said: "Let me be bereaved of him whom I hate, I shall hide my face from him, and he will serve as the leopard's food." And he took him and flung him on his back, his intention being thus expose him first to the leopard. But the small one, upon whom he took pity, he

⁴⁰ Pinhas of Koretz. Found in Buber's The Early Masters, pp. 129-130.

⁴¹ Barukh of Mezbizh, d. 1811. Found in Buber's The Early Masters, p. 97.

placed under his belly, as he ran to escape. And when he saw that the leopard came nearer and nearer, he wanted to throw off him whom he carried on his back, but that one felt that this was his intention and held on right to the fringes of his hair, desperately trying to save his own life. And when the ape saw that he was unable to get rid of him, and the leopard had almost overtaken them, he let go of the one whom he loved, and himself escaped with the ape who was clinging to his back. And when the ape saw that his intentions were frustrated, his reins and heart turned to the ape he hated, and his hatred changed into love, and he took pity on him as a man takes pity on the son who serves him.

The lesson is that you should love your sons equally, for if you love one of them more, and put your hope in him, suddenly a turn of the wheel can tear him away, so that you cast your eyes about and, behold, he is no more. And he whom you hated and kept at a distance becomes the restorer of your soul and your supporter in old age.⁴²

ANALYSIS: Self-contained analysis.

⁴² Berekhya haNaqdan, Mishle Shu'alim. Found in Patai's Gates to the Old City, pp. 493-494.

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