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Bingo Hall in the Synagogue
An Analysis of Gambling in the Jewish Tradition

By: Jody H. Riches

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination
Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion
2004

Referee, Professor Samuel Joseph
Referee, Professor Mark Washofsky

Digest

There has long been an attitude within the American Jewish community that Jewish people do not drink, use drugs, or have problems with compulsive gambling. Evident from research, such topics are taboo, simply not talked about. This thesis deals with the prejudice that Jewish people do not suffer from the same social pathologies that other groups of people suffer from.

The first chapter defines addiction as a mental illness. It is imperative to understand that addiction is not simply a character flaw, but rather a disease. This chapter deals primarily with the psychological implications of addiction. Here, compulsive gambling is defined as an addiction. Some parallel characteristics of addictive behaviors and the manifestations of the addictions are established.

Addictive behaviors, including alcohol and gambling, exist in the Hebrew Bible. Although the great sages did not consider addiction a mental disease, as this is a much more recent phenomenon, these rabbinic authorities did deal with the issue of gambling. This chapter outlines the debates over gambling as they appear in the Talmud. In addition, this chapter presents instances in Jewish tradition (examples from the Bible and holiday observances) where gambling is present.

As more research is conducted, it becomes more apparent that programs that treat addictions can be generic. Addictive behaviors may differ, but the type effective treatment does not. The most common type of treatment program is the twelve-step program. Initially created for the treatment of alcoholics, the same twelve-steps are now used as treatment for a variety of addictions. The third chapter provides an analysis of

the twelve-step program, and suggests ways to frame each step according to the beliefs of Judaism and to specifically target a gambling addiction.

Work to prevent addictions is seriously lacking. It is difficult to determine exactly what type of preventative education will have a positive impact on those who would be addicts. Studies indicate that children who gamble are more likely to become compulsive gamblers than are people who were not exposed to gambling during their youth. This chapter includes a curriculum based on Jewish values that can be used to discourage people from becoming problem gamblers. This chapter outlines strategies and goals of prevention programs.

The concluding chapter explores the issue of gambling in the synagogue today. . While bingo and Monte Carlo nights tend to be successful fundraisers for congregations, the issues associated with the gambling epidemic are often times ignored. Although the Jewish reaction to gambling is ambivalent – while it is not prohibited, it is also not widely accepted – congregations must be more sensitive when depending on casino nights to raise money.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

The seed for this thesis was planted when a group of students at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati suggested raising money for a charity by organizing a poker tournament. After listening to the opinions of faculty and students, both in support and in opposition of a gambling event at the seminary, I was faced with a personal struggle. As a person who enjoys the social aspect of a card game and who also recognizes the devastation that compulsive gambling can cause, I felt the need to research Judaism's views of gambling. The most significant thing that this research indicates is that there is an extreme need for Jews in America to confront the problems associated with gambling.

Along with my classmates at the college, who always offered to be research subjects for this thesis, and the faculty in general for their support, I would like to thank my thesis advisors, Dr. Mark Washofsky and Rabbi Sam Joseph, who helped me to create this piece of work. Their knowledge and wisdom allowed me to produce something that I am proud of and find important.

I would also like to thank my dad, Bob Riches, for his constant encouragement and support. I greatly appreciate his confidence in me and the joy that he exhibits when he talks about his daughter becoming a rabbi. I thank my sisters, Stephanie and Danielle, for forcing me to push myself in all that I choose to do.

Each day, when I sat down to write, whether just a few words or several pages, I could hear my mom, Gayle Riches z'l, telling me that I would finish on time. I know how proud she is of my accomplishments, and treasure her unending support and love.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my fiancé, Rabbi Alan Cook. I look forward to the tremendous experiences that we share each day. Thank you for encouraging me and allowing me to work diligently on this thesis.

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Introduction

The Problems of Gambling

The thrill of Las Vegas casinos, the lights that gleam from Atlantic City, the tour buses that fill the parking lots of American Indian Casinos in the United States – while these sites may seem to exaggerate the gambling life, they in fact do not distort the strong attraction that exists between people and the life of throwing dice and betting on football games. From buying an occasional lottery ticket, feeling the need to at least have one shot at winning millions, to proposing an innocent sounding bet as a child, the excitement and thrill involved in gambling is contagious. Taking chances, placing a wager on something, is part of human nature – we simply cannot escape the desire to take risks. Certainly, there is a difference between taking a gamble on a career move and spending excessive amounts of time and money in casinos. The tension that builds up inside, however, is the same, regardless of the force that drives the tension. We do not want to lose when we take a risk, we want to succeed. Whether it means a large payback or success in the business world, when we take a chance on something, we are looking for a favorable outcome.

Unfortunately, this element of human nature has evolved into a serious problem. Gambling, a form of thrill seeking, produces a high that helps motivate people. Because there is no real substance involved, as is the case with chemical or alcohol dependency, the effects of gambling have not been understood to be as detrimental to human health. Recent studies and scholars have made significant contributions to the understanding of gambling disorders. By defining compulsive gambling and classifying it as a mental disease, there is more interest in understanding the consequences of becoming a gambler

and in finding ways to help people recover from being problem gamblers. Compulsive gambling is a mental disease. There is no cure for it, once a person is diagnosed with this disease, or comes to realize the severity of the problem, there are treatment programs, but there is no cure. As addiction gains recognition as a legitimate mental disorder, more time is dedicated to understanding the motivation behind becoming an addict, regardless of the substance to which one is addicted, and to creating effective treatment for the addiction.

The recent phenomenon of casinos in the United States and throughout the world highlights a problem that people have had since ancient times. There is evidence of forms of risk taking throughout the Bible, and the issue of addiction, whether to alcohol, drugs, or gambling is not new to the medical community. Likewise, legal authorities, particularly within the Jewish religion, have dealt with problems that arise from addiction since the codification of the Talmud. Forced to deal with a dilemma, the Jewish community still struggles to define the role that gambling plays in Judaism, and to determine exactly what forms of gambling are appropriate. Without actual Rabbinic rulings that declare gambling illegal, it is impossible to impose a legal ruling that bans the Jewish community from gambling. This does not, however, mean that the rabbis condone gambling and find it to be morally acceptable.

Without convincing legal rulings that deem gambling to be illegal, the community must take measures to reduce the number of people who become addicted to gambling. In recent years, people have designed treatment programs, but these programs only deal with the problem once it has blossomed. There are no fully developed curricula or programs that deal specifically with gambling in the Jewish community. This is in part

due to the way addictions are characterized – as they are neither a Jewish problem or linked specifically to the substance being abused. Still, implementing prevention programs that are specific to the Jewish people, and specific to gambling, will impact the number of people who become addicted.

All people are subject to becoming addicts. Learning about the consequences of gambling at an early age is an important factor in lessening the problem of compulsive gambling. People cannot escape from the natural act of taking risks and gambling on some aspect of life. The unnecessary gambles; the poker games at summer camp, the bets made on athletic events, the dares made for purely recreational purposes, are small steps into gambling that begin to build up the tolerance that adults have for losing more and more money with each bet. An occasional friendly wager will not turn someone into an addict, but not knowing the devastating consequences that compulsive gambling can have is quite problematic.

Aside from the medical issues that are linked to addiction, the moral aspect of gambling must be considered. There is nothing inherently wrong about a social bet; however there are severe repercussions when gambling turns into an addiction. Gamblers have tendencies to lie, steal, cheat, destroy relationships, and neglect family and work responsibilities. Gambling can affect one's life in extreme ways, which is difficult to understand because gambling does not involve ingesting any type of substance.

Today, the news reports are filled with stories of Pete Rose betting on baseball games and statistics of revenue from casinos in an overwhelming number of states. With the internet, one need not even leave his own home to participate in interactive blackjack or poker. This problem, that is certainly apparent in the secular world, has a definite

place in the Jewish world as well. It would be unfortunate, but perhaps as more gambling scandals are revealed in public, more people will become educated about the serious problems attached to compulsive gambling.

Chapter I

Understanding Addiction

Introduction

Addictive behaviors plague humankind. While certain behaviors are more widely recognized as addictive (drug use, alcohol consumption, overeating, gambling), it seems that any behavior can become an addiction, and that any person is a candidate for becoming an addict. An addiction is “an ingrained habit that undermines your health, your work, your relationships, your self-respect, but that you feel cannot change.”¹ According to this definition, any habit can become addiction. The behavior need not be seen as unfavorable by society in order to be deemed an addictive behavior. Any habit has the potential to take control away from the individual, thereby making any substance or habit a potentially addictive one.

Scientific study of addiction, particularly of gambling addiction, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although the label of addiction may be new, addictive substances and behaviors are anything but new. Gambling, drinking, and eating, have been recorded as popular human activities for quite a substantial time.² In order to better understand addiction, it is necessary to gain perspective of the way that the mind of an addict works and to determine how significant certain factors are in the life of an addict. While there are both internal and external factors that impact an addict, medical research indicates that

¹ R.A. Davis, “Addiction and the Torah: A Jewish Community Primary Prevention Program” (Rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1992), 1.

² Examples of gambling from the Bible include drawing lots on Purim (Esther) and drawing lots to determine the distribution of land to the tribes (Genesis). There are also examples of excessive drinking and eating in the Bible.

addiction is primarily a psychological issue.³ Significant findings, such as this one, will allow for addicts to receive treatment that addresses the actual problem.

Substances or activities to which one becomes addicted are similar in that the principle issue lies within the individual. Study of addictions requires an understanding that the problem is not actually due to the activity or substance, but rather in the way that the addict's mind works. While gambling is considered one of the most common forms of addiction, it is clearly different from alcohol and other substance addictions. In the former, the case of gambling, the addict does not consume a substance. The addiction is purely according to the need to participate in a particular activity. The latter, substance abuse and alcohol addiction are based on the consumption of mind altering substances. Thus, while a gambling addiction can be understood to some degree in a similar fashion as substance addiction, there are a variety of commonalities and differences that must be assessed.

When talking about addictions, gambling is considered one of the three most common manifestations of an addictive behavior. In a presentation titled, *What Religious Communities can do in Coalition*, delivered in 1986 at the National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community, Rabbi Irving J. Block makes the following statement regarding addictive behaviors. "I refer to the growing problem of ruined lives, the wreckage of family stability and the carnage of human bodies broken on the anvil of

³ *Pathological Gambling: A Critical Review*. Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of Pathological Gambling; Committee on Law and Justice; Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; National Research Council. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999)

what I call the four 'D's' - drink, drugs, and daily double."⁴ For both social reasons and medical reasons, a gambling addiction is considered equal to substance addiction. There is evidence that gambling and gaming has long been a part of many cultures. Whether for pleasure or as part of a political system, people have been involved in taking risks. Now, with advanced research and the ability to conduct such research, it is necessary to understand the psychology involved when gambling for fun and entertainment becomes problem gambling, or a true addiction. Keeping in mind that all people are subject to addiction, and that many different behaviors have the potential to become addictive behaviors, the stages of addiction and the psychological component of addiction are in most cases general categories.⁵

At the 1984 National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community, one speaker addressed the issue of the genesis of addiction. She specifically reports that addictions are illnesses, and should be treated as such. "These addictive illnesses all begin as pleasurable behavior: socially acceptable, socially promoted, or even sometimes socially required by the individual's culture or peer group."⁶ A simple game of poker, a

⁴ Rabbi Irving J. Block, "What Religious Communities Can do in Coalition," in *Proceedings: National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Council of Jewish Federations and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1986), 35.

⁵ While the focus of this thesis is on Judaism's responses to gambling and the consideration of addiction as a medical concern, it is necessary to establish any substance can become addictive. While there are some differences in how a substance works, i.e., alcohol is consumed while a gambling high is achieved through an activity that does not involve ingestion of a substance, the mental response is similar. Prevention and treatment programs for various addictions will look different, but will also be based on like components when dealing with the psychological aspect of addiction.

⁶ Sheila B. Blume, M.D., "Hooked: Common Factors in Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, and Compulsive Gambling," in *Proceedings: National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Council of Jewish Federations and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1986), 13.

Sheila B. Blume, M.D., delivered this paper at the National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community. She was the keynote speaker at this conference, and is the Medical Director of Alcoholism and Compulsive Gambling at South Oaks Hospital in Amityville, New York. She documents that there are similarities in the development of these three addictive behaviors (alcohol, drugs and gambling).

casino night at a synagogue, drinking a shot for *kiddush*⁷, all behaviors seen on the surface as innocent, have the ability to turn into a serious addiction. During the beginning stages, it is difficult to classify a behavior as an addiction. It may be a behavior that seems socially acceptable, or is even socially required. Depending on the personality of the participant, however, this innocent, harmless behavior can turn into something with severe consequences.

A recent study conducted by the Task Force on Gambling Addiction in Maryland reports a series of findings related to the profile of a "compulsive gambler"⁸. One topic addressed in this study is the background of the identified gamblers, in terms of how they were introduced to gambling. The researchers agreed that the environment was a large contributing factor, but were looking for evidence that would clarify the role that heredity plays in gambling addiction. Although the majority of participants indicated that they were related to another gambler, researchers concluded that it was primarily environment, and not heredity that influenced the gambler. This study claims that the origin of the gambling problem is the surrounding; the availability and accessibility. It is participation in what seems to be an innocent game that can lead to a gambling problem.⁹

⁷ Means "holiness" in Hebrew. Kiddush is a blessing over wine (or other food or drink that grows on a vine) that is used to sanctify, or express the holiness of, many Jewish events and holidays.

⁸ Compulsive and pathologic gambling are terms that some scholars use interchangeably. Others claim that there is a distinction between the two terms. Both terms will be defined and explained in upcoming pages. For the purposes of this paper, the words "pathologic" and "compulsive" will be used synonymously.

⁹ Valerie C. Lorenz, Ph.D., Robert M. Politzer, Sc.D., Robert A. Yaffee, Ph.D., *Final Report of the Task Force on Gambling Addiction in Maryland* [document on-line], (accessed 12 September 2003). Available from http://www.nyu.edu/its/socsci/Docs/task_force_4.html: Internet

Gambling as an Addiction

Scientists today include gambling in the category of addictions. Determining when addictions were introduced by the medical community as a disease is difficult. Sheila B. Blume claims that, "Although the roots of the disease concept of alcoholism reach back to Ancient Rome, its modern formulation dates in large part to the work of Benjamin Rush in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Rush's work included the first concept of addiction to a drug (alcohol) and also of addiction as disease."¹⁰ Scientists have determined that addictive behavior is a type of disease or illness because there is such a loss of control of free will. This behavior takes over the person, and the person cannot control the severity of the disease without proper treatment. In addition to a degree of control loss, an addiction, be it to alcohol, to a drug, or to gambling, is considered a disease because there is a common course of progression; there are symptoms and a prognosis, and there is a treatment pattern that can lead to recovery.¹¹

Addiction is recognized in the modern world as a mental disease, specifically as a psychological disorder. There are intense implications of addiction, including the risk of suicide, severe depression, and association with other mental disorders such as manic-depressive disorder and personality disorder.¹² It is clear that the medical world considers addiction to be a medical problem, and scientists include gambling in the category of

¹⁰ Sheila B. Blume, M.D., "Hooked: Common Factors in Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, and Compulsive Gambling," in *Proceedings: National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Council of Jewish Federations and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1986), 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 15

¹² *Ibid.* 16

addictions, generally thought to be in regard to alcohol and drug use. Thus, research that deals with addictions can cover all three of these areas, as well as other addictive behaviors.

Study on compulsive gambling did not become serious until the beginning of the nineteen hundreds. Recognized as a problem, beyond that of social pressures, researches began to explore the psychological impacts on compulsive gamblers. Scholars recognize a paper written in the 1920s by Ernst Simmel as the first significant paper that takes a psychoanalytic approach to understanding gambling. He concludes that gambling is a way to gain "narcissistic supplies"¹³. A person wants and needs certain things solely for personal gain. Custer further explains this need to include the examples of food, love, comfort, and attention as things that a compulsive gambler feels he has been denied.¹⁴ Each of these, as well as other desires, are cravings that a person has. When one gambles, he is fulfilling his desire for any or all of these narcissistic cravings. Every person needs to feel fulfillment in love, comfort and attention, which helps to explain why gambling, or any other addiction, might be an issue for all people.

Following the research done by Ernst Simmel, Freud produced material on the subject of risk taking during this time period as well. In 1928, Freud commented on gaming saying that gambling is an addiction that fits into the same category as other

¹³ Robert L. Custer, M.D., "An Overview of Compulsive Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen Jay Levy, Ph.D., and Sheila B. Blume, M.D. (New York: Commission of Synagogue Relations, 1986), 321-322.

Robert L. Custer is a diplomat of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology in Psychiatry. He is an expert on gambling, and served as a Medical Advisor to the National Council on Compulsive Gambling. He has also worked closely with both Gamblers Anonymous and Gam-Anon.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

known addictions, namely substance abuse and alcoholism. In all three cases, the addict gets caught in a pattern of seeking out a destructive behavior and repeating it purposely. This pattern was of particular interest to Freud. He noted that while a gambling addict certainly enjoyed the winning, and found motivation in the losing, it was the action, and not the money, that actually drove the addict to continue. In this way, gambling is similar to alcoholism and drug addictions.¹⁵ As Freud frequently does, he also relates a gambling addiction to sexuality. It is his opinion that the passion that one has for gaming is equal to the compulsion to masturbate.¹⁶ In each instance, the person is driven by a force to engage in an action. The anticipation of the activity in both cases robs the person of the ability to control his behavior. The implications of this conclusion are significant for a more modern understanding of gambling addiction. It is not necessarily the money that is the driving force of an addict; Instead, it is the repeated action that is involved with gambling – the winning, the betting, the risk taking that gives the person the feeling of a high.

Edmund Bergler is the next significant contributor to research conducted in the area of compulsive gambling. In the 1930s, he wrote about the psychoanalysis of compulsive gamblers. In a portion of his thesis, Bergler writes, "I submit that the gambler is not simply a rational, though 'weak' individual who is willing to run the risk of failing and moral censure in order to get money the easy way, but a neurotic with an unconscious

¹⁵ *Pathological Gambling: A Critical Review*. Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of Pathological Gambling; Committee on Law and Justice; Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; National Research Council. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999), 11.

¹⁶ Robert L. Custer, M.D., "An Overview of Compulsive Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen Jay Levy, Ph.D., and Sheila B. Blume, M.D. (New York: Commission of Synagogue Relations, 1986), 322.

wish to lose.”¹⁷ This is perhaps the first indication that the medical world has that compulsive gambling is a disease.¹⁸ Prior to this, gambling was linked to addiction, but most studies of addiction revolved around alcohol and drugs. With Bergler’s work, gambling is seen as a psychological problem, not just a social activity that has a tendency to get out of hand. Now, addiction as a broad subject includes compulsive gambling.

Finally, as a step toward treatment of gambling problems, Gamblers Anonymous was started in 1957 based on the concept that compulsive gambling is in fact a disease. This treatment program will be further discussed in later chapters that deal specifically with treatment and recovery from addiction.

Lori Rugle, Ph.D., specializes in understanding compulsive gambling. In 2003, she contributed a paper to the Arizona Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. In this piece of work titled, *Conscious Contact: Brain, Mind, and Addiction*, Rugle focuses on the connection that exists between the brain’s function and addiction. She opens by saying, “Much research today, funded by national organizations, is focusing on the neurobiology of addiction. The catch phrase is, ‘addiction is a brain disease’. This line of research has served to help ‘legitimize’ the field of addiction. Research is showing that alcoholism, drug addiction, and compulsive gambling – my particular area of focus – have

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 322.

¹⁸ Sheila B. Blume, M.D., “Hooked: Common Factors in Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, and Compulsive Gambling,” in *Proceedings: National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Council of Jewish Federations and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1986), 17.

genetic and biological bases. These addictions are not just self-centered, immoral, bad behavior.”¹⁹

Work must continue in this area in order that doctors may eventually fully understand the way that the brain of an addict functions. Our bodies are comprised of many organs that work together so that we can function in the ways that we do. In Rugle’s paper, she points out that unlike the kidney and the liver, the brain has nerve cells. These nerve cells differentiate the brain from the other organs, and they send signals to other parts of our bodies. Neurotransmitters are the chemicals that send the messages or signals throughout our bodies. When someone becomes addicted to a substance or to an activity, there is a problem with the neurotransmitters. This is the conclusion that the medical world has made which explains why addiction is considered a medical disorder.²⁰

¹⁹ Lori Rugle, Ph.D., *Compulsive Gambling and the Brain: Conscious Contact: Brain, Mind, and Addiction*. Arizona Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. (October 20, 2003). [Document on-line], (accessed November 3 2003). Available from http://www.southampton.liu.edu/fw/portfolio_resource_guide/manmla.htm

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Similarities and Differences Between Compulsive Gambling and Substance Abuse²¹

1. Inability to stop the action	1. The individual cannot overdose when gambling, there is no saturation point.
2. Denies that there is a problem of addiction	2. Compulsive gamblers can function in a work environment
3. Severe depression and mood swings	3. The individual cannot overdose
4. The disease will progress and there are stages and phases	4. There is more of a likelihood of severe financial problems with gambling
5. Always chasing after the high or the win	5. One cannot be screened for compulsive gambling as one can with substance usage
6. Remembers the first drink or the first win (the first real experience with the action)	6. Gambling does not require the person to consume a substance.
7. Might experience blackouts	7. There are fewer resources available to gamblers and their families.
8. Do more of the action to try to escape from pain that the addiction causes	8. Perception of gambling as a disease is not as widely recognized by the general public.
9. Feelings of preoccupation	
10. Low self esteem and high ego	
11. Dysfunctional families and effected family relationships.	
12. High of gambling is similar to the rush of the substance use.	
13. There are rituals involved	

²¹ This table is adapted from a table produced by the Arizona Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. The table, in its original form, can be found in the appendix. It was taken from the website of the Arizona Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. www.azcgc.org/about_gambling/sim_and_dif.html.

Defining Gambling Problems

The problem that gambling creates is the risk of a person becoming a compulsive gambler or a pathologic gambler. These closely related terms define the possible result of an addiction to gambling. While it is difficult to understanding the way that the mind of a compulsive gambler works, learning why one gambles and what processes one goes through as a gambler is necessary. The American Psychological Association²² recognizes pathological gambling as a mental disorder. The APA chose to include this disorder in its Diagnosis and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders, published in 1980. Characteristics of a problem gambler, or a compulsive gambler, include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. continuous or periodic loss of control
2. progression in frequency and in amount wagered
3. preoccupation with gambling and obtaining money to gamble with
4. A continuation of the behavior regardless of its consequences²³

The American Psychological Association also defines stages that a pathological gambler might experience. Dr. Renee Worth²⁴ from the Buffalo New York Jewish Federation Program on Problem Gambling confirmed that these stages are widely recognized as stages of a pathological gambler.

²² Will be referenced as American Psychological Association or APA throughout this paper.

²³ <http://www.psych.org> – American Psychological Association website

²⁴ References to Dr. Worth are based on a phone interview conducted October 2003.

1. Preparatory Period: In this stage, an addict might experience a tense sense of self. There may be narcissism, impulsivity, anxiety, and depression. The person might avoid others and try to find an escape for his problems.
2. Winning Phase: This stage is defined by slow, progressive escalation of involvement in gambling. An experience of a major "big win" lures the addict in and urges the addict to continue to gamble.
3. Losing Phase: The third phase of compulsive gambling is characterized by a losing pattern. Aside from losing money on risks and bets, the person will sacrifice relationships with family and friends. There is a social loss, a personal loss, and a familial loss. Frequently, the gambler lies to loved ones and to himself. Unfortunately, often times in this stage, the family provides money and emotional bailouts in an attempt to deny the problem and to help the addict.
4. Desperation: This is the most severe stage of compulsive gambling. Here, the addict enters depression and possibly entertains the idea of committing suicide. There are weak ties to family and friends; the addict is completely alienated.²⁵

Finally, the American Psychological Association publishes a list of what is termed, "Diagnostic

Criteria for Pathological Gambling".

Persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior is indicated by five or more of the following traits:²⁶

1. Preoccupation with gambling
2. The need to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement level
3. Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control gambling
4. Restlessness when making an attempt to cut back

²⁵ <http://www.psych.org> – American Psychological Association website

²⁶ *Ibid.*

5. Person gambles in order to escape problems or relieve a particular mood
6. The gambler tries to win back losses
7. Gambler lies to conceal the extent of the gambling problem
8. Committing illegal acts to support gambling needs
9. There is a loss of significant relationships, loss of job, and loss of other positive opportunities
10. The gambler relies on other people for money

It has already been established that gambling is linked to other addictions, in terms of the way that the addiction develops. In a publication of the American Psychological Association, Senior Research Scientist Martin McGurrin comments on the pathological gambler's need to gamble. He suggests that the need of a gambler to gamble mimics the need of an alcoholic to drink and the need of a drug addict to use more of the substance. Just as the alcoholic develops a higher tolerance for alcohol, so too does the gambler develop a higher tolerance, or need to spend more money.²⁷

In 1994 the APA released a study in which the association classifies pathological gambling as an "impulse control disorder not elsewhere classified". This medical research links the mental disorder with four other mental disorders, each which does not fit into any other established category.²⁸ The other disorders in this category include:

- Kleptomania: Stealing objects that may or may not be of value
- Pyromania: Setting things on fire
- Trichotillomania: Intentional hair pulling
- Intermittent Explosive Disorder: Episodes of aggressive behavior

²⁷ <http://www.psych.org> – American Psychological Association website

²⁸ *Pathological Gambling: A Critical Review*. Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of Pathological Gambling; Committee on Law and Justice; Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; National Research Council. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999), 31.

It is necessary to understand the difference between the various stages of gambling and to have a working vocabulary of terms that are related to gambling addiction. Research shows that the differences between each of the stages are not always great. In fact, some experts explain that the stages overlap in certain areas. One explanation of the classifications can be found on the APA website. A critical aspect to the development of these stages is the age at which a person begins to gamble. Many researches have indicated that gambling often starts during one's teenage years. One recent study of high school students in England tells us that gambling is common among children as young as nine years old.²⁹ While these children gamble in a social environment, the study reveals that when children start gambling at a young age they are more likely to end up as pathological gamblers when they are grown. These stages, from social to pathological, are the bookends of the spectrum of types of gamblers.³⁰

- Casual Social: Typically a female gambler fits into this category. This gambler is typically thirty-five years old or older and white. She has no college degree and no children. Gambling is not an important part of this person's social life, but it is fun and entertaining.
- Serious Social: Major source of entertainment, socialization process
- Relief and Escape: Gambling is a coping strategy, habitual, but the gambler is not dependent upon gambling.

²⁹ *Pathological Gambling: A Critical Review*. Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of Pathological Gambling; Committee on Law and Justice; Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; National Research Council. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999)

³⁰ <http://www.psych.org>

- Problem gambling: Typically is a white male, thirty to thirty-five years old. Lives in an urban area and has likely not been graduated from high school. Is socially isolated.
- Antisocial Gambler: Limited ethical concerns, which has a direct effect on others.
- Professional Gambler: Gambling is an occupation; this person has been through professional training.
- Pathological Gambler: Meets at least five of the criteria designed by the APA for a pathological gambler.

Robert L. Custer, M.D., who conducts modern research on gambling issues, identifies six types of gamblers, combining some of the above categories. His suggested categories include:

- Professional Gambler: One who makes a living by gambling and thus considers gambling a profession. This gambler is skilled in the games that he chooses to play, and is able to control the amount of money and the time spent gambling. According to Custer's classification, this type of gambler is not an addict.³¹
- Antisocial or Personality Gambler: This type of gambler uses the game as a way to get money through illegal means. As is suggested above, this gambler is not concerned with ethical behavior. He might fix races, play with loaded dice, or use marked cards. This gambler faces many problems, and if in need of legal defense, may cite a compulsive gambling addiction.

³¹ An addict, based on Custer's classification, is one who is not in control. The professional gambler is able to manage the time and money that he spends gambling, and therefore is not considered an addict. This differentiation is important, particularly when dealing with the gambler in the Jewish tradition because Jewish law forbids one from being a professional gambler. According to the Jewish tradition, a professional Jewish gambler does not make any positive contributions to society, and is thereby not counted as a witness.

- **Casual Social Gambler:** This person gambles mainly for recreation and entertainment. Gambling is nothing more than a form of relaxation or a social event. He may place bets on big sports games, occasionally play poker, or buy lottery tickets. This gambler does not allow gambling to interfere with family, work, or social obligations.
- **Serious Social Gambler:** This gambler is still able to remain in control of his gambling pursuits. However, unlike the casual social gambler, gambling plays a more prominent role in this person's life. Family and work maintain their place of importance, but gambling is also high on the list of priorities.
- **Relief and Escape Gambler:** When this type of gambler feels overcome by feelings of anxiety, depression, anger, boredom, or loneliness, he resorts to gambling. For him, gambling provides an escape from the problems of daily life. This category of gambler is not considered a compulsive gambler, but is likened to a drinker who uses alcohol for similar purposes.
- **Compulsive Gambler:** This is the gambler who has lost control. Gambling is the most important part of life; family, work, and social obligations are neglected. A compulsive gambler cannot stop gambling on his own, he needs some type of intervention or treatment program.³²

The categories of problem gambler and pathological gambler are of great importance because these are the categories around which the majority of problems happen. They are also the categories around which the majority of research has been conducted. Problem

³² www.addictionrecov.org/sixtypes.htm - Illinois Institute for Addictive Recovery website

gambling is defined by the APA website as, "patterns of gambling behavior that compromise, disrupt, or damage personal, family, or vocational pursuits." According to the same source, pathological gambling is a more extensive form of gambling. It is characterized by a loss of control, chasing of losses, lies, family and job disruptions, bailouts, and illegal activities.³³ The distinction between problem and pathological is rather clear, pathological is a more severe stage of the gambling addiction. While most Americans are social gamblers, they participate in gaming activities without experiencing harmful effects, as the addiction moves to the stage of pathological gambling, there is a recognizable mental disorder.

Within this discussion of stages of gambling addiction, a clarification must be made regarding the terms "compulsive gambler" and "pathological gambler". The terms are not always used consistently by scholars, as each person has a different opinion on what the terms actually represent in his or her work. Simply, the difference tends to be based on the arena in which the subject is being discussed. Pathological gambling is a more medical, scholarly term, while compulsive is generally used by lay people.³⁴ For the purposes of this paper, compulsive and pathologic will be used interchangeably with an understanding that the scientific world typically uses the term pathologic to label an addiction to gambling where the qualifications are met and the term is appropriate.

A casual gambler is one who can gamble for entertainment only. This person is not concerned with the actual outcome, and does not gamble more than he or she can afford to

³³ <http://www.psych.org>

³⁴ Robert L. Custer, M.D., "An Overview of Compulsive Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen Jay Levy, Ph.D., and Sheila B. Blume, M.D. (New York: Commission of Synagogue Relations, 1986), 321.

risk. Chasing after one's losses is a natural part of gambling; however, the casual gambler only chases after these losses for a short while and is able to leave without gaining back all that was lost. At the other extreme, the pathological gambler is typically more nervous, has sweaty palms and a racing heartbeat. This anxious feeling is similar to the high experienced by drug use. This addiction is certainly a medical condition.

Gabonry and Ladoucer, two scholars who have done work in the field of compulsive gambling, indicate that a component of the medical problem that compulsive gamblers have is a cognitive disorder. It is apparently typical that cognitive distortion, or unusual thinking patterns, exists with pathological gamblers. Specific behaviors reflect this idea. These cognitive disorders might include denial, fixed beliefs, and superstitions or magical thinking.³⁵ It is common for a pathological gambler, a gambling addict, to become fixated on the days of the week, particular numbers and colors, exact slot machines, and other "good luck charms". These lucky objects are no more than superstitions; any clearly thinking person knows that the day of the week does not impact the outcome of a game. Still, the pathological gambler is one who seeks out a specific slot machine, wears the same clothing each time he goes to the casino, and has lucky numbers that will certainly (at least in his mind) win the lottery.

In a paper on Jews and pathological gambling, Louis Linn, M.D.,³⁶ refers to the definition of the pathological gambler as described in the Diagnostic Manual of the American Psychological Association (DSM-III). The classification reads:

³⁵ *Pathological Gambling: A Critical Review*. Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of Pathological Gambling; Committee on Law and Justice; Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; National Research Council. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999), 29.

³⁶ Louis Linn is a psychiatrist who has also worked as a consultant to Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York. Linn uses Jewish history to discuss the growing problem of gambling within the Jewish community.

312.31 Pathological Gambling

The essential features are a chronic and progressive failure to resist impulses to gambler and gambling behavior that compromises, disrupts, or damages personal, family, or vocational pursuits. The gambling preoccupation, urge, and activity increase during periods of stress. *Problems that arise as a result of the gambling lead to an intensification of the gambling behavior.* Characteristic problems include loss of work due to absences in order to gamble, defaulting on debts and other financial responsibilities, disrupted family relationships, borrowing money from illegal sources, forgery, fraud, embezzlement, and income tax evasion.³⁷

It is each of these components that signify that the gambler has a serious psychological problem. A "good" gambler, one who plays well and is in control of his gaming, is one who recognizes that gambling involves both winning and losing. Although it is possible to have a string of lucky bets, it is not possible to win every time. At this level of gambling, the player is able to maintain control over himself and over the money that is placed in bets. This "good" gambler is happy with a win and upset with a loss, but is able to accept the loss and not let the urge to win every bet cause him to risk more.

³⁷ Louis Linn, M.D., "Jews and Pathological Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen Jay Levy, Ph.D., and Sheila B. Blume, M.D. (New York: Commission of Synagogue Relations, 1986), 347.

This was taken from the American Psychological Association: *Diagnostic and Statistical manual, Third Edition*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1979. The diagnostic category: "Pathological Gambling" is listed as #312.31 under: Disorders of impulse control, not classified elsewhere.

Statistics and Characteristics of Gamblers

There are many studies that attempt to define who is likely to be affected by the disease of compulsive gambling. The results of various surveys show that anyone can become addicted to gambling. As previously stated, environment plays more of a role in compulsive gambling than does heredity. Therefore, a gambler is not likely to fit a specific profile. Research shows that children and adults, people of all religions and races, males and females, are possible addicts. Societal pressures drive the gambler to participate. Money is a status symbol, and the thrill of winning money by placing a bet draws people in. A 1997 statistic reports that more than eighty percent of adults in America have gambled sometime during their lives. While this does include all forms of gambling, from purchasing lottery tickets and making a friendly wager with co-workers on a sports game, to playing the table in a casino and illegal betting, it is still an astonishing number of people. This report also claims that in 1997 Americans spent over five hundred fifty one billion dollars placing bets.³⁸

³⁸ *Pathological Gambling: A Critical Review*. Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of Pathological Gambling; Committee on Law and Justice; Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; National Research Council. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999), 1.

The following statistics characterize a potential compulsive gambler:³⁹

Statistics from University of Michigan Study: 1975

68 % of males gamble	23% of people ages 65+
55% of females gamble	51% with incomes of \$5,000-\$10,000
62% of white gamble	74% with incomes over \$15,000
52% of non-whites gamble	41% of non-high school graduates
73% of people age 18-24	79% of college graduates
69% of people age 25-44	80% of Catholics
60% of people age 45-65	77% of Jews

The following statistics are from surveys conducted of Gamblers Anonymous group in Maryland.

89% of the GA members are male

11% of the GA members are female

90% of the GA members are Caucasian

10% of the GA members are non-Caucasian

33% of the GA members are Catholic

29% of the GA members are Protestant

³⁹ Robert L. Custer, M.D., "An Overview of Compulsive Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen Jay Levy, Ph.D., and Sheila B. Blume, M.D. (New York: Commission of Synagogue Relations, 1986), 320.

16% of the GA members are Jewish⁴⁰

43% of GA members started gambling before puberty

60% were educated past high school⁴¹

The number of people who participate in gaming is high. Given the long history that gambling and risk taking has in society, however, the numbers do not seem as outrageous. In his Rabbinic thesis, Rabbi Eric Lankin writes, "Playing games of chance, or gambling, predates earliest recorded history and is found in every culture. Archeological, anthropological, and historical research reflect early instances of gambling."⁴² Taking risks is part of human nature. The desire to always be in the middle of the action, which can give a person a sense of pride, increase confidence, and make one feel important, cannot be avoided. In everyday life, people are required to take chances, related to business endeavors, family life, and personal gain. The problem arises when this need to gamble turns into a need to gamble with money. It is difficult to differentiate between the risks that we must take in order to learn and achieve goals and risk taking that can lead to addiction.

In 1984, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropy of New York made a decision to merge the three task forces which dealt with addictions. As research proved that addictions are all similar in regard to the psychological nature of the addict, joining

⁴⁰ The Final Report of the Task Force on Gambling Addiction in Maryland concludes that the percentage of people attending Gamblers Anonymous in Maryland is disproportionately high when comparing the numbers to percentage of Jewish people in the national population. This is an interesting statistic that suggests that Jewish people do gamble and that they are seeking treatment for gambling addiction.

⁴¹ Valerie C. Lorenz, Ph.D., Robert M. Politzer, Sc.D., Robert A. Yaffee, Ph.D., *Final Report of the Task Force on Gambling Addiction in Maryland* [document on-line], (accessed 12 September 2003); available from http://www.nyu.edu/its/socsci/Docs/task_force_4.html: Internet.

⁴² Eric M. Lankin, *A Jewish Spirituality Group for Recovering Jewish Pathological Gamblers*. (Doctor of Ministry thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1999). 1.

these task forces would allow the Jewish Federation to develop a better understanding of addiction and to provide more useful assistance to those in need. In existence today is the Task Force on Addictions in the Jewish Community.⁴³ This is just one of the many efforts made by the Jewish community to address the growing problem of addiction. Prevention and recovery programs will be addressed in following chapters, however, it is significant to point out here that gambling addiction affects all people, Jews and non-Jews alike. Although there has long been denial within the Jewish community of problems with addiction, statistics from a variety of research pieces show that religion and race does not affect who is likely to become an addict. Rabbi Irving J. Block made the following statement, "There is no genre such as a Jewish alcoholic, but there are alcoholics who are Jewish, as there are drug addicts and pathological gamblers who are Jewish, as with all racial, religions, and ethnic traditions."⁴⁴ Everyone is influenced by the greater society; everyone is subject to the negative effects of the larger community. While there is not such thing as a "Jewish pathological gambler", only a pathological gambler who is also Jewish, prevention and recovery programs should focus on the individual, catering to each person's specific needs.

It has been determined that the need to experience success necessarily drives people to seek the thrill of gambling. Robert L. Custer, M.D. claims,

Although we are now in a permissive phase, public attitudes remain essentially judgmental and moralistic toward compulsive gambling and the compulsive gambler. It seems moderate risk-taking is more socially valued in our society than caution; but

⁴³Dr. Stephen Jay Levy "Introduction," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen Jay Levy, Ph.D., and Sheila B. Blume, M.D. (New York: Commission of Synagogue Relations, 1986), 5.

⁴⁴ Rabbi Irving J. Block, "What Religious Communities Can do in Coalition," in *Proceedings: National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Council of Jewish Federations and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1986), 35.

caution is infinitely more acceptable than reckless risk-taking. Perhaps another way of expressing our value is that we admire a risk-taker who wins and reject a risk-taker who loses. It is not that they are naïve, they know that the odds are against them; they have a deep passion of gambling. They love the 'action'. This is epitomized on the classic saying of the compulsive gambler: 'Do you know what the next best thing to gambling and winning is? Gambling and losing.'⁴⁵

Unfortunately, the necessary risks that need to be taken with caution, and the senseless risks that are taken without thought, are often confused. Likened to alcohol use, the following Jewish teaching can be applied to gambling:

A great teacher, Rav Moshe Poleyoff, once explained the difference between drinking for the sake of the mitzvah and drinking that leads to drunkenness. If one is empty inside and expects the wine to supply the happiness, the wine only leads to hopeless abandon and drunkenness. But if one is filled with joy and wishes to express that joy through drink, then the wine represents a *simha shel mitzvah* – and the consumption of the wine itself becomes the mitzvah. That is the kind of drinking that takes place at the Passover Seder.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Robert L. Custer, M.D., "An Overview of Compulsive Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen Jay Levy, Ph.D., and Sheila B. Blume, M.D. (New York: Commission of Synagogue Relations, 1986), 318.

⁴⁶Dr. Stephen Jay Levy "Introduction," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen Jay Levy, Ph.D., and Sheila B. Blume, M.D. (New York: Commission of Synagogue Relations, 1986), 5. Jewish tradition is rich with references to wine. According to many references to wine in Jewish literature, wine is said to gladden the heart. However, the use of wine must be carefully defined in order to prevent alcoholism and misuse of the substance. This passage, taken from *The Passover Haggadah*, and written by R. Shlomo Riskin, helps to define appropriate and inappropriate use of alcohol. There is a commandment to drink four cups of wine at the Passover seder to represent the freedom of the Jews from Egyptian slavery. While it is a commandment, and wine is said to gladden the heart, the intention is not to create alcoholics.

Chapter II

Gambling in the Jewish Tradition

Introduction

Jewish people, like all other people, have a history of participating in activities that can be destructive. Examples of drug use, intoxication, and gambling in the Jewish tradition are found throughout the Hebrew Bible.¹ There are examples of alcohol use, drug use, intoxication, and gambling in the Hebrew Bible, considered to be the most sacred of all Jewish texts. While it has been established that gambling addiction parallels substance abuse, as well as other addictions, it is important to continually refer to the similarities that exist. Solomon B. Freehof, a man responsible for a good deal of modern, Reform Jewish responsa says, "...any discussion about drugs and alcohol must be made through an analogy, and for us as Jews, that analogy is drunkenness."² Jewish authorities use analogies to determine Jewish view of various subjects that are not previously discussed in legal materials. Authorities rely upon older sources that deal with different subjects to make rulings on matters that were not considered in the past. Work concerning Judaism's response to gambling is seriously lacking. The more substantial work that has been done in the field of Judaic responses to alcohol, therefore, must be relied upon for determining how Judaism treats gambling and the compulsive gambler. This style of establishing precedence is a traditional method in Judaism to determine legal responses to difficult issues. There is a verse in the book of Ecclesiastes that

¹ Examples of excessive drinking of wine and eating can be found in the Hebrew Bible. See Genesis 8:20 (a reference to Noah being drunk).

² Solomon B. Freehof. *Current Reform Responsa*. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College. 1969), 247-250.

suggests there is nothing new under the sun. That which exists has always existed but people may not realize the complexities of life from the beginning.³

In the previous chapter, addiction is classified as a mental illness. The recognition that the two are so closely related is a recent finding, and is therefore not of consideration in ancient Jewish texts. As will be seen, the rabbis deal with addiction as a social issue. They condemn the person who gambles rather than engaging in productive societal behavior. Certain rights, such as being a witness, are taken away from the gambler⁴. The rabbis do not deal with addiction or gambling in terms mental illness. Although this is the case regarding gambling, Jewish tradition emphasizes the importance of health. Were rabbis of the Talmudic period knowledgeable of the mental disorder associated with addiction, treatment of gambling would have been vastly different.

With the advances in scientific research and the medical community's support of the understanding that addiction is a disease, the way that the Jewish community perceives addiction must also be modified. It is no longer the case that the rabbis are dealing with an alcoholic, a compulsive gambler, or a drug abuser. Now, the rabbis must make decisions regarding the health and well being of people who are addicted to a substance. Sanctity of life is of the highest degree of importance in Judaism. This presents a dilemma for modern rabbinic authorities. The challenge that is presented requires balancing an activity that is socially accepted, although certainly not encouraged, and an out of control degree of this activity that is a medical problem. Although the act

³ Ecclesiastes 1:9. This verse from the Hebrew Bible suggests that nothing that humans do is actually new to them. Everything has existed from the point of the world's creation. There is evidence of gambling in the Jewish community that dates as far back as the time of the Bible. Specific examples (i.e. drawing lots on Purim and drawing lots to determine land distribution for the twelve tribes of Israel) are included in subsequent pages. Realizing that the problems that exist today with compulsive gambling are not new to us is significant, and can allow doctors to refine treatment.

⁴ Sanhedrin 3:3

of gambling is not new to Judaism, the approach that the rabbis take when confronting the topic must change with time.

Addiction, and specifically addiction to gambling, is certainly not a new problem for Jewish people. Taking risks, essentially gambling with life, is deeply rooted in the Jewish world.⁵ Using Jewish literature, both ancient and modern, assists in determining what Judaism says about participating in gambling. Consider that life itself is a gamble. Every decision that is made is essentially a risk. If a person chooses one option over another, then the outcome of the situation will be different. This outcome is dependent upon the choice, the risk, or the gamble that the person makes. Dr. Louis Linn reflects on this concept stating, "If one considers the Jewish historical experience, replete with danger, uncertainty, ambiguity, repeated uprootings and exile, over again, and again, and again, in small numbers and with meager possessions in foreign lands and among unfriendly strangers, one begins to understand why the capacity to erotize anxiety, that is, somehow transform this unpleasant feeling state into a condition of pleasurable excitement in the form of games of chance, for example, has had survival value for the Jews."⁶ From the time that Abraham made the choice to leave his home, Jewish people have been involved in taking risks, and this behavior is not always discouraged. Depending on the nature of the situation and the consequences involved in taking such a risk, the gamble might be allowed according to Jewish tradition.

⁵ Biblical verses to confirm this can be found in upcoming pages as part of an analysis of gambling in a Jewish context. Likewise, examples of gambling in the Jewish community during the Middle Ages will be given later in this chapter.

⁶Louis Linn, M.D., "Jews and Pathological Gambling", in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*; ed. Stephen Jay Levy and Sheila B. Blume (New York: Commissions of Synagogue Relations, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Inc., 1986), 342.

Examples of Gambling in the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible is one source of Jewish traditions. Looking through the contents of the Hebrew Bible, it is evident that gambling did exist in biblical times. This does not necessarily imply that gambling is accepted in Jewish tradition; however, it does provide a basis for an argument that gambling is not prohibited as post-biblical authorities do not ban gambling. Gambling in the Hebrew Bible can be categorized as taking risks that are part of everyday life, and taking risks that involve or are dependent upon another party. In the later, the results of some activity will determine the fate of a situation.⁷ There are, however, no recorded examples of gambling as a form of recreation or as a profession in the Hebrew Bible.⁸

One can interpret the natural risks taken in life as instances of gambling. The example cited above, interpreting Abraham's choice to uproot his family in order to follow the command of God (virtually unknown to man at that time), is a prime example of such a gamble. Taking risks is a natural part of the human condition. Something as basic as choosing a livelihood is an example of how a decision made is actually a risk. While it is impossible to completely avoid decision making, it is possible to choose the least dangerous option available. Still, certain activities and professions are inherently risky. That there is risk involved does not imply that people should refrain from traveling

⁷ Valerie C. Lorenz, "The Bible and Gambling", 6th National Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking, (Atlantic City, 1984)

⁸ Eric M. Lankin. *A Jewish Spirituality Group for Recovering Jewish Pathological Gamblers*. (Doctor of Ministry thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1999).

by plane, working as firefighters, or swimming in a lake. Taking chances and making life changes, uncertain of the consequences, is gambling on life.

Alternatively, there are risks that involve an element of chance; not typical or part of everyday life. Often times, these risks involve "betting" on the performance of another party, or a sort of gaming, such as picking lots. Due to the nature of these risks, in that they are not an inherent part of human nature, they are more closely linked to gambling and gaming that is problematic today. In Judges 14, a story of Samson is recounted. Samson bets thirty Philistines that they cannot solve a riddle. Judges 14:12 reads, "He [Samson] said to them [Philistines], 'Let me present you with a riddle. If you can give me the correct answer, I will give to you a feast for seven days. I will also give you thirty tunics and thirty sets of clothing.'"⁹ In this instance, the wager is nearly a form of entertainment. This recorded instance of gambling, or risk taking, provides evidence that gambling was indeed a part of life during biblical times.

In addition to this example, there are several occasions in the Bible where lots are cast to determine the fate of something. In Leviticus 16, we read, "Aaron is to offer his own bull of purification offering, to make expiation for himself and for his household. Aaron will take the two goats and stand them before Adonai in the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. Aaron will put a lot on the two goats; one lot is for Adonai, and the other is for Azazel. Aaron will bring forward whose fate is to be offered to Adonai, and offer it as a purification offering. The goat whose fate is to be offered to Azazel, it will remain standing alive before Adonai, to make atonement with it, and to send it to the wilderness

⁹ Judges 14:12

for Azazel.”¹⁰ This process, through which Aaron will repent, is a paradigm for repentance for Israel. The lots, commanded by God, provide a prime example of one type of gambling. Either goat is fit to be sacrificed to God, but it is through the casting of lots that the fate of each is determined. This example of using a lottery type system to determine the fate of the two goats is incorporated into the Jewish calendar, as it is the traditional Yom Kippur Torah reading.

Another example of casting lots as an instruction by God can be found in Numbers 26. Here, the Israelite people are approaching the Promised Land when God instructs Moses on how to appropriately divide the land among the tribes of Israel. The text reads: “Adonai spoke to Moses saying, ‘You will divide the land among these according to their names. Increase the share for the larger groups, and reduce the share for the smaller groups. Each share will be assigned according to the members of the group. The land will be divided according to lots cast...”¹¹ The portion of land that is assigned to each tribe is not assigned by God, but is determined by casting lots. Thus, gambling determined the assignments of the land to the tribes.

These are just two examples of how lots are used in the Bible. Scholar Valerie Lorenz states that there are four different uses for casting lots in the Bible. These purposes include: 1) to divide the land (Numbers 26: 52-56, as seen above); 2) to establish leaders and to assign duties (I Samuel 10:20-21); 3) to determine issues of guilt and transgression (I Samuel 14:41-43; Joshua 7:13-21; Leviticus 16:7-10); and 4) to resolve issues pertaining to the military and civil law (Esther 3:5-6, Nahum 3:10,

¹⁰ Leviticus 16:7-10

¹¹ Numbers 26:52-55

Obadiah 1:11).¹² These categories explain the uses of casting lots, just one form of “gaming” or taking chances that is found in the Bible.

Yet another type of gambling from the biblical text involves the rather mystical *Urim* and *Thummim*.¹³ Explained in Exodus 28, these mysterious elements are part of the breastplate constructed in the wilderness. After a lengthy, intense description of the construction of the ornate breastplate, the text refers to the *Urim* and *Thummim*. “Aaron will carry the names of the children of Israel on the ‘breastplate of decision’, over his heart, when he enters the sanctuary for remembrance before Adonai at all times. You shall place in the “breastplate of decision’ the *Urim* and the *Thummim*, so that they are on Aaron’s heart when he comes before Adonai. Aaron will carry the instrument of decision for the children of Israel, upon his heart, before Adonai, forever.”¹⁴ The purpose of the *Urim* and *Thummim* is not definite given the lack of description in the Bible. The text does, however, imply that there is some type of divination or risk taking associated with these articles. When one is involved in determining the fate of another, he or she is gambling.

Moving beyond examples that exist in the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, there are more examples of gambling in Jewish history that are found in

¹² Valerie C. Lorenz, “The Bible and Gambling” (paper presented at the Sixth National Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking, Atlantic City, December 1984), 3.

¹³ *Urim* and *Thummim* are explained in the *Etz Hayim*, the JPS Torah commentary. It is clear from the association with the ‘breastplate of decision’ and ‘the instrument of decision’ that these two items constituted a device for determining the will of God in specific matters that were beyond human ability to decide. Although the function of this device is clear, nowhere in the Torah is there a description of it or of the technique employed in its use. (It has been suggested that two sacred lots were drawn out of the *hoshen* in the process of consulting God) It remained in the exclusive possession of the priest and was used only on behalf of the leader of the people in matters of vital national importance. This mode of discovering the Divine will disappeared from ancient Israel after the age of King David.

¹⁴ Exodus 28:29-30

subsequent books of the Bible. Perhaps the most familiar is the casting of lots in Shushan. Haman, the antagonist, planned to cast lots in order to determine the day on which the Jewish people would be destroyed.¹⁵ Purim, the holiday, derives its name from the word *pur*, meaning lots. There was to be an element of chance when deciding the date for this massacre.

Similarly, lots are cast in the story of Jonah. Here, the sailors cast lots to determine who on the ship is responsible for the storm. Clearly, casting lots is not a reliable way to determine who was responsible. The idea is that God would have a hand in the outcome of the lottery; if God wants someone to be the “loser”, then God will arrange for that person to draw the short end of the stick.¹⁶

God plays a role in what might be considered situations of chance. Proverbs 16:33 reads, “Roll the dice, God will decide the outcome.” Casting lots, playing with dice and other forms of gambling are determined in part by God. One might then suggest that when gambling, particularly when playing the lottery no more than one ticket must be bought. It will only take one ticket to win – if God wants a win, then God’s desire will control the outcome.

¹⁵ Esther 3:7

¹⁶ Jonah 1:7

Gambling as Part of a Culture

Putting the legal considerations of gambling in the Jewish tradition aside, there are many examples of Jewish people gambling based on customs and traditions. Throughout time, there are references to Jewish people participating in games of luck and taking risks. The gambling that is found in the Bible increases and transforms from taking chances on life to a form of entertainment. With the codification of the Talmud¹⁷ around the year 500 A.D., it is clear that the Rabbis recognized that there was a gambling problem among the Jewish people.¹⁸ Although references to gambling in the Talmud are few, the allusions to dice playing and pigeon racing¹⁹ strongly suggest that gambling was a part of the culture. There is also evidence that people engaged in playing cards, which the rabbis called a "time waster" because so many people did it and because cards took time away from studying Torah.²⁰

The Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 338:5 offers an opinion on playing games on Shabbat. The discussion focuses on playing chess on this sacred day. In one argument,

¹⁷ Talmud is the name given to the compilation of rabbinic scholarship. It contains records of debates and discussions on various legal matters, and is considered a binding law code of the Jewish people. It is made up of two main sections, the Mishnah (which is the rabbinic interpretation of Biblical law), and the Gemara (commentary on the Mishnah).

¹⁸ Louis Linn, M.D., "Jews and Pathological Gambling", in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*; ed. Stephen Jay Levy and Sheila B. Blume (New York: Commissions of Synagogue Relations, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Inc., 1986), 348.

¹⁹ Rolling dice and pigeon racing are the two types of gambling that are mentioned repeatedly throughout the Talmud. Examples of pigeon-racing in Talmudic literature include, but are not limited to; Babylonian Talmud tractate Rosh Hashana 22a, tractate Sanhedrin 24b, tractate Shavuot 45a. They apparently were the two common forms of gambling that people engaged in. Lasting forms of gaming, people today continue to bet on animal races on dice games.

²⁰ Louis Linn, M.D., "Jews and Pathological Gambling", in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*; ed. Stephen Jay Levy and Sheila B. Blume (New York: Commissions of Synagogue Relations, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Inc., 1986), 344.

chess playing is permitted. According to this view, the only reason to prohibit the game is that the pieces make noise as they are moved around the board. The intent of the players, however, is not to make noise, but is to play a game. In an opposing view, the play is prohibited. There is no practical need to play chess on Shabbat; therefore playing the game is not permitted.²¹ This can be translated into the play of other games, such as dice rolling, and can also extend to days other than Shabbat. While there are not available statistics, the prevalence of game playing suggests that it is valid to assume that even from this early time, people were addicted to gambling.

A principle value in Judaism is education and study. Throughout Jewish literature, the commandment to learn Torah and to teach Torah is repeated, emphasizing the importance of this commandment in Jewish culture. The positive commandment to “teach them [these words, which are the words of God, or the commandments] diligently to your children,”²² explains that it is a commandment to teach Torah to the next generation. Likewise, it is a *mitzvah* to learn.²³ Pirkei Avot²⁴ teaches that a person should limit his or her desire to do things other than to study Torah. According to this

²¹ Rabbi David Bassous and Rabbi Harold Sutton. *Gambling in Jewish Law* [document online], (accessed November 2003); available from <http://www.benporatyosef.org/etzahaim/halakha/gambling>

²² Deuteronomy 6:7. A repetition of this commandment is in Deuteronomy 11:18-19, which reads, “Thus, guard these words in your hearts and on your souls. Bind them as a sign upon your hands, and let them be a symbol between your eyes. Teach them to your children, speaking them when you are in your homes and when you are away...”

²³ A translation of Deuteronomy 5:1 reads, “Moses called out to all of Israel and said to them, ‘Listen Israel to the laws and to the rules that I speak to you [your ears] this day. You will study them and observe them and do them.’” Deuteronomy 31:12; “Gather the people – the men, the women, the children, and the strangers in your communities, that they will hear and that they will learn to fear Adonai your God, and to observe and do all of the words of this Torah [teaching].

²⁴ Pirkei Avot, often translated as “Ethics of our Fathers”, is a tractate of the Mishnah that is comprised of ethical and religious precepts of the sages. There is no corresponding tractate in the Talmud because this material is not considered legal material, but is rather wisdom literature.

and other teachings in the Jewish tradition, it is most important that one study Torah. One should work as much as is needed to maintain a livelihood, and the remainder of one's time should be spent learning Torah. Thus, gambling, or recreational activity, is not promoted. With the demands of society, and the need for socialization, gambling has been established as a common pastime and socially accepted recreational activity. There are objections to gambling based on the value that society places on making positive contributions to the community. Unfortunately, while there was an understanding that a gambler would face certain consequences in that he or she was not well versed in Torah, there was not an understanding that gambling could lead to an addiction, or that addiction is a mental disease. There was an ambivalence concerning gambling. On one hand, it was recognized that people were going to gamble, either taking chances on life or placing monetary wagers as sport. On the other hand, the rabbis were not pleased with such behavior. Certainly taking chances concerning one's profession was in a different category than playing dice, and it is the latter that was considered most disgraceful. Still, it the rabbis did not prohibit gambling.

Moving forward from the Talmudic period to the Middle Ages, the professional gambler persona gains more recognition. In the mid-eleventh century, people involved in a game of "Nuts" were excommunicated if they played for money. Joseph Tob Elem found gamblers guilty of "forsaking life eternal", and only permitted children to play "Nuts", and only on the first day of the Festival.²⁵ Gambling, loathed by the Jewish community, remained under scrutiny by rabbinic authority. As time passed, and gambling grew in popularity, the Jewish community responded to the changes taking

²⁵ See *Hagohat Mordecai*, Sanhedrin 722-723. As found in: Leo Landman. "Jewish Attitudes Toward Gambling." *Jewish Quarterly Review* (April 1967) 301.

place in the secular world. Despite the restrictions that had been placed on the Jewish community, increased gambling activity caused authorities to revisit the prohibitions of previous eras.

Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, attitudes slowly changed from showing no pity toward a gambler. While the gambler's actions were still frowned upon, his "...burning desire to gamble was pitied."²⁶ Bans were lifted, restrictions were eased. R. Peretz b. Elia of Corbeil and R. Tobia b. Elia of Vienna placed a great deal of faith in man's ability to control his behavior.²⁷ They each nullified existing vows against gambling.²⁸ This clearly demonstrates that authorities did not necessarily understand the link between mental illness and gambling. Compulsion, based on a decree that would reverse the bans on gambling, does not seem to be understood as a mental disease. According to this reversal, people had the ability to restrain themselves when gambling. While some were attempting to overturn previous restrictions, other rabbinic authorities maintained the attitude that gambling had negative results. Landman includes a source as saying, "Do not be quick to enter into a dispute, keep removed from oaths and promises, and stay away from games of chance."²⁹ These mixed messages are consistent with the problem that remains today – although gambling may not be halakhically forbidden, it does violate moral expectations.

²⁶ Leo Landman. "Jewish Attitudes Toward Gambling." *Jewish Quarterly Review* (April 1967) 302.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Shiltei Gibborim* to Mordecai, Sheb. 757, as found in: Leo Landman. "Jewish Attitudes Toward Gambling." *Jewish Quarterly Review* (April 1967), 302.

²⁹ Asher ben Yechiel, *Orhot Hayyim*, paragraphs 23 and 24. As found in: Leo Landman. "Jewish Attitudes Toward Gambling." *Jewish Quarterly Review* (April 1967), 302.

As more time passes, and gambling for recreation increases within the Jewish community, there is more literature available on the subject of gaming. There is a theory that Jews are so attracted to gambling because of their relationship with outside communities. For much of time, European Jews were restricted to living within the walls of ghettos. This enforced ghetto existence contributed to gambling because the Jews needed a recreational outlet. Separated from other people, they saw gambling as a form of recreation that did not violate religious boundaries established by *halakha*, Jewish law.³⁰ This pattern extends through modern times as Jews, not quite as secluded as they were before, still tend to live in clusters. For example, Jewish immigrants to New York were known to play dice games.³¹ On a quest to be involved in the action, and on a mission to find a reasonable source of recreational pleasure, Jewish people turn to gambling and gaming.

Historical information from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries provides significant support for the theory that being forced to live within the walls of a ghetto encourages gambling. In the fifteenth century, it has been recorded that the Jewish community of Italy was tremendously affected by the gambling influences of the surrounding Christian community. In order to fit in and to stay in line with the trends of the general population, Jews gambled in increasing amounts. There were certain Jewish communal ordinances made in an attempt to outlaw gambling. One particular ordinance

³⁰ Louis Linn, "Jews and Pathological Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen J. Levy and Sheila B. Blume. (New York: Commission on Synagogue Relations and Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Inc., 1986), 342. This will be established in subsequent pages of this chapter. While gambling may be morally objectionable, and may be discouraged by rabbinic authority, there is yet to be a halakhic ruling that gambling in itself is prohibited.

³¹ Eric M. Lankin. *A Jewish Spirituality Group for Recovering Jewish Pathological Gamblers*. (Doctor of Ministry thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1999). 5.

banned Jews from gambling, for a ten year period, unless a person was in trouble or sick.³²

In 1628, and Leon Modena³³, and Italian Rabbi, scholar, and writer, wrote a legal document in which he expressed his opinion on gambling and Jewish law. Leon Modena's famous essay, *Sur me-Rah*³⁴, addresses the issue of gambling. This can be rendered "cast away from evil" or "stay away from evil" in English. As Modena understood previous legal rulings, the rabbis were unable to come to a consensus, and therefore, there was not real answer to whether or not gambling was legal according to Jewish law. His work is significant because it recognizes that a person with a gambling addiction would not be hindered by rabbinic legislation against gambling.³⁵

Although Jewish people remained close to others, influences from the outside society were great. People found ways to integrate gambling into many activities. For example, playing cards, recorded as an activity in Italy as early as 1299,³⁶ became a popular activity among Jewish people. Associating cards with holidays as well as

³² *Ibid.* 3

³³ Leon Modena (1571-1648) was a child prodigy whose life was dramatically affected by gambling. Throughout his lifetime, he worked as a Rabbi, preacher, translator, teacher, seller of amulets, matchmaker, musician, proofreader, commercial broker, and gambler. His family suffered financial hardships, and Modena struggled to earn enough money to support himself and his family. (Information from: Mark. R. Cohen, "Leon Modena's Autobiography" from *In Practice: From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period*, ed. Lawrence Fine (Princeton Readings in Religions, Princeton University Press, 2003) accessed on the internet, <http://www.zamir.org/Italy/CohenModena.shtml>, 16 December 2003.

³⁴ Translation from, Hermann Gollancz, *The Targum to 'The Song of Songs'; The Book of the Apple; the Ten Jewish Martyrs; A Dialogue on Games of Chance*, (London: Luzac & Co., 1908). A copy of the original document, as well as a translation, is included for reference in the appendix.

³⁵ The dialogue between Eldad and Medad will be explained in more detail in upcoming sections of this chapter.

³⁶ Leo Landman. "Jewish Attitudes Toward Gambling." *Jewish Quarterly Review* (April 1967). 306.

playing on regular days, Jewish people began playing cards as early as 1322.³⁷ Different cards and suits were referred to according to Talmudic sounding names³⁸. The following appellations were used for cards:

Deck of cards = Little Shas

Suit of Hearts = Lev

When one trumped, he called "Yom Tov"

King of Diamonds = King David

King of Spades = King Saul

King of Hearts = King Solomon

King of Clubs = King Ahasueras

Queen of Diamonds = Bathsheva

Queen of Hearts = Queen of Sheba

Queen of Clubs = Judith

Queen of Spades = Queen Esther

Six = "vover" after the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet, vov.³⁹

³⁷ Kalonymous b. Kalonymous, *Eben Bochan* ed. Lemberg, p. 28; *Shiltei Gibborim*, Erub. 127b. As found in: Leo Landman. "Jewish Attitudes Toward Gambling." *Jewish Quarterly Review* (April 1967), 307.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 179

Zion mentions that his explanation of card playing in Judaism is based on Yitzhal Rivkind, *Hadoar* 5/7 (1 Tevet 5686) p. 101-102 and 5/9 (22 Tevet 5686), p. 133-134; Rivkind, *Der Kampf*, p. 48-49; *Sefer Hamo'adim*, p. 229-230; and Akiva ben Ezra, p. 136-138.

³⁹ Louis Linn, "Jews and Pathological Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen J. Levy and Sheila B. Blume. (New York: Commission on Synagogue Relations and Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Inc., 1986), 344.

What does Halakha Say about Gambling

Outlining the *halakhic* responses, or Jewish legal responses, to gambling is a critical step in understanding whether or not gambling is truly an acceptable form of recreational activity. As is the case with much Talmudic literature, establishing one definitive answer is quite difficult. As Talmud is the compilation of different authoritative opinions, it is common that the sages disagree on what behaviors are appropriate and what behaviors are not accepted by the Jewish community. Issues that Jewish people faced are issues that are incorporated into the Talmud. When reviewing the legality of a specific practice, one must also consider the changes that have taken place in society since the codification of the Talmud. Although none can compare to the great sages quoted throughout this legal code, Jewish scholars and authority figures have continued the task of writing responsa to questions posed by members of the Jewish community.

The *Mishnah*⁴³ does not outlaw gambling, but does teach that one who engages in dice rolling or pigeon racing may not serve as a witness in court.⁴⁴ This disqualification implies that the person is doing something wrong. Perhaps the issue with gambling is that it is both immoral and illegal. The rabbis do not specifically say gambling is illegal,

⁴³ The *Mishnah* is a compilation of the oral interpretations of the Biblical laws. Judah haNasi is credited with the compilation of the *Mishnah*.

⁴⁴ Sanhedrin 3:3; "And these are they which are not qualified [to be witnesses or judges]: a dice player, a usurer, pigeon flyers, or traffickers in Seventh Year produce..." Tosefta: He who plays dice: "this refers to one who plays with blocks of wood, and who plays with nut-shells or pomegranate shells. Under no circumstances does such a person have the power to reform himself unless he undertakes to break his blocks of wood and to carry out a complete reformation"...He who races pigeons: "This refers to one who trains pigeons. All the same are the one who trains pigeons and the one who trains any other sort of domesticated beast, wild beast, or bird. Under no circumstances does such a person have the power to reform himself unless he undertakes to break those things which disqualify him and to carry out a complete reformation." cf. Rosh ha-Shanah 1:18, Sanhedrin 25a-25b.

In addition to card playing, Jews were known to have placed bets on sports events, such as tennis and bowling.⁴⁰

Certain forms of gambling in the Jewish world stem from observances of Jewish holidays that might include gambling as a form of recreation. For example, on Hanukkah, it is tradition to gather with others and play a game called *dreidel*. This activity, which is custom and not law, involves gambling. The dreidel, a four-sided top, has one letter on each side. The one who spins wins or loses the antes that are in the middle depending on the letter that the top lands on. *Gelt*, or money, and nuts, are commonly used in betting. Although the actual connection between dreidel and Hanukkah are uncertain, there are several legendary reasons for why dreidel is associated with this holiday.⁴¹ According to Noam Zion, the game of dreidel is actually based on similar games from other cultures. Many people had variations of what the Jewish people call dreidel.⁴²

⁴⁰ Leo Landman. "Jewish Attitudes Toward Gambling." *Jewish Quarterly Review* (April 1967). 306.

⁴¹ Noam Zion and Barbara Spectre. *A Different Light: the Hanukkah Book of Celebration*. New York: Devora Publishing, 2000. 177.

The following are proposed connections: The letters on the dreidel *nun, gimmel, hey, shin* stand for the Hebrew *Nes Gadol Haya Sham*, meaning "A great miracle happened there", referring to the miracle of Hanukkah; the *gematria* of the letters *nun, gimmel, hey, shin* equal the value of the letters for *Messiah*; The letters represent the four kingdoms that tried to destroy the Jewish people, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, Gog, and Seir.

⁴² Louis Linn, "Jews and Pathological Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen J. Levy and Sheila B. Blume. (New York: Commission on Synagogue Relations and Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Inc., 1986), 344.

but their rulings regarding gamblers imply that they do not consider gambling to be a legitimate activity. There are two substantial categories to study regarding gambling and gaming for the purpose of recreation.⁴⁵ First, one must consider the halakhic prohibition of robbery. Some authorities equate gambling to stealing because there is an exchange of money, and it is possible that both parties do not actually agree to the exchange. Second is the prohibition against not engaging in productive labor. The rabbis assert that one must be a positive, contributing member of society. Thus, one must not waste time gambling, but must work and be productive. This category also raises the question of the difference between the professional gambler and the one who gambles for sport.

The rabbis condemn gambling through arguments that define it as a form of theft. The principle debate over the issue of whether or not gambling is equal to stealing involves two sages; Rami b. Hama⁴⁶ and R. Sheshet⁴⁷. The principle debate central to this argument is the notion of *asmachta*.⁴⁸ According to Rami b. Hama's argument,

Sanhedrin
24b

⁴⁵ Rabbi David Bassous and Rabbi Harold Sutton. *Gambling in Jewish Law* [document online], (accessed November 2003); available from <http://www.benporatyosef.org/etzahaim/halakha/gambling>

⁴⁶ Rami b. Hama is a fourth century Babylonian Amora. He was the head of the academy at Pumbedita.

⁴⁷ Rav Sheshet lived during the late third and early fourth centuries C.E. He was a Babylonian Amora whose work frequently features the principle of using authority as precedent. In many cases, his decisions are justified in the Talmud by quoting the Mishnah.

⁴⁸ *Asmachta* is defined by Eli Clark as "a conditional offer to pay made with the conviction that the condition will not come to pass." In other words, the bet is placed with the condition that the one placing the bet intends to win. His genuine belief that he has the luck or the skill to win complicates this issue. Clark also highlights three classic Talmudic cases of *asmachta*:

- 1) A borrows money from B, who subsequently repays a portion of the debt. The loan document is then placed in the hands of C. A promises to pay C the balance of the debt by a certain date. But if A does not pay the balance by that date, C will return the loan document to B, obligating A to repay the entire debt, including the portion that he had already paid off (Baba Batra 168a).
- 2) A and B agree to engage in a transaction. A deposits a security with B and promises that, if he should renege, B may keep the security. B promises that, if he should renege, he will return A's security and pay A an amount equal to the value of the security (Baba Metziah 48b, 77b).

gambling does meet the definition of an *asmachta*; there is a condition established by each one who places a wager that he expects to win. When the gambler places a bet, he genuinely believes, according to this condition, that he will not actually lose his money. If this is the case, when he loses the bet, he is unwillingly forced to give up his wager. If he entered the bet with a true understanding that he would win (which is clear because one would likely not bet on something that he was not confident about winning), then he is not actually prepared to surrender his money.⁴⁹ Therefore, when the winner of the bet collects, he is essentially stealing the money from the loser. The loser is not willingly giving the money to the winner, because the loser did not intend to lose his wager. If this case is legitimate, then the winner is actually a loser, because he is considered a thief according to this interpretation of the matter. Stealing is prohibited according to the biblical text,⁵⁰ and this prohibition is maintained by the sages. Thus, the winner is not a valid witness in court. When determining the legitimacy of gambling, however, this case does not prohibit participation. Rami b. Hama's argument only serves to condemn the winner from taking money.⁵¹ This opinion ascertains that it is okay to gamble, as long as you are the loser. Of course, this would serve to prevent gambling because one would likely not enter a bet in which he is certain to lose.

Further work that supports Rami b. Hama is produced by later authorities.

Pigeon-racing and dice throwing are often linked in the Talmud. Other forms of

3) A tenant farmer promises that, if he neglects and does not work the land, he will pay the landowner one thousand zuz (Baba Metzia 104b).

⁴⁹ Rabbi Eli D. Clark, "Gambling and the Jewish Law," *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 31 (Spring 1996): 8.

⁵⁰ Exodus 20:13 - The Ten Commandments include a prohibition against stealing.

⁵¹ Rabbi David Bassous and Rabbi Harold Sutton. *Gambling in Jewish Law* [document online], (accessed November 2003); available from <http://www.benporatyosef.org/etzahaim/halakha/gambling>

gambling, however, such as casting lots, are not discussed in tandem with the other forms.⁵² Drawing support from Mishnah Shabbat 23:2, the rabbis conclude that all gambling is prohibited. A translation of the passage reads, "One may cast lots [on Shabbat] with one's children and members of one's household with respect to [distributing portions] at the table, as long as one does not intend to make a [lottery of] a large portion against a small portion."⁵³ This passage is interpreted by the sages to condemn any type of gambling. Only if the portions are of equal size may they be doled out based on a lottery. Clearly, if the portion sizes are equal, there is no purpose in even holding a lottery system.

The Gemara provides commentary on this idea, stating, "[A lottery of] a large portion against a small portion should be forbidden even during the week to strangers. What is the reason? Because [it constitutes] dice playing."⁵⁴ Following the opinion that a lottery also constitutes gambling, there are issues with the passages from the Hebrew Bible, stated above, that refer to casting lots. If lotteries are not permitted, then casting lots to determine which goat will be sacrificed to God, and which tribe should receive a specific plot of land, should not be permitted.

Rami b. Hama's view also fails when considering certain forms of gambling that do not involve a wager that is lost or won. There are certain types of betting where the gambler pays the money upfront, and hopes to win it back (i.e. slot machines). Here, the gambler is not betting that he will "beat" another person. There is no degree of skill

⁵² See earlier examples mentioned in footnote 19.

⁵³ Translation done by Rabbi Eli D. Clark in "Gambling and the Jewish Law," *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 31 (Spring 1996)

⁵⁴ B. Talmud Shabbat 148b

involved with this method of gambling, and it is not a matter of robbery because the loser (or the gambler) conceded from the beginning when he surrendered the money that he was willing to give it up.

In Talmudic fashion, the argument is not one-sided. Rav Sheshet presents an alternative view regarding gambling practices. Rav Sheshet does not consider gambling to be an *asmachta*. Rashi⁵⁵ explains, "in the case of *asmachta*, the person making the conditional promise believes it in his power (*be-yado*) to determine whether the condition will occur. The gambler, in contrast, knows he is playing a game of chance that he may either win or lose."⁵⁶ It is only considered an *asmachta* when the individual relies on his own ability. In the case of dice playing, the outcome is completely dependent on luck. There is no skill involved in rolling dice, the results are pure chance. Rav Sheshet does agree that a gambler, specifically a dice roller, is disqualified from serving as a witness, but his reasoning is that this person does not contribute to society in a positive way. His opinion does not support Rami b. Hama's position that the gambler is a thief.

According to Rav Sheshet, the justification for revoking the right to be a witness is that the gambler is not making positive contributions to society. He reasons this because the gambler does nothing to improve society. He finds it to be problematic that a person gambles, and is therefore involved in an occupation (one can conclude that it is a full-time occupation) that is distasteful. According to this opinion, the issue of serving as a witness must be addressed again. One might interpret this to mean that only a

⁵⁵ Rabbi Solomon ben Yitzchaki: Born in France during the 11th century, Rashi is associated with commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud. The Rambam is also the author of the *Mishneh Torah*. It is here that the Rambam codifies the laws of the Talmud and interprets debates such as the one between Rav Sheshet and Rami b. Hama concerning gambling.

⁵⁶ Rashi, Sanhedrin 24b, translation in Rabbi Eli D. Clark, *Gambling and the Jewish Law* found on p.8

professional gambler is not eligible to give testimony. Rambam⁵⁷ says the following concerning the one who gambles professionally. "One who has no occupation other than this [dice playing], because he is not engaged in *yeshuvo shel olam* (the settling of the world, or civilizing of the world), he is presumed to support himself through dice which has a residue of theft."⁵⁸ Based on this interpretation, it is not actually theft, but it is close to theft, and therefore the professional gambler is not a valid witness. According to the reasoning of Rav Sheshet, one who engages in gambling on the side, and does have a legitimate profession, should be allowed to give testimony.

If an authority does rely upon the *asmachta* principle, then Rami b. Hama's conclusion, that the gambler is a thief, is valid. If this does not seem to be a compelling argument, then there are problems with determining the degree of skill versus the degree of luck involved. In the case of dice rolling, the game is based purely on luck, there is no skill involved. With pigeon flying, skill is potentially involved (as the person trains the pigeons or cheats by using a decoy pigeon).⁵⁹ While others provide commentary on these opinions, the result is more or less inconclusive. There are many factors, such as the type of gambling and whether or not this is one's main occupation, that contribute to the

⁵⁷ Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides, is one of the most famous intellectual thinkers of medieval Jewry. His work extends from astronomy, medicine, logic, and philosophy to Jewish law and commentary on previous Jewish works.

⁵⁸ Hilkhhot Edut 10:4, translation by Rabbi Eli D. Clark in "Gambling and the Jewish Law," *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 31 (Spring 1996), 12. See also: Hilkhhot Gizela 6:7 and Shulchan Arukh. Choshen Mishpat 34:16.

⁵⁹ B. Talmud Sanhedrin 25a: "And pigeon-flyers. What are pigeon-flyers? Here, they interpreted it, 'If your pigeon arrives before my pigeon.' R' Chama bar Oshaya said, 'a pigeon decoyer.' The one who says [it means], 'If your pigeon arrives before my pigeon,' why does it not say a pigeon-decoyer?" This person is essentially cheating by luring a second pigeon in, thus winning the competition. If this is the case, Rashi deems this person a thief, thus associating gambling with robbery in another way. (from Artscroll edition of Talmud)

opinions of the rabbis. These factors influence the rabbis as they formulated decisions as to whether or not gambling is discouraged because it involves theft, or because it signifies that one is not making positive contributions to society.

It is apparent that the rabbis agree that gambling is not a good thing, and that it is not encouraged. From the halakhic sources, it seems as though gambling is not actually illegal, but that it is behavior that is not looked upon favorably.⁶⁰ The two substantial arguments, posed by Rami b. Hama and Rav Sheshet spurn gambling. Neither one, however, provides a compelling case for declaring gambling to be illegal. While Rami b. Hama's case of the *asmachta* comes close, he cannot conclude that gambling is illegal because the theft is only on the part of the winner. Thus, it is not the gambling that is wrong, but the winner taking the money from the loser that is illegal. Rav Sheshet's argument explains that gambling is only "illegal" if it is one's profession. If he is engaged in another form of work, this person is able to be a witness, according to this opinion. To translate this into modern terms, occasional gambling, or recreational gambling may not be encouraged, but it is not illegal.

The discussions of the rabbis fail to address the issue that it complicates the permissibility of gambling, even if only for the purpose of recreation. The matter of compulsive gambling, or gambling to excess because of a mental disorder that does not allow a person to escape from the constant desire to gamble, does not enter the debates surrounding gambling that are found in the Talmud and in other Jewish commentaries.

⁶⁰ Another source for the condemnation of gambling is Shulchan Arukh, Choshen Mishpat 370:3. Recorded here is the instance in which a Jew gambles with a non-Jew. The ethical responsibilities of a Jew toward a non-Jew are vastly different from the ethical responsibilities that a Jew has toward another Jew. While the problem of a Jew "stealing" winnings from a non-Jew is of minor consequence, this passage does cite the importance of aspiring to a higher standard than gambling.

Leon Modena's Commentary on Gambling

Returning now to the work of Leon Modena⁶¹, characters Eldad and Medad engage in a conversation about the legitimacy of games of chance. This piece of work combines Modena's knowledge of Jewish text and what he has learned from society. In the dialogue between two characters, Medad defends gambling pursuits, as he himself is a gambler. Medad informs Eldad that in fact, gambling is not the corrupt activity that so many have defined it as. Medad speaks of gambling as, "praiseworthy, laudable, and glorious; it exists among mankind like every other well-defined and regulated mode of traffic which is usually found to exist among them...Nay, it acts as a goad and an instructor, spurring him [man] on, and teaching him that it may be well with him all the days of his life."⁶² Eldad's character agrees with the position presented by Rami b. Hama; gambling is theft. He argues, "Why are you [Medad] defending a position devoid of strength, and trying to justify a pursuit which fills the world with robbery? It's a saying as old as the hills, having come down to me from my grandfather, that there are three primary sins in the world, the sources of all evils, and these are gambling, gormandizing, and whoring, hinted at in the three Scriptural terms occurring in Deuteronomy 18:3, 'the shoulder, the cheeks, and the maw' (the three physical organs employed in the three acts referred to); but the worst of all things, and particularly base,

⁶¹ A complete English translation of this work can be found in the Appendix.

⁶² Hermann Gollancz, *The Targum to 'The Song of Songs'; The Book of the Apple; The Ten Jewish Martyrs; A Dialogue on Games of Chance*. (London: Luzac & Co., 1908), 167.
This is a translation of the original text.

is the act of gambling."⁶³ Medad's response is that gambling is no different than any other trade that involves an exchange of money.

Eldad attempts to convince Medad that gambling is inherently wrong by insisting that gambling violates each of the Ten Commandments:

If you go into the matter thoroughly, you will see that the gambler trespasses all the Ten Commandments, the very foundation of the Law of Moses and of his Prophecy, acknowledged not alone by the people of Israel, holy unto the Lord, but also by those nations among whom we dwell. First, with regard to those Commandments from the words, "I am the Lord thy God" unto the fourth, "Remember the Sabbath Day." These all warn against the sin of idolatry: and beyond doubt he trespasses against each one of them. For, as soon as his star is unlucky, and he loses everything, he will be beside himself, will grow full of fury and anger; and it is clear to us that our Rabbis were right when they said that 'the man of anger is like the idolator' (in forgetting his God). They have even expressed the same idea more clearly when they remarked: "A gambler is as an idolator," basing their dictum on the Scriptural phrases "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar...playing" (Gen. 21:9): "And the people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play" (Exod. 32:6).

As regards the third Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord Thy God in vain," etc., it is self-evident to all, that at every moment during play, at every opportunity for sinning, or differences among players, a man will commit perjury, he will swear thousands of vain and false oaths, dragging his soul down to earth – a dark and weary outlook.

And how easily the Commandment referring to the Sabbath-day is broken! A man is playing on Sabbath-eve, near dusk; the loser, in the forlorn hope of winning back what he has lost; the winner, whose greed for gain is not satisfied, hoping to make more, suddenly find that the Sabbath has overtaken them, and they have infringed the sanctity of the day. In many other ways, too, this can happen to players.

The "honouring of father and mother" is equally jeopardized by this pursuit. Properly speaking, it is the duty of father and mother to correct and chastise the son who is addicted to gambling, in the endeavour to bring him back; but the son who is steeped in this sort of thing, which has become to him as second nature, will give them no ear, he answers them harshly, and this is a source of bitterness to their lives; for he has ignored the command "A man shall fear his mother and his father" (Levit. 29:3).

Furthermore, when a man realizes that he has lost his money, the fire of envy and hatred will burn within him against his fellow-man, or he

⁶³ *ibid.* 180-181

will seek a pretext to quarrel with him, remarking, "The game was not so," calling him a wicked scoundrel, anxious to rob him of his own; the other will retort, and the discussion, having become heated, we cannot predict where it will end. It may even be that each will draw his sword, so that one gets killed, and the command of the Lord, "Thou shalt not murder," be transgressed.

A gambler will mix with loose women; in his rage he will utter obscene and filthy expressions, and concerning such a sin our Rabbis have said, "The one who defiles his mouth with unhallowed words has no share in the bliss of the world to come."

Words are the index to actions; the mouth makes the first move, and the organs of action do the rest. This is all contained in the prohibition: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Now, when he has been left destitute, left entirely without money, it is natural that all his thoughts are misdirected the livelong day; he broods upon how he may steal secretly, or rob his fellow-creatures openly, hoping by this means to make up for his deficiencies, with the result that he will be like "the chief baker, Pharaoh's servant," hanging between Heaven and earth, for not having observed the warning: "Thou shalt not steal."

It may happen, too, in the course of a game with his friend, that they may form a compact to share the profits equally, and a misunderstanding arising, a third party is called in to arbitrate; but he, being a friend of one of the players, gives the decision in favour of that friend, to wit, unjustly; what becomes now of the command, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour"? It is thrown overboard.

And it stands to reason, that if a man is not particular with regard to the law of stealing, he will be less careful as regards the prohibition, "Thou shalt not covet"; for whatever his eyes see, his heart will desire with a longing which will never satisfy the eye of covetousness.

Consider and answer now, whether the evil of this wicked pastime is not monstrous enough to reach unto Heaven (and draw down punishment) – Law of the Living God, both written and traditional, and the end of which is bound to be bitter as wormwood: surely the one who touches such a diversion cannot go unpunished!⁶⁴

Medad responds:

You have employed many words to condemn this sport, but you have nevertheless said nothing effectual to cast a stigma upon it which might not apply equally to every other human pursuit. For "anger resteth in the bosom of fools" even in trivial matters, but the sensible man is patient at all times.

This is my experience. I saw a man yesterday losing 400 gold-pieces, and he never uttered a word of cursing his luck: only once he

⁶⁴ *ibid.* 186-190

exclaimed; "Thou, O Lord, art righteous!" On the other hand, I knew a man who, on receipt of this news that corn had depreciated in value (he was a corn and wine-dealer), went up to the roof, threw himself down, and was killed.

And where will you find the occasion for more wicked and perplexing oaths than among merchants, which they employ to confirm their statements in the course of buying and selling?

And with regard to your apprehension as to the violation of the Sabbath, this may apply as well to the tailor, shoemaker, and every other workman who is desirous of increasing his profits.

There are, furthermore, many other diversions which might lead to the breaking of the command to "honour father and mother," or to the commission of murder and adultery.

And the same is the case with stealing, which a poor fellow in straitened circumstances justifies by saying, it is not for stealing that he is hanged, but owing to his unlucky star, and hard times.

As far as concerns false swearing, this may occur in any form of partnership; and covetousness, even outside gaming is well known to reside naturally in the heart of man.

To sum up the matter: a perfectly righteous person will be as upright in commercial pursuits as in sport or anything else; whilst a wicked person will act wickedly in the one matter as in the other. And now, finally, I say, go and reflect upon this one point. If, as you insist, this is such robbery and an intolerable sin, why did not our Rabbis of old prohibit it to us and our descendants in a clear, decisive and express manner? Considering, too, as is well known, that their object was ever to keep us aloof, not alone from transgression and wickedness itself, but even from that which in remote degree might lead to its commission, and they therefore, in their exalted and perfect wisdom, instituted one fence and safeguard upon another to protect the law – what conclusion can we arrive at from the consideration that they never lifted up their voice against this diversion, but that they found therein nothing of vice or vanity, as you would have us believe?⁶⁵

After more discussion between the two voices, Modena ends this piece with Medad conceding that gambling is in fact wrong. He claims that he was simply using this confrontation as a means to sharpen his mind. Gambling is not productive and can only lead to destruction. This literary work, the work of a rabbi afflicted with the disease of addiction, addresses the issue of compulsive gambling. With Modena's obvious

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 190-192

knowledge of rabbinic sources and halakha, it is made clear with the surprise ending, that he does not actually condone the gambling practice which has plagued him. Medad concludes, "By now understand that I am also quite aware of the fact that gambling is essentially and entirely a vain and most wicked occupation...it is improper for man to subject himself absolutely and without limitation to the Decree of Fate, either to lay in wait for the blood of his neighbour – I mean money – and to use it up, or losing his own money, for this is certainly not the decree of the unity of the world: it is rather that 'the prudent man shall look well to his happiness,' and God will support him according to His will."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 212-213

Chapter III

Treating an Addiction

Introduction

Society has only two real opportunities to combat the problems that exist with compulsive gambling and other addictions. The obvious is aiding those already affected by the mental disease. Treatment and recovery programs are continually growing, both in availability and in the number of people who are using the services of these programs. Recovery programs provide valuable assistance to people who have reached the point of being able to admit that there is a problem. While treatment is available, the larger problem is finding ways to provide treatment before the problem even arises. Prevention programs and information are not as readily available as are treatment programs; therefore, prevention programs are in need of more attention. While treatment programs can only be utilized by those affected by addiction, prevention programs have the potential to quell the problems caused by addictive behaviors, such as compulsive gambling. Frequently, treatment programs employ a twelve step program to guide recovery. The twelve step programs have a reputation for helping addicts, their families, and their friends.

The twelve step program, initially designed for alcohol treatment, has been adapted to treat people addicted to sex, gambling, eating, shopping, and numerous other substances and behaviors. The universality of the twelve step program is due to the common traits of addictive behaviors.¹ In addition, because addiction is a disease,

¹ Refer to material in chapter one that describes various characteristics of compulsive gamblers and of those addicted to other substances.

treatment is not dependent on the substance, but is rather dependent on the ability of the person to accept treatment.

The Twelve Step Approach to Treatment

The idea of a twelve step approach to treatment of addiction blossomed in the 1930s. Two men, Bill Wilson and Bob Smith, both addicted to alcohol, recognized the way manner in which this disease had been destroying their lives. In search of treatment, these men joined together to devise a program that was based largely on the concept of mutual help.² In 1939, the fellowship that Bill and Bob created published its first book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Bill wrote the text of this book that expresses the methods and philosophy of AA. The central component of this textbook is the twelve step program that has become the basis for the most widely recognized alcohol treatment program. A paradigm for other addictions, similar programs that exist now include; Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Pills Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, Sex and Love Anonymous, Families Anonymous, and others. Treatment has also extended to families and friends of those affected by the disease of addiction. The success of these programs cannot be denied. The twelve steps are not a cure to the disease, but rather are intended as therapy and treatment. Abraham J. Twerski, M.D.,³ states, "These fellowships have indeed produced remarkable results in many cases that have defied the finest psychiatric and psychological treatments."⁴ Understanding the methods of treatment is critical as it is clear that the twelve steps can be used to help people addicted to a variety of substances.

² Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., *Waking up in Time* (New York: Topper Books, 1990), 9.

³ Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski is a psychiatrist and an expert on recovery from addiction. He is the founder and medical director of the Gateway Rehabilitation Center in Pennsylvania. He has written many books on the subject of the twelve steps and on overcoming self-defeating behaviors.

⁴ *Ibid.* 9

Twerski gives a basic description of why he believes the twelve step program is so successful. "The common denominator of these programs is an agenda of twelve steps that has been adapted for various self-defeating behaviors. The modus operandi of these programs is the mutual sharing of difficulties and of successes, which is accomplished by the medium of meetings wherein people share their experience, hope, strength, and courage. In addition to benefiting from the collective wisdom of the group, each member is expected to have a personal sponsor or mentor. Common terminology that has special meaning to the initiated is employed, and there is a lexicon of pithy slogans. Although the programs do not espouse any specific religion, prayer is an important feature."⁵ Whereas the twelve steps and fellowships that utilize them to offer treatment are not dependant on a particular religious connection, they do require belief in a Higher Power. The manifestation of a Higher Power typically is God, although the religion is not specified. Prayer is a central part of the twelve steps; however, the personal sponsor, the slogans, and the additional support that people give is equally as important.⁶

The mission of Gamblers Anonymous mimics that of Alcoholics Anonymous. Gamblers Anonymous is "a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from a gambling problem."⁷ Founded in 1957 by two men who realized how affected they were by their gambling problem, Gamblers Anonymous employs the twelve steps that were formed by Alcoholics Anonymous. There is only one membership

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Gamblers Anonymous: About Gamblers Anonymous* [document on-line], (accessed 12 October 2003), available from <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/about.html>

requirement – the desire to stop gambling. It is not necessary to compartmentalize treatment – addiction is a disease, and treatment for addiction is related to the person's desire to be treated, not to the specific substance that is abused. Although this is true, the plethora of treatment programs that exist emphasize the extreme need for recovery programs. There are so many different kinds of treatment programs, reflecting the variety of addictive substances or behaviors. There are so many affected by the disease of addiction that there is a purpose for each program.

Jewish Treatment Programs

The twelve steps rely heavily on a connection with a Higher Power. While it is not imperative that a gambler who is Jewish seek treatment from a Jewish treatment center, the twelve steps can be approached with an emphasis on Jewish values, and treatment can occur within a Jewish framework. Several prominent Jewish thinkers base their work in psychology on the twelve steps. Rather than modify the steps to make them "Jewish", these scholars emphasize how each step can be interpreted in a Jewish context. With the general premise of the twelve step program established, a deeper understanding of the actual steps, and the process that the addict goes through, is possible.⁸

A religious connection is important in the twelve step process, although to which religion one establishes a connection is not significant. Prayer and meditation are critical during the treatment process. One of the difficulties with counseling someone toward accepting a specific set of religious beliefs is that any person can become an addict. While some religions may be more highly represented in treatment programs, gambling and other addictive behaviors are not a problem for one religious group and not problematic for another. A study was conducted to determine the distribution of compulsive gamblers among religious groups. According to the results, the majority of people seeking treatment are Catholic. Nearly one third of those in seeking treatment for gambling addiction are Jewish. It is impossible to assess the number of people who are compulsive gamblers; findings are inconclusive because they depend on people who

⁸ Many sources site the twelve steps that exist. While these twelve steps originated as Alcoholics Anonymous, the same wording and concepts are used with regard to alternative recovery programs.

admit that they have a problem. Statistics based on those who are in treatment are true.⁹ Compulsive gambling is not a *Jewish* problem. It is not necessary to provide treatment for the Jewish compulsive gambler, but rather for the compulsive gambler who happens to be Jewish. Although it is the case, the addiction will affect a person regardless of religious affiliation, it is quite powerful to recognize the problem that exists within a closed community, such as the Jewish one.

Despite the high numbers of Jewish people who are compulsive gamblers, in 1977 there were no Gamblers Anonymous groups that met within the walls of synagogues or Jewish centers. Some attribute this to denial. Robert L. Custer, M.D., feels that Jews at that time were not facing the reality. They needed to be more proactive, taking responsibility for educating themselves about the dangers of gambling and the facts about addictions.¹⁰ Fortunately, much progress concerning treatment of addictive behaviors has been made within the Jewish community since the 1977 figure. Today, many congregations and Jewish organizations provide services to addicts who are (and are not) Jewish. Programs exist for alcohol addiction, drug addiction, gambling addiction, and the disease of addiction, not dependent on the specific behavior.

Some see a contradiction in establishing a Jewish recovery program. Based on the traditional view of Judaism, Torah¹¹ is authority. A Torah observant Jew would not see particular use of the twelve step program because Torah should be adequate for

⁹ Sheila B. Blume, M.D., "Hooked: Common factors in Alcoholism, Drug Abuse and Compulsive Gambling," in *Proceedings: National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Council of Jewish Federations and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1986), 12.

¹⁰ Robert L. Custer, M.D., "Questions and Answers on Gambling", in *Proceedings: National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Council of Jewish Federations and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1986), 24.

¹¹ Torah here refers to a wide variety of traditional Jewish texts.

recovery, if the person even needed it for this purpose. The twelve steps would be superfluous for a Torah observant Jew.¹² Rabbi Twerski, aware and sensitive to this, has developed an alternative to the twelve steps for a person who is fully committed to observing each of the *mitzvot*. This program is only appropriate for those who are Torah observant; it is not fitting for a Jew who does not observe every commandment.¹³

Treatment programs present another problem for Jewish people. The types of programs that are typical, including the twelve step program, require being in a group as a method for surmounting self-defeating behaviors. Jewish people, however, are stereotypically not supporters of group programs to solve problems. Twerski says, "...ingrained cultural trait which fosters concealment of all personal problems, which remain carefully guarded secrets within the immediate family."¹⁴ This problem of secrecy is one of the major contributors to the initial problem. Jewish people do not like to speak of things that are judged by society as bad or wrong. Hiding from the reality, however, is detrimental.

Despite the stigma attached to treatment programs, because they signify that there is an uncontrollable problem, the larger community and the Jewish community are taking action. Jewish organizations and congregations run treatment programs that target specific addictions or addiction in general. The success of a program sponsored by the Jewish community depends on outreach. As addictions are not "Jewish", proper treatment relies upon networking. Professionals outside of the Jewish community are

¹² Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., *Self-Improvement? I'm Jewish!*, (New York: Shaar Press, 1995), 25.

¹³ *Ibid.* 26

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 17

able to make valuable contributions to the course of the treatment process.¹⁵ A Jewish institution can modify treatment, making specific connections to Judaism, however, the process must be understood as a process that treats addicts, not Jews. Rabbi Isaac Trainin¹⁶ states, "The concept of a unified approach to a communal problem is not widespread, but is beginning to catch on. That is why the idea of networking has recently come to the fore. Sensitive communal leaders both lay and professional are beginning to realize that if we are concerned with the health and welfare of the Jewish community, then resources have to be pooled and information must be shared so that one agency will know what the other is doing."¹⁷

Perhaps the most recognized Jewish treatment program is the JACS (Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others) Foundation. This fellowship was started in 1979 with a retreat for Jewish people who were in need of self-discovery. JACS provides support for people addicted to any substance or behavior. This treatment group recognizes that addiction is a disease, not a disgrace. JACS uses the twelve steps to help participants, but integrates Judaism into the execution of meetings and retreats. This is possible because the twelve steps are inherently Jewish as they

¹⁵ Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin, "Networking in the Jewish Community – A Coordinated Approach", in *Proceedings: National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Council of Jewish Federations and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1986), 28.

¹⁶ Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin (when he gave this address) is the Executive Director of the Department on Religious Affairs at the UJA – Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York. Rabbi Trainin is promotes the necessity of networking, particularly when dealing with issues, such as addiction, that affect all people.

¹⁷ Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin, "Networking in the Jewish Community – A Coordinated Approach", in *Proceedings: National Conference on Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Council of Jewish Federations and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1986), 27.

“emphasize spiritual and personal awareness, taking stock, reaching out to others in need.”¹⁸ These are underlying values in Judaism, and they need to be more present in Jewish education concerning addictions.

Another well developed program, the Gambling Recovery Program of Jewish Family Service of Buffalo and Erie County, focuses specifically on gambling recovery. This organization provides the following description of their work. “It is estimated that between 2%-5% of the general adult population experience significant problems as a result of excessive gambling. Pathological Gambling is recognized by the American Psychiatric Association as a serious and progressive disorder that if left untreated can destroy individuals and families. Jewish Family Service provides evaluation and treatment services to help individuals overcome this condition and return to a healthy lifestyle.”¹⁹ This program, directed by Dr. Renee Worth, provides treatment intervention for adults and families. Counseling includes group therapy, support groups, and relapse prevention groups. Psychiatrists are available for complete screening and evaluation, and JFS provides referrals when necessary.²⁰

¹⁸ Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Stuart A. Copans, M.D., *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), 109.

¹⁹ *Gambling Recovery Program of Jewish Family Service of Buffalo and Erie County* [document on-line], (accessed 10 June 2003); available from http://rin.buffalo.edu/s_huma/huma/agen-j/jfs_grp.html

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Step by Step

Treatment does not necessitate connection to a particular spiritual group of religious group. Likewise, due to the universality of addiction, in that the primary concern is not the substance to which one is addicted but rather the disease, treatment does not need to target a specific addictive behavior. While may be the case, due to the growing number of addicts, there may be validity in treating compulsive gamblers who are Jewish. Thus, it is necessary to adapt the generic twelve steps, customizing them to help the compulsive gambler who is Jewish to relate better to the steps. Rabbi Abraham Twerski²¹ and Rabbi Kerry Olitzky²², two contemporary rabbis who have done extensive work in the area of addiction, have published works that deal with making the twelve steps “Jewish”. Here, the twelve steps will be framed in both a “Jewish” and a “gambling” context.

Step One: *We admitted we were powerless, that our lives had become unmanageable.*

Explanation: Without a doubt, this first step is the most difficult step of the process. Facing the reality that we are not in control opposes the natural tendency to think that we are always able to manage the elements of our lives. The disease of addiction is characterized by the change in control, from the person to the addictive substance or behavior. When the ideal becomes upset, when the perfectly managed life is

²² Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky dedicates his time to outreach education and to providing people with options for recovery from any type of addiction. He is the organizer of many programs on chemical dependency. He is the author of several books that deal with the recovery from substance abuse, alcohol addiction, compulsive gambling, and other addictive behaviors. While his work emphasizes the connection that recovery has with Judaism, Rabbi Olitzky recognizes that addiction does not rely upon one's religious affiliation.

disturbed, it is typical that one depends on an outside substance to regain the balance. This “escape route”, as Twerski calls the outside substance or activity, can easily become more damaging than the lifestyle that was out of balance and in disarray.²³ An addict who wants to receive treatment must have courage and must find support from others. Admitting powerlessness is difficult and can cause one to give up. Self-defeating behaviors are discouraging and put intense pressure on the person. Recovery, however, is not possible without the initiative of the person in need of help.

In a Jewish Context: In each of these steps, wording is of utmost importance. The first word of the step process is “we”. The *minyan* or quorum is the building block of the Jewish people. It is human nature to need other people, to grow within a community. An addict turns to an unhealthy substance to fulfill a need, or to feel in control. Instead of using something that is destructive, such as gambling, drugs, or alcohol, it is suggested that an addict should rely on community to fill this basic need, rather than to something that is damaging.²⁴

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when? (Hillel, Pirkei Avot 1:14)
- Have you found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for you, lest you be filled with it, and vomit it. (Proverbs 25:16)
- Since by keeping the body in health and vigor one walks in the ways of God – it being impossible during sickness to have any understanding or

²³ Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., *Waking up in Time* (New York: Topper Books, 1990), 14.

²⁴ Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Stuart A. Copans, M.D., *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), 17.

knowledge of the Creator – it is a man's duty to avoid whatever is injurious to the body and cultivate habits conducive to health and vigor.
(Maimonides)

- If you are sitting at a grand table, do not lick your lips and exclaim, "What a spread!" ...Do not reach for everything you see or jostle your fellow guest at the dish; judge his feelings by your own and always be considerate...If you are dining in a large company, do not reach out your hand before others. A man of good upbringing is content with little, and he is not short of breath when he goes to bed. The moderate eater enjoys healthy sleep; he rises early, feeling refreshed. But sleeplessness, indigestion, and colic are the lot of the glutton. (Wisdom of Ben Sira 31:12-15, 18-20)
- There are eight things that taken in large quantities are bad, but in small quantities are helpful: travel, sex, wealth, work, wine, sleep, hot baths, and bloodletting. (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Gittin 70a)

Step Two: *Come to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

Explanation: Step two of the typical twelve step program is largely dependent on the achievement of step one. This process of recovery requires that an addict relinquish some power, recognizing that the person is not strong enough to control all aspects of his life. While step one indicates that a person accepts that there is disarray in his life, and that one cannot manage all aspects of life, it is only logical that step two follow. There must be some other power that can control those elements that are not being managed

appropriately. Perhaps the greatest difficulty with this step is its theological implication. Material presented by Alcoholics Anonymous includes the following statement concerning God. "The majority of A.A. members believe that we have found the solution to our drinking problem not through individual willpower, but through a power greater than ourselves. However, everyone defines this power as he or she wishes. Many people call it God, others think it is the A.A. group, still others don't believe in it at all. There is room in A.A. for people of all shades of belief and nonbelief."²⁵ While this step does not necessitate a belief in God, for the purposes of a Jewish treatment program, it provides an opportunity to include discussion of God and to foster the connection that one has with this greater power.

While it does seem obvious that there must be another force working in life, as some aspects are out of our control, and therefore must be within the realm of some other being's power, it is, nonetheless, a difficult step to concede. Twerski discusses this concept of willingly giving power to the other, and in doing so, he offers a simple idea that so many have difficulty with. When a plumbing situation is in need of repair, a plumber, or an expert, is called in to perform. If there is an electrical problem that reaches beyond simply changing a light bulb, an electrician is called upon. So, if we can give up control of these common tasks, why is it so difficult to call for help when we are faced with the problem of managing our lives appropriately? Twerski's theory is that we do not feel as though we need to be experts in plumbing, but that we do need to be

²⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous, *Historical Data: The Birth of A.A. and its Growth in U.S./Canada* [document on-line], (accessed 12 October 2003), available from <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org>

experts at managing our lives and ourselves.²⁶ Without accepting the reality that help must come from the outside, treatment is not possible.

The Higher Power of step two need not be considered God. As the information from Alcoholics Anonymous states, treatment is not based on belief in God, but rather is based on the belief in a Higher Power. This "other" can be the group itself, God, or another person who provides support and organization. Likewise, treatment and recovery programs should not be seen as "Jewish" or "Catholic" programs. The initial problem, revolving around the inability to manage life, and the subsequent problems, addiction to one or more of a variety of substances, are not categorized by religion. The concentration here is on the idea that there exists a Higher Power, not on who or what that Higher Power is.

In a Jewish Context: By framing the twelve step process in a Jewish context, the group would focus on the belief in God, and formulate an understanding of what God is. As Judaism identifies with God as an omnipotent being, this concept can be integrated into the discussions revolving around step two.

The wording of this step is also significant. The word "came" implies that this step requires process and progress. Belief in this Higher Power is not as simple as a declaration. One must go on a spiritual journey in order to grasp the essence of this step.²⁷ This is an active process, and accepting a Higher Power without actually making the journey only adds to the initial problem of not accepting reality.

²⁶ Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., *Waking up in Time* (New York: Topper Books, 1990), 24-5.

²⁷ Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Stuart A. Copans, M.D., *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), 24.

Addiction, a disease, is caused by a person's desire to have control over something and to have an outlet from those elements of life over which there is no real control. Thus, the treatment programs which exist can employ the same basic twelve steps, regardless of how the addiction manifests itself. Treatment for alcohol, gambling, drug abuse, overeating and compulsive shopping rely upon the same general ideas. When a compulsive gambler comes to realize that there is a Higher Power, and that one cannot manage all aspects of his life without depending on outside resources, this gambler has made a significant realization.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- Wherever does God dwell? Wherever we let God in. (Kotzker Rebbi)
- The emperor Hadrian once said to Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah, "I want you see your God." "You cannot see Him," answered the rabbi. The emperor insisted. So the rabbi had him face the sun during its height and said to him, "Look up at it." "I cannot," he answered. "If you cannot even look at the sun, which is just one of God's attendants," said Rabbi Joshua, "How do you presume to be able to look at the divine presence?"
(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Hullin 59b-60a)
- Ethical life has entered into religious life, and cannot be extracted from it. There is no responsibility unless there is One to whom one is responsible, for there is no response where there is no address... (Martin Buber)
- We shall accomplish nothing at all if we divide our world and our life into two domains; one in which God's command is paramount, the other governed by the laws of economics, politics, and the 'simple self-

assertion' of the group...Stopping one's ears so as not to hear the voice from above is breaking the connection between existence and the meaning of existence. (Martin Buber)

- No spot on earth is devoid of the Presence. (Numbers Rabbah 12:4)

Step Three: *We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*

Explanation: Like step two, the third of the twelve steps includes the concept of a Higher Power. With an understanding of this "power" the process flows into transferring some personal power to this Higher Power. As the flow was natural from the first to the second step, so too is it natural that once there is a belief in a Higher Power that one would be able to transfer some control to that power. Demonstrating that complete autonomy is damaging indicates that one truly understands the first two steps. As one begins to let go of certain things, putting more trust in the Higher Power, it becomes clear that person is confident in the abilities of a Higher Power. Like the other steps, this is not an easy task. Questions about how the Higher Power will control things and concerns about what issues should be transferred can be confusing, and can cause a great deal of pain. The results, however, are tremendous. Eventually, trusting a Higher Power will allow the person to feel liberated and powerful over the aspects of life that one can realistically control.

In a Jewish Context: Martin Buber's²⁸ commentary on Psalm 13:3 contextualizes this idea in a Jewish manner. Psalm 13:3 reads: "How long shall I take counsel in

²⁸ Martin Buber (1878-1965) was born in Vienna. He received a traditional Jewish education from his grandfather, Solomon Buber, and was influenced by the Hasidic movement in his youth. He studied

myself, having sorrow in my heart by day.”²⁹ Buber writes, “Only when I know of no further counsel that can help me, and I give up taking counsel, and know of no other help but God, will help be vouchsafed me.”³⁰ As long as we look inward, and refuse to look outside of ourselves for help, we will not make progress. As this verse from Psalms indicates, if we only look inward, we will eternally be plagued by sorrow.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- I lift up my eyes to the mountains; what is the source of my help? My help will come from Adonai, Maker of heaven and earth. God will not allow your foot to slip; your Guardian will not slumber. Behold, the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. The Eternal is your Keeper, the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. Adonai will guard you from all evil, and protect your being. Adonai will guard you, coming and going, from this time forth and forever. (Translation of Psalm 121)³¹
- You know best what is for my good. If I articulate my desires it is not to remind You, but that I might better understand how greatly dependent I am on You. If then, afterwards, I ask You for things that are not in my best interest, it is because I am humbly ignorant. I acknowledge that Your

philosophy and art history at universities in Berlin and Vienna. A Zionist, Buber later emigrated to Palestine. He became a professor of sociology, religion, and social philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

²⁹ Translation found in: Rabbi Rami Shapiro, Ph.D., *This is the Path: Twelve Step Programs in a Jewish Context* (Miami: EnR Wordsmiths, 1989), 29.

³⁰ Martin Buber, *Ten Rungs, Hasidic Sayings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), 20.

³¹ *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe*, ed. Chaim Stern (New York: CCAR Press, 1978), 21.

choice is better than mine and I give myself over to You and the Divine direction of my life.³² (Bahya ibn Pekudah)

- Rabbi Bunam said to his followers: Our great transgression is not that we commit sins – temptation is strong and our strength is slight! No, our transgression is that at every instant we can turn to God – and we do not turn! (Chasidic 18th-19th Century)³³

Step Four: *We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

Explanation: This step emphasizes the responsibility that we have to ourselves to improve aspects of our lives that we have the ability to improve. With enough self restraint, one can stop using alcohol or stop gambling. However, without appropriate therapy, the disease associated with such addictions remains. Twerski explains: “The *ism* is comprised of all the inappropriate behavior the person must correct if he or she is to be something more than just abstinent. People who never had a problem with alcohol may nevertheless have the *ism*, and just as much need to overcome it. The *ism* is essentially comprised of the seven cardinal sins or faults human beings may have: pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth.”³⁴ An accurate assessment of what needs to be treated is a crucial part of the treatment process. Without properly defining the problems of an addict, the action of abuse will not be halted. Taking an inventory of our actions and our feelings allows us to better understand where the confusion lies in our complicated lives.

³² Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Stuart A. Copans, M.D., *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), 34.

³³ *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe*, ed. Chaim Stern (New York: CCAR Press, 1978). 11.

³⁴ Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., *Waking up in Time* (New York: Topper Books, 1990), 38-9.

This process is quite difficult because it requires complete honesty. Every action must be assessed to determine whether or not it is morally acceptable or if it needs to be altered in the future. Surveying positive aspects of life is easy; admitting to things that are not ethical is more difficult. In a comical fashion, Twerski interprets this step with the popular Peanuts characters. In an episode, Peppermint Patty explains to her teacher why she did not get her homework done. In giving her excuse, she blames television, newspaper, radio, and magazines, because these things distracted her. A "fearless" inventory would not blame these things, which are obviously not at fault. Instead, Patty would say that she chose to watch television rather than study. She is the only reason why the work was not finished. Patty could have made the decision to do her work prior to watching television. Twerski writes, "If we take responsibility for our behavior, we can set things straight. If we blame others, then we absolve ourselves from making any changes. The quality of our lives will improve when others stop their pernicious behavior. Patty will have to wait for good grades until radio, television, newspapers, and the magazine industry all are defunct. Good luck Patty."³⁵ Recovery is hindered if one is unwilling to take responsibility for the things that are within his control.

A compulsive gambler certainly is accustomed to lying. Recovery is dependant on a conscious effort to cease lying, including "white lies" which many would consider inconsequential. This is a reminder that it is not about the actual substance to which one is addicted but rather it is about the mental capabilities that one has to behave in morally sound ways.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 43.

In a Jewish Context: The connection between this step and Judaism is strong.

Requiring that one take a personal inventory correlates to the Jewish concepts of *heshbon hanefesh*³⁶ and *teshuvah*³⁷. Personal accountability, realizing deficiencies and correcting them, is central to the Jewish cycle. Each year, Yom Kippur calls for Jews to itemize their relationships and actions from the past year. Taking this account allows a person to reflect on his or her behavior. Admitting wrongdoings enables one to correct future situations. According to Judaism, it is not just in making such a list that one is able to repent, but in making a conscious effort to correct immoral decisions or actions in future cases.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- R. Eliezer ben Jacob said: "He who performs one precept acquires for himself one advocate, and he who commits one transgression acquires for himself one accuser. Repentance and good works are as a shield against retribution." (Pirkei Avot 4:11)
- Before he died, Rabbi Zusya said: "In the world to come they will not ask me, 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me, 'Why were you not Zusya?'" (Legend about Hasidic rabbi, R. Zusya of Hanipoli)³⁸
- When a person is brought in for judgment in the world to come he is asked, "Were you honest in your business dealings? Did you set aside time for study? Did you engage in procreation? Did you look forward to

³⁶ *Heshbon hanefesh* is a Hebrew term that means "account of the soul". It implies that one takes a personal account.

³⁷ *Teshuvah* is the Hebrew term that refers to repentance. It is derived from a word meaning "to return". One who goes through this process effectively returns to him or herself and to God.

³⁸ Found in: Francine Klagsburn. *Voices of Wisdom: Jewish Ideals and Ethics for Everyday Living* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, Inc., 1980), 6.

salvation? Did you engage in the dialectics of wisdom? Did you look deeply into matters?" (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shabbat, 312)

- Rava wrote: If people see that painful sufferings come to them, let them examine their deeds. "Let us search out our way in life and return to Adonai." (Lamentations 3:40) If they examine their deeds and find nothing, let them seek the cause in the neglect of Torah. "Happy is the person whom You instruct, Adonai, and teach from the midst of Torah." (Psalm 94:12) If they still find that this is not the reason, they may be sure these are sufferings of love. "Adonai loves whomever Adonai corrects." (Proverbs 3:12) If the Holy One Blessed be He loves a person, that person is crushed by God's painful sufferings. (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Berachot 5a)

Step Five: *We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

Explanation: The previous step is introspective. On the path of recovery, one must also be held accountable to other people. This reinforces the notion of the first steps, that one is not alone in the process. It is not healthy to live in complete isolation, nor is it possible, particularly for an addict, to do so. Steps four and five are connected in that they deal with admitting our failures and wrongdoings, as well as our successes and our decisions that lead to positive consequences. Once an individual is able to admit wrong and right to him or herself, the next part of the process is to admit these same wrongs and rights to others.

In addition to revealing our inner-feelings to others as a sign of actually admitting these feelings, this step alerts other people with whom we have relationships to begin to understand us. An addict's life is a life that is completely out of control. Other people need to grasp why this happened and how the treatment can help. In order for this to occur, others must gain insight into the complexities of the addict's life.

In a Jewish Context: The true feeling of liberation comes only when we admit that we were wrong. Assuming responsibility for our actions comes when we let others know that we are taking responsibility. This coincides with the Jewish tradition of asking others for forgiveness. Community is essential in Judaism, and maintaining close connections with those around is important.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- The gates of prayer are sometimes open and sometimes closed, but the gates of repentance are always open. As the sea is always accessible, so is the hand of the Holy One Blessed be He always open to receive you in penitence. (Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:12)
- A woman was known as the gossip of her town. Every time she saw a friend, she would tell a story about another person. Sometimes the stories that she told were truthful, but often times they stretched the truth. One day, the woman was out in the village, and she realized that no one would say anything to her. She was troubled by this, and she went to see the rabbi about her problem. The rabbi told her that she should take a feather filled pillowcase up to the top of the hill in the middle of town and shake the pillow as hard as she could. Following the advice of the rabbi, the

woman climbed to the top of a hill and shook her feather pillowcase. All of the feathers came out and blew in the wind. The woman went down the mountain and still felt as though people were not speaking to her. She went to see the rabbi again about her problem. This time, he told her to go and collect the feathers from her pillow. She went to the hill to collect the feathers, but quickly realized that this was impossible – the feathers had scattered in the wind. When she went back to the rabbi to ask for an explanation, the rabbi said to her, “the feathers are like your words, once they are out there, they spread around, and you cannot take them back.” (Traditional story)

- R. Judah said: Repentance effects half [of the atonement], while prayer effects all [of it]. But R. Joshua ben Levi said the opposite: Repentance effects all [of the atonement], while prayer effects only half. (Leviticus Rabbah 10:5)

Step Six: *We are entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character.*

Explanation: An addiction is a result of character flaws that exist. When a person is unable to deal with aspects of life, a change must be made. The first five steps are the necessary preparations for making major changes in lifestyle. It is not effective to completely quit gambling without readying the mind for the consequences of quitting. There is evidence of this in everyday life. Celebrating the secular New Year, many make resolutions, claiming that they will give up a behavior such as eating excessively, smoking, or drinking. Just days after the resolutions are made, they are also broken.

Without proper preparation, planning and understanding the effects that abstinence will have, one cannot completely give something up.³⁹

This step is significant because through it, one demonstrates that he or she is ready to be freed from a particular behavior that is damaging. In the previous step, the person admits to character flaws and unhealthy behaviors. That does not always mean that the person is ready to be relieved of these harmful ways. Here, the addict declares that there is both recognition that certain behaviors are harmful, and that these behaviors are no longer necessary in order to cope with life.

In a Jewish Context: Change is difficult and uncomfortable. Rabbi Kerry Olitzky, a man who dedicates his time to helping Jewish people who are affected by the disease of addiction, writes, "What is so frightening about changing is that we find ourselves as someone else without being sure how we became that new person. People in recovery have said to us, 'How strange it feels. I like who I am, but it's not really me.'"⁴⁰ Knowing that another step follows is helpful. The difficult task of making lifestyle changes is made easier when there is awareness that there is more therapy and support.

Twerski offers a suggestion for an "acid test" to determine whether or not someone is actually ready to move beyond step six. When making teshuvah, a person must be willing to leave the objectionable behavior behind. A true act of teshuvah requires more commitment to Torah and to living an ethical life than was present when the transgression was committed. The example the Twerski gives is of an alcoholic. If a person would have gone out during a blizzard to get alcohol, the truest test of his or her

³⁹ Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., *Waking up in Time* (New York: Topper Books, 1990), 61.

⁴⁰ Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Stuart A. Copans, M.D., *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), 59.

recovery is if he or she would also go out in a blizzard for a support meeting.⁴¹ Thus, the process of teshuvah is woven into this step.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- Have a discussion on the notion of free will in Judaism. While humans are given some degree of free will, it is also believed that God is omnipotent and that there is a “master plan” of what is to happen in the universe.
- R. Hanina said: The seal of the Holy One, blessed be He, is *emet*⁴². In explaining the significance of the letters in this word, Resh Lakish said: The first letter, *alef*, is the first letter of the alphabet; the second letter, *mem*, is in the middle of the alphabet, and the third letter, *tav*, is the last letter, thus signifying, “I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me, there is no God.” (Isaiah 44:6) (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shabbat 55a)

Step Seven: *We humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings.*

Explanation: In the first several steps, it is established that a Higher Power exists. Then, the addict admits to having certain character flaws and problems. Here, the addict asks this Higher Power for help to remove these unhealthy problems. It is difficult to be humble. The previous steps help to prepare the addict for this stage. This step does not intend to make a person feel completely powerless, but rather empowers the addict. Without the strength to admit that help is needed, one cannot even approach this stage of the process.

⁴¹ Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., *Self-Improvement? I'm Jewish!* (New York: Shaar Press, 1995), 36-37.

⁴² Emet is the Hebrew word for truth.

In a Jewish Context: Humility must be defined using Jewish criteria in order to understand this step in a Jewish context. "In the Jewish tradition humility is the awareness that 'I' am nothing but dust; the awareness that my ego-centered self is not my true nature, but only one facet of a greater Self that is not 'me' but the cosmic 'You'. Humility is the awakening to the oceanic and to the ego as a temporary expression of the oceanic. Humility arises when the ego returns to its place. Humility comes when we recognize the temporal nature of the 'I', when we accept our own transience and mortality."⁴³

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- Our masters taught: Adam was created on the eve of Shabbat. Why? So that if man's opinion of himself should become overwhelming, he would be reminded that the gnat preceded him in the order of creation.
(Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin 38a)
- They sent word from there [the Land of Israel]: Who is destined from the world-to-come? He who is meek and humble, bows on entering and on leaving, continually occupies himself with Torah, and takes no credit to himself. (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin 88b)
- An arrogant person is not accepted even in his own household...At first members of his family jump to his every word; after awhile they find him repulsive. (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sotah 47b)

⁴³ Rabbi Rami Shapiro, Ph.D., *This is the Path: Twelve Step Programs in a Jewish Context* (Miami: EnR Wordsmiths, 1989), 53.

- Keep two truths in your pocket, and take them out according to the need of the moment. Let one be: "For my sake the world was created." And the other; "I am but dust and ashes." (Chasidic saying)

Step Eight: *We made a list to all persons we have harmed, and are willing to make amends to them all.*

Explanation: While the steps in the twelve step approach seem like baby steps, they are actually calling upon the person in recovery to make significant lifestyle changes. The system is methodic, there are exact steps that must be followed for results to be effective. As much as people do not want to admit that they have flaws, admitting fault when others are involved is even more complex. In the process of cleansing mind and body, relationships with other people are important. Reconciliation is necessary, which implies that one must know who he or she has harmed in the past. Taking responsibility for past actions, accepting fault and preparing to make amends is central to the recovery process.

In a Jewish Context: Similar to the Jewish context established in previous steps, this step relates to the Jewish notion of *teshuvah*. The process of repenting includes identifying the people who have been hurt, and reflecting on the ways in which the relationship was damaged. Making a spiritual connection requires the ability to take responsibility for our relationships with other, whether they are positive or negative. A list of this nature might not have an end; reviewing interactions with others will take time. Likewise, making *teshuvah* is not bound by time.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- If a man is penitent, one must not say to him, "Remember your former deeds." If he is the son of proselytes, he should not be taunted, "Remember the deeds of your ancestors." If he is a proselyte and comes to study the Torah, one must not say to him, "Shall the mouth that ate unclean and forbidden foods...come to study the Torah that was spoken by the mouth of the All Powerful?" (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Bava Mezia 58b)
- My hope is that God, in His mercy, will grant me a complete healing among the other sick people of His people Israel, and that in His abundant kindness He will enable me to return to Him in love. Especially do I pray that He enable me to mend whatever wrong I may have committed, whether in man's relationship to God or man's relationship to man, and that He grace me with the opportunity to repay my debts. To my great regret, I do not remember all my debts in detail. But I hope that God will bestir me and remind me of them all, and that He will help me to repay them. (Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook)⁴⁴

Step Nine: *We made direct amends to others wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

Explanation: Now, the addict is required to go out to other people. Admitting fault to others, saying "sorry" and asking for forgiveness are incredible acts. Humility must override the natural tendency to defend the self, no "buts" can be attached to the

⁴⁴ Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Stuart A. Copans, M.D., *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), 74.

apology. One in recovery maintains that he or she is responsible for the wrongdoing that he or she caused. This act frees the addict from the negativity associated with the lies and is a step toward reconciling relationships that have soured.

In a Jewish Context: Yom Kippur is the most sacred day in the Jewish year. Atonement is not reserved for this day alone, but is expected on any day of the year. The following prayer is part of the Yom Kippur confessional.

Before a person is healed, he must acknowledge his illness.

Before a person finds light, she must know her own darkness.

Before a people is forgiven, it must confess its sins.

We confess our sins and those of our fellows

for we are responsible, one for the other.

Heal us, Adonai, and lead us through darkness to light.⁴⁵

During the High Holiday period, between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, the Jewish people approach those whom they have harmed to ask for forgiveness and to accept responsibility for wrongdoings when appropriate. This concept parallels step nine.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- A person should always try to be on best terms with his friends and his relatives and with all people, even the heathen on the street, so that he may be beloved in heaven above and well-liked below, and accepted by his fellow creatures. It has been said of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai that no one ever greeted him first, before he greeted them, not even the heathen on the street. (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Berakhot 172)

⁴⁵ Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Stuart A. Copans, M.D., *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), 81.

- When you make a friend, begin by testing him, and be in no hurry to trust him. Some friends are loyal when it suits them, but desert you in time of trouble. Some friends turn into enemies and shame you by making the quarrel public. Another sits at your table but is nowhere to be found in time of trouble; when you are prosperous, he will be your second self and make free with your servants, but if you come down in the world, he will turn against you and you will not see him again. Hold your enemies at a distance, and keep a wary eye on your friends. A faithful friend is a secure shelter; whoever finds one has found a treasure. A faithful friend is beyond price; his worth is more than money can buy...Do not desert an old friend; a new one is not worth as much. A new friend is like new wine; you do not enjoy drinking it until it has matured. (Wisdom of Ben Sira 6:7-15, 9:10)

Step Ten: *We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong we promptly admitted it.*

Explanation: Recovery is an ongoing process. While there is no one time cure for the disease of addiction, there is a recovery process that is never-ending. After a person has experienced the previous steps, he or she must realize that the steps must be repeated eternally. If the process ever ends, it could mean that the addictive behavior is still in control and that life is still unmanageable. Sigmund Freud applies the term *repetition compulsion* to the act of repeating a behavior that is known to be unhealthy for

no apparent reason.⁴⁶ Rather than repeat the manifestation of the addiction, this step calls for the addict to repeat healthy and acceptable behaviors. A person who is not mature enough to admit fault is likely to repeat bad behaviors because they do not seem wrong. There is no need for correction if something already seems right.

This step is particularly important because it deals with the future. While prior steps rely upon past experiences, this step directs the life of the addict to the future. This is a constant reminder of the days when the addict was abusing a substance. The addict has been through tremendous change, and it is easy to slip back into the comfortable, destructive ways of the past. With a reminder of the way that life was, unmanageable and harmful, there is less temptation to revert to past ways. Olitzky compares recovery to breathing; both are constant and life depends on both.⁴⁷

In a Jewish Context: Establishing a sacred time and space to reflect is recommended. Setting time and space apart is also a principle of Judaism. There is time set apart each day, three times a day, when a Jew prays. This is a model for reflection and treatment. Maintaining a schedule allows one to internalize the steps and the elements of recovery. Making a spiritual connection is central to this process. Everything is holy, the challenge is finding the holiness that exist around us. "We are not seeking to escape the everyday, but to hallow it. And we do this by cleansing ourselves of the negative behaviors that keep us from entering the world, and all beings in it, with a sense of awe, wonder, kindness, and compassion."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., *Waking up in Time* (New York: Topper Books, 1990), 85.

⁴⁷ Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Stuart A. Copans, M.D., *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery* (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), 83.

⁴⁸ Rabbi Rami Shapiro, Ph.D., *This is the Path: Twelve Step Programs in a Jewish Context* (Miami: EnR Wordsmiths, 1989), 13-14.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- The process of individual teshuvah (repentance – literally, turning around) is so demanding and requires such concentration that I don't see how we can achieve reconciliation within the groups to which we belong at the same time. Group renewal and mending should be done, but it is so easy to deflect personal teshuvah that we might do best not to find justification for it by including corporate teshuvah in Rosh Hashana. Alternatively, were we to adopt a more frequent process of teshuvah all year round, on each Shabbat or every Rosh Hodesh, for example, we might with greater equanimity devote Rosh Hashana to our corporate teshuvah. (Edward Greenstein)⁴⁹
- R. Jacob said: This world is like a vestibule before the world-to-come. Fix yourself up in the vestibule, so that you may enter the banquet hall. He used to say: Better one hour spent in repentance and good deeds in this world than the whole life in the world-to-come; and better one hour of bliss in the world-to-come than the whole life in this world. (Pirkei Avot 4:16)
- "A twisted thing cannot be made straight, a lack cannot be made good." (Ecclesiastes 1:15) In this world, he who is twisted can be made straight, and he who lacks something can have it made good. But in the time to come, he who is twisted cannot be made straight, and he who lacks something cannot have it made good. (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:15)

⁴⁹ Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide & Commentary* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), 105.

Step Eleven: *We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.*

Explanation: Spirituality has been essential since the beginning of the twelve steps. Working as partners with God, or another Higher Power, is the basis of the recovery program – without this partnership, the addict will not succeed in rehabilitation. Spirituality is contingent upon God and man. Prayer and meditation gives the addict an opportunity to set aside sacred time for reflection and concentration on maintaining an ethically sound lifestyle.

In a Jewish Context: Again, this step parallels certain Jewish values. In Judaism, prayer is not necessarily offered to God on behalf of the individual. There is an expectation that Jewish people offer prayer to God. This is part of the covenant that was established between man and God during Biblical times. It is a Jewish belief that God is everywhere. A certain mindset is required to identify God.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- A story of Rabban Gamaliel: When he got married, he recited the Shema on his wedding night. His disciples said to him, “Our master, did you not teach us that a bridegroom is exempt from saying the Shema?” He answered, “I will not listen to the suggestion that I should cast off the kingship of Heaven from myself even for a moment.” (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Berakhot 16a-b)

- Third best is to think about prayer, second best is to pray, best is to be prayer. (Rabbi Chaim Stern)
- R. Hanina ben Dosa had a neighbor, a woman, who was building a house. She found that the beams were not long enough to frame the house. She came to him and said, "I am building a house and the beams do not reach far enough." He asked her for her name. She said, "Eikhu." He said, "Eikhu, may your beams reach further." Immediately, they reached the walls. Another man said, "I saw the house, and its beams projected a measure on each side; and I was told, 'This is the house that, through his prayer, R. Hanina ben Dosa framed with beams.'" (Babylonian Talmud)
- What is the meaning of the verse, "Follow none but Adonai?" (Deuteronomy 13:15). Is it possible for a human being actually to follow the ways of God? What it means is that we should imitate the attributes of God.

Step Twelve: *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry the message and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Explanation: These twelve steps were written with careful consideration, particularly in terms of the wording that is used. Although written in the past tense, the twelve steps remain with the person eternally. Twerski interprets this step in an interesting way. "The twelfth step is carefully worded: '...we tried to carry this message,' and the corollary is 'Carry the message, not the person.' Our responsibility is to try to be of help to others, not to control them. The other person may not wish to listen

to the message, and that is the prerogative. *Imposing* the message on others is not *carrying* it; in doing so, we overstep the boundary of genuine help and enter the area of co-dependence.”⁵⁰

It is the obligation of the one who has worked in a recovery program, who has made progress, and who has regained some amount of control over his or her life, to support others who are in need to overcome self-destructive behaviors. The addict who has transformed his life through the twelve step process knows to keep these steps close through every moment of life. With this transformation, the addict is able to live a positive life, characterized by a spiritual connection and the realization that one cannot have complete control over every element.

In a Jewish Context: A Jew is responsible for every other Jew. This principle guides Jewish peoplehood. A Jew is obligated to teach, to support, and to help others. When assistance is granted, it benefits both the one who helps and the one who is helped.

Text Support from the Jewish Tradition:

- Discussion on the principle of “Every Jew is responsible for every other Jew”
- A man came to the sage Shammai, and said to him, “I will convert to Judaism if you will teach me all that is in Torah while I stand on one foot.” Shammai pushed the man away with the builder’s measure he held in his hand. The man went before Hillel and repeated his proposal. Hillel told him, “What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary – go and learn it.” (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shabbat 31a)

⁵⁰ Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., *Waking up in Time* (New York: Topper Books, 1990), 101.

- Love your neighbor as yourself. (Leviticus 19:18)
- There are four types of men: One who says, "Mine is mine and yours is yours" – this is the commonplace type. But some say this is the Sodom type. "Mine is yours and yours is mine" – the ignorant person. "Mine is yours and yours is yours," – the saint. "Mine is mine and yours is mine," – the wicked. (Pirkei Avot 5:13).
- Whoever can prevent members of his household from committing a sin, but does not, is punished for the sins of this household. If he can prevent his fellow citizens from committing sins, but does not, he is punished for the sins of his fellow citizens. If he can prevent the whole world from committing sins, but does not, he is punished for the sins of the whole world. (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shabbat 54b)
- They shall stumble one because of another. (Leviticus 26:37) – one because of the iniquity of another. The verse teaches that all Israel are responsible for another. (Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shavuot 39a)

Chapter IV

A Focus on Prevention

Introduction

Scholarship has dedicated incredible amounts of time to finding ways to treat those who are affected by addiction.¹ As there is growing recognition that approaches to dealing with addiction need not be specific to the addictive behavior, programs effective in treating those who are classified as addicts are growing in popularity and in accomplishment. While there is no cure for addiction, an addict will always have tendencies to return to the addictive behavior, therapy exists to help people maintain stability. Treatment programs are effective; however programs that promote prevention would be more useful in lowering the number of people who are affected by addiction.

Statistics from one study conducted in New Jersey in the 1990's indicate that of 892 eleventh and twelfth graders interviewed, 91% have gambled, and 5.7% met the criteria established to define a pathological gambler.² An astounding number of children participate in gambling. Unfortunately, this childhood fun can lead to compulsive gambling. Moreover, there is evidence from a study conducted in Britain that concludes that non-pathologic gamblers remember their first gambling experience (on average) at age eleven-and-a-half. Those who are compulsive gamblers, or addicts, remember

¹ The outstanding number of articles and websites found on the internet, along with the journal articles dedicated to the subject of gambling prevention and recovery, confirm that scholars consider this an area of concern.

² *Pathological Gambling: A Critical Review*. Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of Pathological gambling; Committee on Law and Justice; Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; National Research Council. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999), 113.

gambling at a slightly younger age, (on average) 10.9 years old.³ Developing appropriate prevention programming will certainly help lower the exposure of young people to gambling. If educators and doctors can warn people about the dangers of gambling, and help people understand that occasional gambling can be managed, it is likely that the number of compulsive gamblers will decrease rather than continue to increase as is currently the case.

There is evidence that supports the idea that nature contributes to pathological gamblers. Due to the relative newness of research in the area of addiction, it is not yet clear to what degree nature and nurture contribute to the disease of addiction.

Pathological Gambling: A Critical Review includes an explanation that it is not clear if personality leads to gambling or if gambling leads to one having abnormal personality traits.⁴ There are certainly environmental factors that encourage a person to continue to gamble. The thrill of winning, the positive reinforcement that one gets for beating the dealer, and the rush to try again when there is a near win are all societal factors that encourage one to maintain the gambling addiction.⁵

Addiction does not need to be compartmentalized based on religious affiliation. The disease does not need to be categorized based on the substance or behavior that is abused. Furthermore, a person of any religion can become addicted to any substance or behavior. The mental processes involved in addiction are similar, regardless of the person's background or the substance. Although this is true of the nature of addiction, it is appropriate for religious leaders, teachers in secular classrooms, employers, and others

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* 34

⁵ *Ibid.* 39

who educate to include a component that addresses gambling. Therefore, a curriculum for gambling prevention, specifically for the use of Jewish clergy and teachers for their congregants, is both necessary and appropriate.

Within the Jewish world, there are many things that can be done to serve as addiction prevention. Along with implementing curricula in religious schools and camp settings, two settings that attract many Jewish adolescents, continuing programs are required. Jewish clergy can preach on the issue of gambling, cautioning congregants against becoming so involved that gambling becomes a compulsion. Offering a support group for recovering gambling addicts and their families sends a message to the community that the congregation recognizes that there is a problem of compulsive gambling within the community. Publishing materials that explain the consequences of gambling, particularly if there are regular bingo nights or gambling related fundraisers at the congregation, alerts congregants to the dangers, and also informs them of the difference between social gambling, which is not problematic, and problem gambling, which is. While it is necessary to address the difficulties that exist, it is perhaps more important to provide prevention when it matters, when people are young and introduced to gambling.

In his rabbinic thesis, titled *Addiction and the Torah*, Rabbi Robert A. Davis provides an outline of two different approaches, or models, that explain addiction. First, Davis describes the more widely accepted model that addiction is a disease that has no actual cure. There are ways to treat addicts; one example of treatment is the twelve step process. This treatment should not be confused with a cure, as it simply helps the addict to redirect his or her temptation to use the abused substance.

Alternatively, Davis explains a second theory of addiction. This model, called the Life Process Model⁶. This model emphasizes the importance of primary prevention as a way to aid people in resisting temptations that would eventually lead to an addiction. These negative tendencies to depend on gambling, on drugs, on alcohol, on shopping, or on eating, are dissuaded with the program's emphasis on self empowerment and self confidence.⁷ The following chart, taken originally from the work done by Peele, Brodsky, and Arnold, defines certain differences and similarities between the two processes; addiction as a disease and the life process model:

⁶ Stanton Peele, Archie Brodsky, and Mary Arnold, *The Truth about Addiction and Recovery* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991) as found in Robert Davis, *Addiction and the Torah: A Jewish Community Primary Prevention Program* (Rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1992), 101.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Addiction as a Disease Model	Life Process Model
1. Addiction is inbred and biological	1. Addiction is a way of coping with yourself and your world
2. The solution is medical treatment and membership in spiritual groups such as AA	2. The solution requires self awareness, new coping skills, and changing your environment.
3. Addiction is all-or-nothing; you either are or you are not an addict	3. Addiction is a continuum; your behavior is more or less addicted
4. Addiction is permanent and you can relapse at any moment	4. Addiction can be outgrown
5. Addicts are "in denial" and must be forced to acknowledge that they have a disease	5. An addict should identify problems and solutions according to what will best work for him/herself
6. The recovering addict is the expert on addiction	6. Those without an addiction problem are the best models
7. Addiction is a "primary" disease	7. Addiction stems from other life problems
8. Your main associates must be other recovering addicts	8. You should associate with a normal range of people
9. You must accept the disease philosophy to recover	9. Getting better is not a matter of believing a dogma
10. Surrendering to a higher power is the key to recovery	10. You must develop your own power in order to get better. ⁸

⁸ *Ibid.* 103.

Using Values to Prevent Addiction

There are an array factors that contribute to an addiction, it is impossible to prescribe one form of treatment and to highlight one symptom. While these two models greatly contribute to the understanding and analysis of addiction, I suggest that it is the blending of the two that actually will lead to a reduced number of addictions. We may have been seriously influenced during youth, directing us toward an addiction, but we also have the capacity to steer clear of negative behaviors. Early prevention will allow a person to better control tendencies of wanting to turn toward an addictive substance. Thus, study and a greater understanding of the factors that possibly contribute to addiction, and of the various types of recourse that might be helpful in providing treatment, is necessary. To outline these factors, Peele, Brodsky and Arnold include several values that they feel are a person must have in order to limit the chances of addiction. These values, and a brief description, include⁹:

1. *Self-control and moderation:* Having complete control over every aspect of life is not possible, as Rabbi Abraham Twerski points out. When a person thinks that he or she must have complete control, things get most jumbled. Demonstrating self control and restraint, when considering a second helping of food, a second round of taking money out of the bank for gambling, or a second drink, is a value that must be taught and understood. An addict does not internalize this value, and is unable to resist the temptation of a second or third portion. Each person must have an appropriate definition of what is enough.

⁹ These values are taken from the work of Peele, Brodsky, and Arnold (as found in the Davis thesis). The interpretations, however, are not necessarily those found in the book, *The Truth about Addiction and Recovery*, but instead belong to the author of this thesis.

2. *Accomplishment and competence:* When a person has clear life goals, and is motivated by the desire to accomplish these goals, he or she is less likely to encounter problems with addiction. A person who values mastery and achievement will concentrate on goals and personal values, rather than on gambling money in a casino. One who feels a sense of accomplishment, and has a sense of personal pride, may gamble occasionally on a social level; however, the gambling is under control due to the other factors of this person's life.
3. *Self-consciousness and awareness of one's environment:* For many, an addiction serves as a method to escape from reality. When the actual environment is more than one can handle, it is easy to flee from this environment through use of a substance. Casinos, for example, with flashing lights, free drinks, and entertainment, are more inviting than a house with screaming children, or an office with piles of papers to sort through. Through an honest assessment of one's environment, one can better understand positive factors, and work to change those factors that have a negative influence or impact on life.
4. *Health:* Most people who do not succumb to an addiction are able to do so because they value their health. Smoking, over-eating, drinking, and to a certain extent, gambling and shopping, can negatively affect one's health. Eventually, a compulsive gambler might spend so much time in a casino, or at home placing bets with a bookie, that appearance and general health are of little consideration.
5. *Self-esteem:* Self-esteem is self-protection. High self-esteem reduces the need to find an escape from the everyday routine. If one feels a sense of disappointment, rather than turn to gambling, he would find an actual solution - a long term fix

rather than a short term fix -to the problem. Linked to health, an addict does not place high value on himself. With greater self-esteem, a person is less likely to be involved in an action that is self-destructive.

6. *Relationships with others, community and society:* Societal norms are created because there are certain values that a majority of people support. An addict either ignores or does not understand these norms, and therefore, is not disturbed if she does not comply with them. Fostering healthy relationships with those around is critical in maintaining stability and avoiding addiction.

These universal values have obvious connections to the Jewish religion. In addition to these, the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (BJENY) has developed a curriculum for substance abuse prevention in which they highlight the values self-worth, responsibility, communication, decision making, being an informed consumer, and Jewish identity.¹⁰ Likewise, in *Teaching Hot Topics*, Jewish values are highlighted in a section on eating disorders and substance abuse. Humility, wisdom, faith, acceptance of suffering, preventing accidents, courage, attentiveness, taking care of your body, happiness, and repentance, are highlighted as just some of the Jewish values that are helpful in understanding addiction.¹¹ Strong similarities are evident between the values expressed by each of the above sources. All of these values, required for healthy living and avoiding addiction, are principle Jewish

¹⁰ http://www.bjeny.org/100.asp?dept=Student%20Health&Programs_ID=40

¹¹ Susan Freeman, *Teaching Hot Topics: Jewish Values, Resources, and Activities* (Denver: A.R.E. Publishing, Inc., 2003), 91-92.

beliefs. In the following section, each will be used as a component of a prevention program.

The New York State Education Department suggests the following guidelines on how to teach alcohol prevention¹². The strategies can be altered in order to address the problem of gambling among children:

(1) Grades K-3

- (a) Practical experiences in decision making
- (b) Care for the body
- (c) Nutrition

(2) Grades 4-6

- (a) Cognition is important
- (b) Kids make responsible decisions

(3) Grades 7-9

- (a) Kids are aware that their peers might start to experiment with alcohol
- (b) This issue must be addressed

(4) High School

- (a) Discuss identity
- (b) Discuss self-image

The department identifies the following as approaches to take when teaching children about substance abuse¹³.

¹² Melvin R. Warren, "Alcohol and the Jewish Community: Where do we go from Here? – Strategies for Prevention and Education in the Schools," in *Alcoholism in the Jewish Community*, Rabbi Allan Blaine, ed. (New York: Commission on Synagogue Relations – Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, 1980), 225.

1. Be positive: Use the interests and needs of students to drive instruction.
2. Be humanizing: The approach should be non-judgmental, discussions should be uninhibited.
3. Understand the importance of home life: Express sensitivity toward family attitudes toward drinking. Do not place a moralistic label on drinking.
4. Be open-minded: Do not impose conclusions on students, allow them the freedom to make their own conclusions.
5. Be familiar with the community's attitudes: Cultural attitudes are very influential. Talk to local people to understand these attitudes.
6. Present objective information
7. Emphasize that alcohol is not a necessity: There are other ways to deal with situations and to overcome difficulties.
8. Provide alternatives.

¹³ *Ibid.* 226-227

A Suggested Curriculum

The twelve step process emphasizes a belief in a Higher Power. Prayer and belief in God are integral parts of Judaism. It is evident that prayer and belief in a Higher Power support one's recovery from addiction. More importantly, Jewish liturgy and Judaism done right not only support recovery, but also support prevention. By establishing a firm connection to Judaism, one will not experience the emptiness felt by a person who is addicted to a substance. In treatment programs, establishing a spiritual connection is primary. If children learn how to establish and maintain this connection, they will not experience the void that an addict experiences.

Based on the statistics that reveal the connection between compulsive gambling and gambling at an early age, the lessons to follow are geared toward the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, although they can easily be adapted for programming for older students through adulthood. Frequently, addiction is a result when a person feels a need for something. Addiction fills a void in one's life. By encouraging a religious connection and a search for spirituality, this void can be filled.

The following curriculum is presented as five separate lessons. Each lesson is based primarily on one Jewish value, and each value is taught through several different activities. The curriculum is suggested for fourth and fifth grade students, as this is a formative age. The curriculum can certainly be adapted for family education programs, for adult education programs, and to educate children of other ages. Assuming that addiction results when a person lacks certain values, the goal of this curriculum is to create a strong foundation of Jewish values. Given that certain characteristics of

addictions are generic, the lessons are not solely intended to dissuade children from gambling, but rather the intention is to give children a basic understanding of the nature of addiction.

As it is presented, the curriculum will work best in an environment where there are a series of classes. Certain adaptations are possible, and the components can be used in different settings (such as retreats and youth group programming). The lessons provided are approximately two hours in length, although each activity may require more or less time. It is important to be flexible with these lessons as the topics are sensitive and intense in nature. Students should be encouraged to participate in discussions and much of the learning depends on student initiative. Student-centered learning dominates these lessons.

Teachers are encouraged to use other professionals and community members with experiences with addiction and gambling. Consulting others will enhance the learning. This curriculum aims to prevent gambling addiction. It is difficult to prevent something that will manifest in years to come, but the effects of establishing strong Jewish values can reduce the number of adults who become addicted to gambling and other addictive behaviors.

Preview of the Lessons

Lesson One:

Concept: Addiction

Value: Self-control and moderation, Health

Lesson Two:

Concept: Gambling and Judaism

Value: Self-esteem

Lesson Three:

Concept: Gambling

Value: Community

Lesson Four:

Concept: Treatment

Value: Spirituality/Religious Connection/Belief in God

Lesson Five:

Concept: Responsibility

Value: Responsibility

Lesson One: Addiction

Goals – By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define addiction in a general sense
2. Understand that addiction is a mental illness
3. Grasp the concept that any person can become an addict and that any behavior can be addictive
4. Express a sense of self-awareness
5. Understand how maintaining personal health is linked to addiction

Time Frame:

:00-:15 Introduction/Set Induction

:15-:35 Text Study

:35-:55 Teach definitions

:55-:60 Break

:60-:80 Continuum

:80-:105 Game

:105-:120

:00-:15 Introduction/Set Induction:

Supplies:

Worksheets (cut into sections, each student gets one)

Pencils/Pens

Directions to Activity:

Give each student one of the following scenes. While distributing the stories, make it clear that these subjects may be sensitive subjects to some, or even all, of those in class. Each student should (following the directions) write the end to the story. The students will not write names on their papers, this will be anonymous. At the end, the papers will be collected and some of them will be read aloud to the class.

Why This Activity:

This activity will serve as an introduction to the concept of morality and addiction. Addiction not only affects the addict, but also has an impact on friends, family, co-workers, and even strangers. One of the reasons that the rabbis have a difficult time prohibiting gambling is that while it may be morally objectionable, or it may lead to unethical behavior, gambling is not inherently bad. There is an ambivalence surrounding gambling in the Jewish community. Each scenario in this activity links an addictive behavior with an unethical behavior, demonstrating that the two are frequently connected. This activity will be the initial exposure that the students have to various types of behaviors that can manifest into addiction. Before focusing solely on gambling, it is important to contextualize gambling as an addiction.

WORKSHEET 1.1

Instructions: Do not write your name on this paper! Read the scenario. Take a few minutes to think about your response, and then write it on the paper. No one will know which response is yours.

1. You are at Temple on Friday night. During services, some of your classmates sneak take two bottles of wine from the *Kiddush* table. When services are over, your friends ask you if you want to join them in an empty classroom to try some of the *Kiddush* wine that they took. You are not sure if you want to join them. What would you do if you were in this situation?
2. At an after school basketball game, some friends point out to you that a parent left a pack of cigarettes on the bleacher. They dare you to go and steal them. If you steal them, you know that they will want to go outside to try to smoke them. If you don't accept the dare, they will make fun of you and laugh at you. What do you do?
3. At summer camp, your counselors have just told your cabin that it is time for lights out. Once the cabin is quiet, the counselors will go for some time off. Your cabin mates invite you to join them in a friendly game of poker. You know that the camp rules say that gambling is not allowed in camp, but you really want a chance at winning your friends' candy that they bought at canteen that afternoon.
4. Your parents bought you the expensive sweater that you really wanted. You wore it to school and accidentally spilled paint on it during art class. You don't want to upset your parents because the sweater is ruined. Your friend says she is going to the mall after school, and offers to steal a new sweater for you. What do you tell her?
5. Your friend is over at your house. You see him go into the medicine cabinet in the bathroom, and confront him. He tells you that he likes the taste of cough medicine, and offers a taste to you. You finish the bottle of cough syrup, and go to play video games. Later that night, your mom asks you why there is an empty bottle of cough syrup in the garbage. What do you tell her?
6. Your friend invited you over for a slumber party. Her parents are going to be home, so your parents allow you to go. Late at night, after her parents have gone to sleep, a group of kids from school sneak into the house. They open the liquor cabinet and start passing bottles of wine around. What do you do?

After each student has had some time to react to the scenario, collect the papers and put them aside. Continue by introducing the focus of the next unit of study. The following are suggestions of points to include in the introduction:

- The issue of addiction is a sensitive issue, people should not judge classmates based on what is said in class.
- What is said in class should not be repeated outside of the classroom. The ONLY exception to this rule is if the teacher hears something that legally must be reported to the rabbi or to another authority.
- There will be an anonymous question box left in the classroom. Any student who wants to ask a question privately can put the question in the box. It will be checked regularly.

Ask for volunteers to read through the original stories that were handed out. Each student only read one scene, and needs to know the other scenes before hearing student responses.

:15-:35 Text Study

Supplies:

Text Study Worksheet

Question Worksheet

Pens/Pencils

Directions for Activity:

Divide students into groups of four. Have students recite the blessing for studying text. Hand out the text study packets. This text study will deal with Jewish views of health and taking care of oneself. In their small groups, students will read each text. Each student should choose one text that he/she thinks stands out (it could be one that is surprising, one that the student agrees with etc.) After each student has had an opportunity to select one "outstanding" text, the groups should work together to answer the questions on the attached sheet.

Why this Activity:

Text study is central to Jewish learning. Along with teaching opinions and facts on Jewish content, studying text can influence a person's Jewish identity. The texts chosen reflect a wide variety of historical times and are taken from various movements of Judaism. These statements reflect Jewish thinking regarding addictions and maintaining personal health. Based on the work done by BJENY and the New York State Education Department¹⁴, health is an important component of addiction prevention. Judaism places extreme value on health, requiring that one seek healing and treatment for medical

¹⁴ Refer to the beginning section of this chapter, pages 90-91.

concerns. The Talmud states that one should profane Shabbat in order to save a human life.¹⁵ The selections to follow emphasize the importance of health and begin to explain the connection between mental health and addiction.

WORKSHEET 1.2

TEXT SHEET:

You shall be very careful with your lives.

Deuteronomy 4:15

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

Midrash

If you are in pain, go to the physician.

Talmud tractate Baba Kamma 46b

Those who have become slaves to habit are no longer their own masters, and cannot act differently, even if they want to. Their will is held in bondage by certain habits which have become second nature to them.

Moses Hayyim Luzzato, *The Path of the Upright*

The purpose of maintaining the body in good health is to make it possible for you to acquire wisdom.

Maimonides

Seeing that keeping the body healthy and whole is the way of God, for it is impossible to understand or know anything about the Creator if one is sick. Therefore, a person must distance himself from things which destroy the body and accustom himself to things which heal the body.

Maimonides

Rav Tanchuma said: Wine – its own mother (the vine) cannot stand up under the weight of the juice of the grapes, and you expect to stand up under it? Though the vine is propped up with many reeds and many pronged rods, it cannot stand up, and sags under the weight of the juice in the grapes. And you expect to stand up under wine?

Midrash Leviticus Rabba

It is certainly forbidden to bring oneself to a craving greater than that for food and for a thing which a person has not need for.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

If marijuana is forbidden because it destroys the body, arouses a great craving, and serves no purpose, then cigarettes should be forbidden for the same reason.

Rabbi David Golinkin

Wine has always played a visibly central role in Jewish religious culture. This is evident in the fact that the tradition ordains special blessings to be recited prior to and following its consumption, just as it does for bread. The use of wine is required in such ritual practices as Kiddush, the four cups at the Passover Seder, and the celebration of weddings and Brit Milah.

Rabbi Mark Washofsky

Rav Avdimi of Haifa said: Before a man eats and drinks, he (being distraught) has two hearts. After he eats and drinks, he has but one heart.

Baba Batra 12b

WORKSHEET 1.3

Question Sheet:

1. Make a list of thoughts that describe how Judaism views health.
2. Why is it important to maintain your health?
3. How does each of you stay healthy?
4. What do you do that might jeopardize your health?
5. Make a list of all of the people who are responsible for your health, and explain why they are all responsible.
6. What do you think the Torah means when it says, "Do not follow your heart in lustful urge?"¹⁶
7. Do you think that Judaism views health differently from the way other religions view health?

:35-:55 Definitions:

Supplies:

Definitions written on poster board

Directions for Activity:

Have each of the definitions Found below written on poster board, to be displayed throughout the rest of the unit. These definitions are adapted from the 1994 Fourth Edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* and from *Teaching Hot Topics*. Repeat each definition several times, give illustrations, and prompt students to ask questions about the information. This portion of the lesson is designed for frontal lecture, with participation for questions and comments.

¹⁶ Numbers 15:39

Why this Activity:

It is important to have a good working vocabulary of relevant terms. In addition to the following definitions, make it clear that addiction refers to any addiction, and that different addictions share similar characteristics. When one is involved in a particular behavior, it is important to remember that there are various degrees of involvement. Understanding the degrees should help to avoid making judgmental statements about a person's involvement. This activity will help to create a more sensitized understanding of addiction and addictive behaviors.

Terms and Definitions:

Use:

Using a substance or participating in an experience in order to experience a high, or to escape from a regular activity.

Tolerance:

An increasing need for more of the substance to achieve the desired effect, or a reduced effect when using the same amount.

Substance Addiction:

Present when three or more of the following occur within a twelve month period:

- Tolerance is built up
- Withdrawal symptoms if the use of the substance is stopped or reduced.
- Progressive neglect of other pleasures and duties.
- A strong desire to take the substance or a persistent but unsuccessful desire to control or reduce the use of the substance.
- Continued use in spite of physical or mental health problems caused by the substance.
- Use of the substance in larger amounts or over longer periods of time than originally intended or difficulties in controlling the amount of the substance used or when to stop taking it.
- A lot of time spent in obtaining the substance, using it, or recovering from its effects.

Compulsive Gambling:

The essential features are a chronic and progressive failure to resist impulses to gamble, and gambling behavior that compromises, disrupts, or damages personal, family, or vocational pursuits. The gambling preoccupation, urge, and activity increase during periods of stress. *Problems that arise as a result of the gambling lead to an intensification of the gambling behavior.* Characteristic problems include loss of work due to absences in order to gamble, defaulting on debts and other financial

responsibilities, disrupted family relationships, borrowing money from illegal sources, forgery, fraud, embezzlement, and income tax evasion.¹⁷

Substance Abuse:

Not to the same degree as an addiction, substance abuse is an abnormal pattern of recurring use that leads to significant impairment or distress. Abuse is marked by experiencing at least one of these in a twelve month period:

- Failure to fulfill major obligations at home, school, or work.
- Use in dangerous or threatening situations, such as while driving a car.
- Getting into trouble with the law because of a bad behavior that is linked to the use of a particular substance.
- Continued use of a substance even though there are clear social or interpersonal problems caused by using it.

:55-:60 Break

:60-:80 Continuum Activity

Supplies:

long wall or four corners of a room

labels: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Directions for Activity:

Clear the desks or tables from the middle of the room. One long wall should be free of clutter. This activity can also be done with the four corners and center of a room. Designate one side of the room "Strongly Agree" and the other side of the room "Strongly Disagree". Make a series of statements, and ask the students to move along the continuum to a location that represents their beliefs regarding each statement. Make it clear to the students that there is no reason to clump together with friends. If students are unsure, they should stand at the middle of the wall. They can position themselves anywhere along the continuum for each statement made.

After each statement, ask for volunteers to explain their position. Take the appropriate time to discuss the statements. During this part of the lesson, the instructor should emphasize that addiction can happen to anyone, and that any substance or behavior can become an addiction.

Why this Activity:

This exercise is helpful to the teacher, as it helps to assess what students believe about addiction and related subjects. It also gives students an opportunity to see how their opinions are similar or different to the opinions of their peers. It may be difficult for

¹⁷ Louis Linn, M.D., "Jews and Pathological Gambling," in *Addictions in the Jewish Community*, ed. Stephen Jay Levy, Ph.D., and Sheila B. Blume, M.D. (New York: Commission of Synagogue Relations, 1986), 347.

This was taken from the American Psychiatric Association: *Diagnostic and Statistical manual, Third Edition*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1979. The diagnostic category – "Pathological Gambling" is listed as #312.31 under: Disorders of impulse control, not classified elsewhere.

some students to feel secure about their opinion. It is likely that some will follow other students, and this is acceptable. Depending on the statement and the comfort level of the students, the results may show large variations in opinion.

- I think that I could become addicted to something.
- I try to be as healthy as I can.
- A person can only be addicted to drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes.
- It is okay to make bets with people.
- Drinking wine is acceptable in Judaism.
- Drinking wine is acceptable.
- Kids cannot be addicts.
- To be healthy, we have to take care of our minds and out bodies.
- Kids should drink wine for Kiddush.
- I think about all of the foods that I eat before I eat them.
- Keeping kosher is a good way to help me think about what I eat.
- Someone can become addicted to drugs.
- Someone can become addicted to smoking.
- Someone can become addicted to eating.
- Someone can become addicted to gambling.
- Someone can become addicted to watching television.

:80-:105 Mental Illness

Supplies:

Several board games (Do not include instructions to the games, and choose games that are unfamiliar to the students.)

Directions for Activity:

Divide students into groups of four to six students. To give each group ample space, have the students move to separate corners of the room. Give each group a different game, without instructions. Each group has ten minutes to play their game.

After ten minutes, ask for students to focus on the front of the room. Ask students if they liked their games. Who won? Who lost? Have each group explain the object of the game that they had.

Bring students back to their desks or tables. Begin instruction on the mental illness aspect of addiction. Explain that in the games, the students did not know how to play because they did not have the knowledge of how to play the game. They could not complete the physical motions of the game appropriately because they did not know how to play. They experienced a mental deficit. Likewise, when someone is addicted to a substance, he or she is unable to control his or her actions because the mind and the body are not working together.

Explain to students that keeping our minds and our bodies healthy will help us avoid becoming addicted to a particular substance or behavior.

Why this Activity:

It is difficult to comprehend that addiction is a mental disease. When someone has a mind that functions, it can be hard to conceive of a person whose mind is affected by addiction. This activity is a metaphor for an addict's mental abilities.

:105-:120 Journaling

Supplies:

Booklets stapled together, cardstock covers
Markers and crayons

An important part of this process is reflecting and making a spiritual connection. At the end of each session, students should have some time to reflect on what they covered during the session. Briefly review the major concepts from the day. Students can decorate the covers of their journals, making them more personal. These journals are private, and students should know that their thoughts will remain private. To prompt writing and reflection, suggest a few topics that the students can write about.

LESSON TWO: Gambling and Judaism/Self-Esteem

Goals - By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Have a sense of the importance of self-esteem.
2. Understand that negative self-esteem can lead to substance use, abuse, or addiction.
3. Be able to draw a series of three self-portraits.
4. Read, understand, and interpret Jewish text regarding gambling.
5. Use Talmudic style (commentary) to express personal opinions on gambling according to Jewish text.

Time Frame:

:00-:15 Set Induction/Introduction

:15-:25 Review

:25-:55 Self Esteem/Self-Portraits

:55-:60 Break

:60-:70 Brainstorm Gambling

:70-:95 Test Study/Putting Gambling on Trial

:95-1:10 Codifying the Legal Opinions of Gambling

1:10-1:20 Journal Time

:00-:15 Set/Induction

Supplies:

Dreidels

Gelt

IACAI cards (to be explained)

Directions for Activity:

As students enter the class, direct them to one of the several dreidel games that are set up around the room. Students will be responsible for starting their own games of dreidel. They will have supplies and instructions at each station. Students might wonder about dreidel, assuming that the implementation of this lesson is not during Hanukkah.

As the groups are forming, approach each one. Give each student a large index card with the letters "I. A. C. A. I.", which stands for "I Am Capable And Important". Instruct students to tear a piece off of their card every time someone else says something that does not make them feel important or capable. They will keep these cards, and the pieces torn off, until later in the class session.

After about ten minutes of free play time, re-group and lead the class in a brief discussion. Did any of the group members get louder and louder as they played? Did anyone want to try one more time? Was there a lot of exchange of candy?

Why this Activity:

This will serve as a set induction. Dreidel is part of Jewish tradition. Kids and adults alike spin the four-sided top in celebration of Hanukkah each year. Dreidel is a

form of gambling. Depending on the spin, the spinner can win or lose. It is not significant if the stakes are money or peanuts, candy or pieces of paper. In terms of gambling and addiction, winning peanuts is the same as winning money.

This activity will allow students to have a constructive activity as they enter the room. This activity is a metaphor for gambling on a higher level. A similar high is experienced when one wins the pot, and there is excitement and desire to push the limits in order to end up a winner.

The I.A.C.A.I. card is an activity that is used as a self-esteem builder. Sometimes, it is difficult to pay attention to negative comments made and negative comments received. This activity, which will last for two class periods (but could be extended or shortened) will increase awareness of negative talk directed toward a person or about someone, but said behind his or her back.

:15:25 Review

Review the lesson from the previous week. Ask students to sit quietly at their places. Review these definitions: Use, Abuse, Addiction, and Tolerance. Ask students to volunteer any information that they remember about addictions. Explain why they played dreidel today. The topics that will be discussed in this session are gambling and Jewish responses to gambling. This will be taught through the value of self-esteem. Students should be able to link this value to each of the activities in the lesson. Before proceeding with the next portion, remind students to keep track of their cards.

:25-:55 Self Esteem Activity – Triple Self-Portrait¹⁸

Supplies:

A mirror for each student (size of mirror not important)

Different drawing utensils (markers, crayons, pencils, colored pencils)

Large sheets of paper (three per student)

A copy of Norman Rockwell's *Triple Self Portrait*

Directions for Activity:

Obtain a copy of Norman Rockwell's *Triple Self-Portrait* (if possible). Display the picture for the class to see. In the picture, Rockwell paints three different versions of himself. The first is a figure seated on a stool in front of an easel. The viewer sees the subject's back. The second depiction is a reflection visible in a large mirror that is to the left of the canvas. Third, the viewer can see a portrait being painted on a canvas that sits on the easel. These three portrayals of the same person, Norman Rockwell, show the artist in three different ways. The image reflects in the mirror is different from the image that is being painted on the canvas, thus implying that the artist has different thoughts on what he looks like.

¹⁸ Carolyn Nilson, *More Team Games for Trainers*, McGraw-Hill, New York 1998 p269-270. This lesson is an adaptation of the team building game suggested by Carolyn Nilson. Rather than using it for team building, this exercise is transformed into an exercise on building positive self-esteem.

Students will be taken through a series of different stages to achieve a similar work of art. Students should be encouraged to experiment with different medium (i.e. pencil drawing, markers, crayons, or colored pencils), and should be reminded that any kind of figure is appropriate (i.e. stick figures, cartoons, three-dimensional). When students have their materials, instruct them to draw a picture of how they think they look. They should draw themselves based on how they feel at that moment, in religious school, early in the morning, whatever the situation is.

When they have completed the first drawing, give each student a mirror. For the second portrait, they should use the mirror to draw their reflections. Do not give many instructions beyond this. They have seen the original, and should not be influenced further.

For the third phase, students will draw a self-portrait that depicts the way they would like others to see them. They should focus on the clothing that they are wearing and what they are doing in the portrait.

When students are done, collect the portraits. They will be displayed, and students will view them in an upcoming class session.

Why this Activity:

Self-esteem is an important value that is greatly influenced by perceptions. The perception of an outside party impacts self-esteem, as does comparing the self to others. Regardless of artistic ability, attempting to depict the self in three different images can begin to define self-esteem.

:55-:60 Break

:60-:70 Brainstorming

Directions for Activity:

Take a few minutes to brainstorm different forms of gambling. This activity is important because it will alert students of the different activities that actually involve gambling. Ask the students to think of times when they "make a bet" with someone. What was at stake and what were the terms of the bet?

:70-:95 Text Study and Putting Gambling on Trial

Directions for Activity:

Divide the class into three groups. One group will be the "plaintiff", and this group will present the position that any type of gambling is wrong according to the Jewish religion. The second group will be the "defendant", and will present the opposing view; gambling for recreational purposes is not illegal according to the Jewish beliefs. The third group will be the judges. They will be responsible for making a list of questions to ask both of the other groups. Using the text study quotations and any class discussion on addiction, the teams must make a compelling argument to defend their positions.

The judges group will be responsible for asking each side questions that will help them make a decision as to whether or not gambling is legal.

Why this Activity:

As explained in a prior text study, gaining an appreciation for ancient and modern Jewish text is fundamental in formulating Jewish identity. This activity will give the students an opportunity to study a variety of texts and use them to argue a point. Students will take ownership of this lesson; they will determine what they think modern Judaism should say about gambling.

:95-1:10 Simulating the Talmudic Sages

Supplies:

A large piece of poster board

Marker

Directions for Activity:

When the verdict is delivered by the judges, write it in block form in the center of the large piece of poster board. Explain to the students (they will already have some background in Talmud) the format of the Talmud. Just as the Talmud includes commentary around the main block of text, students will write commentary around the legal block of text that they created concerning gambling. Students should volunteer a statement on gambling, either in agreement with or in disagreement with the verdict that the judges delivered.

End this part of the lesson by sharing a modern response published by the reform movement.¹⁹

1:10-1:20 Journal Time

Students might want to reflect on the following in their journals.

- Have you ever gambled? What were the circumstances? Did you win or lose?
- Why is positive self esteem important?
- What did you feel like when you had to tear a piece off of your I.A.C.A.I card?
- Why was there excitement in the game of dreidel from the beginning of class? What happened to your classmates (speech, behavior, patience) when they were playing?
- What differences did you see in the three self-portraits that you drew?

At the end of class, collect journals and I.A.C.A.I. cards from students. Save these cards and redistribute them in the next class session.

¹⁹ This responsum can be found in the Appendix.

Lesson Three: Community and the Effects of Gambling

Goals – By the end of this class, students will be able to:

1. Consider how their actions can directly and indirectly affect other people in their lives.
2. Express their thoughts concerning self-esteem, specifically on the importance of understanding how other people perceive them and how they view themselves.
3. Think critically about rabbinic sages and statements that they produced that remain important to our tradition.
4. See a connection between traditional texts and modern life, thus understanding the timelessness of certain ways of thinking.
5. Have an understanding of the consequences that gambling can have on an individual and on those related to that person.

:00-:15 Set Induction/Introduction:

Directions for Activity:

Before students come into the classroom, display the self-portraits that they made during the previous session. Keep the three different drawings together so students can compare all three. Ask students to look at the display, as if they were viewing paintings in a museum.

:15-:25 Review

Directions for Activity:

Pass out the I.A.C.A.I. cards. This will be the second, and last, day that the students will have them. Remind students to tear a piece off of the card each time a negative comment is made about or to them.

Initiate a short discussion on perception. How did it feel to see other people's portraits? Was the third portrait, based on the way the artist wanted other people to see him/her significantly different from the artist's own perception?

:25-:45 Who Would it Affect

Supplies:

Directions for Activity:

Each student will have a chart²⁰. On one axis, the student will fill in any people or groups of people to whom they have a connection. Examples would include: parents, siblings, best friend, teacher, coach, grandparents, etc. The other axis will have different actions or activities. Students will have some time to think about which actions affect which groups of people. After the students have time to mark the people affected, the class will join for a discussion on how actions affect other people. Urge students to

²⁰ Master copy of a spreadsheet is on the following page.

consider what type of impact their actions and decisions have on those to whom they are related.

Why this Activity:

Through this activity, students will gain an awareness of how their actions affect other people, both directly and indirectly. An addict does not maintain control over his actions because he or she is so driven by the need to drink, steal, eat, gamble, or use drugs. Consequences of addiction, as were outlined in chapter one, potentially affect others in the community. Teach the difference between actions that have a direct effect and actions that have an indirect effect upon other people.

PEOPLE ACTIVITY	(parents)	(siblings)	(classmates)	(teammates)	(self)	(People I don't know)
Cleaning room						
Making Dinner						
Doing Homework						
Going to Soccer Practice						
Attending Hebrew School						

:45-:70 Text Study

Directions for Activity:

Begin text study as a class by reciting the blessing said for engaging in words of Torah. Provide a brief explanation of Rabbi Hillel²¹, as background for the text study. Divide the class into three (equal) groups. Designate each group as the representative for one of the three statements in Hillel's passage. After each group receives a copy of their statement (some students may know that this statement is generally accompanied by the other two), they should discuss the possible meaning of the question that they have.

Students should focus on the following questions:

1. Why do you think that Hillel made this statement?
2. Do you agree with the statement? Why/why not?
3. Give examples of how this statement is true for you.

Regroup the class into groups of three; in each group there will be one representative from each of the initial groups. Now, students should share their statement, and the comments that were made within the larger group. After each representative has shared, the group will have to decide what order the statements should go in. They may base this on their opinion of which statement is most important, most accurate, or according to any other criteria that they find fitting. After putting the statements in the order that they feel is most appropriate, each student will receive a puzzle piece.

The puzzle piece will be the culmination of this part of the lesson. On one side of the piece will be a portion of Hillel's statement. The students will bring their pieces to a large table (or other flat surface) and try to assemble the pieces as quickly as possible. When the pieces fit together, the puzzle will reveal the correct order of Hillel's statement. Ask students to share their feelings about the order of the questions. Why is it that Hillel put the individual before the community?

Why this Activity:

As is the case with other lessons, this is a way to connect the students with ancient Jewish traditions, brought to us through text. This activity, in which the students are responsible for their learning, enables them to critically interpret Jewish text.

:70-:75 Break

²¹ Hillel is a sage from the second Temple period. He lived in both Babylonia and Jerusalem. He is known for his ethical-religious teachings.

:75-:1:05 Building a Tower

Directions for Activity:

Review the story of the Tower of Babel, which is found in the Torah in the book of Genesis²². Students should be familiar with this story, and could be prompted to contribute details of the story.

Divide the students into small groups (three to four students per group). Each group will need a significant amount of space. Prior to class, assemble paper bags with the supplies that will be used in this exercise. Each group will need its own set of supplies, and supplies should be the same for each group. Students will be assigned the following task: Build the tallest, free-standing structure that you can, using only the supplied in the bag, and following any other instruction that is given to you by the teacher during the activity. Time limit will be twenty minutes.

The supplies in the bag: one package of bubble gum, two hundred plastic drinking straws. Initially, the students will all be able to communicate. They will decide how to plan their structures and how to allocate their resources. Shortly after the program begins, the teacher will circulate and give the following instructions to the groups. With intention, this is not set up to be "fair," and the teacher can decide which instructions will be given to each group. Allow the group a few minutes to function according to the instruction before adding a new limitation to the group.

Limitations:

1. **For the remaining time, one person may not speak.** A person who is addicted does not have full mental capacity. By declaring that one (or more) member(s) cannot speak, this limitation imitates the decreased mental ability.
2. **If supplies are getting low, one person may go to another group and take more supplies.** This will simulate the likelihood that a compulsive gambler will steal. Caught up in the rush, the high, of winning, or feeling the need to try to recover losses, a compulsive gambler will characteristically steal from those around him or her.²³
3. **One person in the group must eat all of the gum that is not yet attached to the tower.** This will simulate the strain that a gambler puts on familial resources. Focused on getting more and more money, this person will be focused on getting more and more gum.

After twenty minutes of building time, bring the groups together to compare the sizes of the different structures. Spend the remaining time discussing the challenges that the students faced and understanding the purposes of the various limitations.

²² Genesis 11:1-9. This story takes place in the Bible following the great flood, after the covenant between God and God's people that a flood will never again come and destroy all of the earth. The story of the *Tower of Babel* begins with a description that all people spoke one common language. The people eventually decided that they would build a tower reaching up to heaven in order to feel more powerful and grand. God was worried by this, and the Bible explains that God scattered their speech. Men and women could no longer communicate easily as they spoke different languages.

²³ See characteristics of a compulsive gambler from chapter one.

Why this Activity:

This is a hands-on way for students to gain an understanding of how community feels the effects of addiction. Giving the students a challenge, like building a tower with drinking straws and bubble gum, is exciting. The real motivation behind this activity comes from the limitations that are placed on the students. The towers will be impacted by the restrictions placed on the builders.

1:05-1:20 I.A.C.A.I/ Journaling

After cleaning up the tower project, have students get their journals and writing utensils. Ask volunteers to suggest reasons for the I.A.C.A.I cards, and have the students try to determine what the letters stand for. The journal entry will be a response to the card.

- How did it make you feel when you had to rip a piece off of your card?
- How many times did you rip your card?
- Did you think that any of the comments you heard were justified?
- When others say something hurtful, how does it affect your self-esteem?

Lesson Four: Treatment/Spirituality

The twelve step process²⁴ relies heavily on belief in a Higher Power. Within the framework of Judaism, this Higher Power can easily be identified as God. Understanding that it is outside of the realm of possibility to have complete control over every aspect of life, one must share the responsibility of control. The previous values; community, self-esteem, and health, all relate to this lesson. Treatment for addiction is a process that relies upon each of these values. While addiction affects the community, an addict also requires outside help for recovery. Only when a person truly values his or her health, and is prepared to honestly assess self-esteem, is he or she ready for recovery to begin the path toward recovery. These values, along with other values of Judaism, are critical for recovery. Spirituality, however, which is part of several of the twelve steps, is of primary concern. Perhaps, by teaching children that spirituality is a main component of Jewish identity, children will not experience the void that addicts seek to fill when they enter treatment programs.

Goals- At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Differentiate between natural and unnatural elements.
2. Have an appreciation that Judaism believes in One God
3. Begin to understand that recovery from addiction relies heavily on the belief in a Higher Being (this being God in Judaism).
4. Begin to think about their own spiritual beliefs
5. Listen to people who have had experience with treatment and recovery

:00-:25 Set Induction/Introduction:

Supplies:

A long piece of white butcher paper, rolled out on the ground

Colored pencils, crayons, markers

Short summaries of the prayers (a basic prayer service)

Summary of Prayers:

1. Barekhu: We need a good way to start a service. The Barekhu is a prayer that calls out to the congregation to tell them that we are ready to start praying. As a group, draw a picture that will help our class get ready for our service today.
2. Creation: The world was created. According to Jewish tradition, based on the story found in the book of Genesis, God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. In those six days, God created animals, the sun, the moon and stars, people, water, plants, light and dark, and bugs. We thank God for the miracle of creation. In your group, draw a picture that will help the whole class thank God for creating the world.

²⁴ See chapter three for a complete analysis of the Twelve Steps and a more detailed description of the Twelve Step process.

3. Revelation: One of the most important things that God gave to the Jewish people is the Torah. The Torah is a record of Jewish stories. It contains Jewish laws, and shows us how our ancestors lived so long ago. We are very thankful that God chose to give the Torah to the Jewish people because this is part of our special religion. As a group, draw a picture that will help the whole class thank God for giving the Torah to us.
4. Redemption: The Torah tells us that God saved the Israelite people (the Jewish people) from slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh was mean to the Israelite people. When we celebrate Passover, we celebrate the freedom from Egypt. As a group, draw a picture that will help the class thank God for freeing the Jewish people from Egypt.
5. Prayer for Peace: There is a lot of fighting in the world. Countries fight wars with other countries, sisters fight with brothers, friends fight with each other. We always need to think about how we can have peace. As a group, draw a picture that will help the class ask God for peace in our world.

Directions for Activity:

Before class, roll the paper out on the ground and scatter pencils and crayons along the paper. Divide the paper into five different parts. These will be the areas in which each group will draw pictures for their prayer section. After the students arrive, divide them into five groups, and direct each group to one section of the paper. Distribute one summary to each group. Briefly explain that prayer is an important part of Judaism. Some people pray once a day, some pray more, some pray less. We have a lot to be thankful for, and we thank God for these things. We also have to ask God for things because the world is not quite perfect. Each group will draw one prayer, and we will use these prayers to guide the class service.

Why this Activity:

The values of this lesson are spirituality and God. Understanding God is difficult because God is not tangible. Thus, it is important to find creative, appropriate ways for children to relate to God. Giving short, simple introductions to each prayer, and asking students to focus only on one prayer, they can think more intensely about the role that God plays in their lives.

:25-:50 Service in the Classroom

Directions for Activity:

Bring the class together after they are done with the drawings. Tack the prayer paper up to the wall in the front of the room, and gather the students either on the floor in front of it or at their desks. Lead the service using the pictures that the students drew. Start with some singing to help create a mood. With each prayer, have the students who did the drawing explain their picture. Notice that the Shema and the Amida (exception is the Prayer for Peace) are not on the roll paper. Include these in the service. Pay particular attention to the Shema. Explain that it is a central Jewish prayer because it is a declaration of the belief in only one God. Take time with this portion of the service.

:50-75 Panel Presentation:

Supplies:

Ask various people from the community who have experience with treatment programs to come into the classroom to do a short presentation on what treatment programs look like.

Directions for Activity:

Secure the panel in advance of the actual day of the lesson. Try to include clergy from the synagogue who might be active in counseling addicts. If possible, find people from the community (Jewish or greater) that would be willing to share their stories of a journey toward recovery. Discuss the purpose of this lesson with the panelists, and give them background on the values and concepts that are covered in this unit. Each panelist should give a short talk, and students should be given time to ask questions at the end of the session. Specifically, ask each guest to touch on the role that spirituality plays in recovery.

Why this Activity:

It will be effective to bring in people who have real life experience with addiction and treatment. This will also help students comprehend that enormity of the problems associated with addiction. Focusing on recovery will teach the students that treatment is available, but that it is a long and difficult journey.

:75-:80 Break

:80-1:05 Nature Scavenger Hunt:

Supplies:

An outdoor area

Paper bags to collect unnatural items (namely garbage)

Pencil

Paper

Directions for Activity:

Take the students outside to a "natural" area (if there is one at the synagogue). Have the students sit down. Do a guided meditation to create a mood for the next activity. Have students close their eyes (they can lay down depending on the elements). Ask them to be completely silent for a few minutes (about three, although it will likely seem longer to the children). After asking for complete silence, ask them to listen carefully to the sounds that they can hear. Try to remember what they are.

After three minutes, ask them to open their eyes. Ask for students to share some of the sounds they heard. Determine whether they are natural or unnatural sounds. Did God make the sound, or did something manufactured by humans?

Why this Activity:

This will give the students an opportunity to connect to God through nature. With busy lives, it is difficult to truly appreciate the nature that surrounds us.

Directions for Activity:

After the listening experience, the students will go on a scavenger hunt. They will be asked to find a series of objects that are not natural to the environment, and a series of objects that are natural to the environment. In order to not disturb the natural surroundings, they will draw a picture of the elements that belong. Any findings that are not natural, the students will collect in a bag. Examples of natural findings: a leaf with bites taken from it, an animal, a cloud, a small insect. Examples of unnatural findings: a piece of paper, a plastic bottle, a soda can.

Why this Activity:

As a continuation of the previous activity (the listening activity), this experience serves several purposes. Primarily, it increases awareness of what is natural and what is not. In addition, students will be cleaning the environment, working together in groups, and gaining an appreciation for the outside elements.

1:05-1:20 Journaling

Suggestions:

- Write on the impact of the panel guests
- How do you describe God and God's miracles?
- Treatment programs rely on belief in God (easier to understand than a Higher Power). Why is this?

Lesson Five: Responsibility/Summary of Unit

This lesson is a summary of the past four lessons and a conclusion of the intense unit on gambling addiction and prevention. A principle idea to express is that we each have a responsibility (to ourselves, to our families, to the Jewish community, and to the greater community) to stay healthy, to perpetuate Judaism, and to live moral lives. Gambling addiction can interrupt any of these (and other) responsibilities that we have.

Goals – At the end of the lessons, students will be able to:

1. Articulate responsibilities that they have to the Jewish people, to themselves, and to their families.
2. Understand that gambling addiction can interfere with our responsibilities.
3. Identify with the values of the unit (responsibility, health, spirituality, self-esteem, and community).

:00-:15 Set Induction/Introduction

Begin the class with another service, using the same drawings from last week to guide the prayers.

:15-:30 Review

Directions for Activity/Why this Activity:

For this activity, the teacher will guide learning. The material from the last lesson was intense, and there was not a lot of time to reflect on the idea of spirituality. Take time, and use frontal lecture, to review the importance of spirituality for recovery. The twelve step process, a common process for addiction recovery, is based in the acceptance that there is a Higher Being. If we believe in God when we are young, if we form and maintain this spiritual connection, there will not be a void in this area when we are adults. It is this void, this absence of belief and trust in a Higher Being that leads to addiction.²⁵ Convey this to the students using appropriate illustrations and language.

:30-:45 Responsibility

Directions for Activity:

Brainstorm with the class, writing responses on the chalkboard. Have a discussion on responsibility. Make a chart on the board, filling in definitions of responsibility, examples of things that the students are responsible for, and to whom they are responsible.

²⁵ For a more complete explanation of this concept, see the analysis of the twelve step process in Chapter Three, paying particular attention to the steps that specifically mention a Higher Being.

:45-1:00 Stations

Three fifteen minute stations with a short break and time to move from one to the next. Divide the students into three groups for these stations.

STATION ONE: Charades

Supplies:

Small slips of paper

A box or hat

Pencils

Optional: a timer

Directions for Activity:

Each student will write five things that relate to responsibility (either something that he or she is responsible for doing, or something that he or she will be responsible for doing in the future). Fold the papers and place them into a box. One at a time, a student will pick one of the papers, read it, and silently act out the activity or the description of the responsibility. The person who guesses is the next one to act out a responsibility. If no one guesses, the person can reveal the responsibility and choose the next actor.

STATION TWO: Story

Supplies:

Several stories that will convey the message that we have certain responsibilities.

If possible, bring someone in to read to the students (clergy, a parent, etc.)

Directions for Activity:

Storytelling is a useful way to teach students. It is important to find appropriate stories, but children like to listen to stories. Have the students sit in a small circle and read the stories to them. Ask questions while reading to have them focus on responsibility.

STATION THREE: Drawing

Supplies:

Paper cut into strips, resembling cartoons

Colored pencils, crayons, markers

Directions for Activity:

Each student will choose from a list of responsibilities that Jewish people have. Then, draw a cartoon of him/herself that shows how he or she is responsible for the activity.

Activity List (examples):

- Lighting Shabbat Candles
- Going to Religious School
- Honoring parents

- Studying Torah
- Praying
- Visiting the sick/elderly
- Taking care of the environment
- Teaching others about Judaism
- Celebrating Passover (or any other holiday)
- Hearing the shofar on the High Holy Days

1:00-1:20 Summary

Review all of the concepts and values taught in this unit.
Distribute journals for students to take home with them.

Conclusion

Judaism and Gambling Today

As compulsive gambling in the Jewish community is better understood, it is possible to look at other aspects of gambling that are related to the Jewish people. Historically, gambling has been a part of the Jewish community. Playing cards, betting on animal races, and throwing dice have high recreational value, and are not inherently against *halakha*. Although the rabbis who produce responsa literature do not generally encourage gambling, arguments against it are easily disputed. Gambling in the Jewish community has evolved into a practice that goes far beyond that of people playing games for fun on a street corner, or using gambling as a break from study. Today, there are a countless number of synagogues and Jewish agencies who use gambling programs as a means of raising necessary funds. Casino nights and bingo programs successfully bring in money, contributing in large amounts to the budgets of these organizations.

Analysis of the legal complications associated with Jews who gamble does not prove that gambling programs in the synagogue are prohibited. However, considering the implications of a gambling program raises concerns as to whether or not a synagogue or other Jewish institution should in fact support gambling as a fundraising event. Raising ample funds is difficult, and the variety of programs that rely on gambling, be it through lotteries, bingo nights, or raffles, are low cost. The typically bring in large amounts of money because they are recreational and social in nature.

Secular Gambling

Before determining the position that Judaism takes regarding gambling in the synagogue, it is helpful to understand what Judaism says about gambling in a secular venue. The majority of states in the United States of America have legalized gambling. Many countries around the world, including Israel, have also legalized certain forms of gambling. Be it through a lottery, or in a casino, government run, or operated by a private party, variant forms of gambling have enveloped the world. Given the rapid growth of the gambling movement, it is not surprising that so many people are addicted to the thrill of winning money, or losing and trying to win it back.

Historically, Jewish communities have issued decrees against gambling. Although these takanot¹, are not halakha, they do have legal consequences for those who live within the communities for which they are issued. An example of a decree imposed upon the Jews in Moravia in 1650:

Every person, whoever he may be, is forbidden to play cards; not only cards or dice, but every other kind of game that the mouth may utter or the heart conceive or consider, even on Rosh Chodesh, Chanukah, Purim, Chol ha-Mo'ed, and other days on which tachanun is not recited, even with a woman in labor or a person whose blood is being let. In general, one may not gamble in any earthly manner. Everyone, whoever he may be, whether master of the house, boy or girl, manservant or maidservant, shall be punished if he should (Heaven forefend) transgress and gamble. Thus shall be the treatment of the offender: if he is wealthy, he shall pay for every offending act two silver coins, unconditionally, for [the support of] Torah study and half for the poor of Jerusalem. If he is not wealthy, such that he cannot be punished monetarily, he shall be punished by imprisonment and afflicted by iron chains as befits such offenders.²

¹ Decrees of rabbinic authorities of various communities.

² Eli Clark. "Gambling and Jewish Law." *Journal of halacha and Contemporary Society* 31 (spring 1996): 21

A more recent decree, issued by the Central Conference of American Rabbis³, provides an updated response to gambling in the greater community. This resolution was adopted in 1984 at the 95th Annual Convention of this group from the Reform Movement of Judaism.

Whereas the Jewish tradition looks with disfavor upon organized gambling activity as non-productive and threatening to the social fabric of society, and

Whereas the citizens of many states are often asked to amend their state constitutions to permit legalized casino gambling, and

Whereas casinos have proven themselves to be quite expert at generating revenues for themselves but quite incapable of seeing that such revenues benefit the surrounding community, and

Whereas, despite claims to the contrary, jobs created by the casino industry have not led to genuine economic revitalization of depressed areas, and

Whereas the establishment of casino gambling will probably lead to real estate speculation that will, in many of the proposed sites, have the destructive effect of driving the poor and the elderly from their homes and neighborhoods, and

Whereas American casino gambling facilities have brought tremendous increases in criminal activity wherever they have been established, and

Whereas the revenues generated by casinos have yet to find their way into law enforcement agencies in quantities sufficient to combat such activity, and

³ The Central Conference of American Rabbis is one of the branches of the Reform Jewish movement. This branch is largely responsible for legal rulings of the movement.

Whereas organized crime activities including, but not limited to, loan sharking and prostitution have gone hand in hand with the establishment of casino gambling facilities despite the best efforts of local governments to prevent their appearance, and

Whereas the promises of the casino industry in other areas, with respect to organized crime control, aid to education, the elderly, and minority population, and genuine economic revitalization remain largely unfulfilled.

Therefore be it resolved that the Central Conference of American Rabbis strongly disapprove of the legalization of any form of casino gambling and urge that its members work to make the dangers of legalized casino gambling become better known and to devote their best efforts towards the thwarting of legalized casino gambling in their states.

Be it further resolved that the rabbis living in states that prohibit casino gambling be alert to the inherent problems, as stated above, should enabling legislation ever be proposed by their municipalities or states.⁴

The Baltimore Board of Rabbis issued a similar response to the legalization of electronic gambling devices that were installed at the race tracks in Baltimore. They say, "Judaism teaches us that social responsibility involves the constructive development of the world and the support of civic institutions maintained by funds raised in appropriate ways. Gambling, on the other hand, carries in its wake, unacceptable ramifications. It is often personally destructive, undermines the fabric of the community, and invites criminal activity." Modern Rabbinic authorities are offering decrees that mimic the *takanot* of the Middle Ages. The concerns of public gambling; criminal activity, poverty,

⁴ <http://www.ccarnet.org> - Website of CCAR

and abuse of funds raised, remain central to the issue of whether or not Rabbis support legalized gambling in the civic realm. The moral implications are evidently of greater consideration than the recreational implications, in many cases, Rabbinic authority does not prohibit gambling practices, but also does not encourage participation in various types of gambling.

The government run lottery in Israel speaks to the issue of allowing civil gambling in a society. Under British rule, the British Mandate in Israel during the mid-1900's did not specifically forbid this form of gambling, but at the same time, the decree did not make the lottery a possibility. This mandate ordered that there could be no opening, keeping, or use of any location to carry out a lottery. Likewise, there could be no printing or publishing of lottery tickets, no publication of advertisements for gambling, and no sale of lottery tickets.⁵ Clearly, these stipulations made it absolutely impossible to conduct a legal lottery in Israel under British Mandate. Between 1948 and 1964, following the formation of the State of Israel, lotteries fell under the Criminal Law Amendment. This code prohibited, "any arrangement whereby it is possible – whether by the drawing of lots or by other means – to win money, a prize having a money value, or a benefit, the winning being dependent more upon chance than upon knowledge or skill."⁶ According to this law code, it was illegal for a private group to run a lottery in the State of Israel. The exception to this rule was the government run lottery that began in 1951. Based on a decision made by the Financial Committee of the Knesset⁷, a public lottery was established. The government strictly enforced the distribution of lottery

⁵ M. Landau. *A Manual on Lotteries*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Massada Publishing, Ltd., 1968. 112.

⁶ *Ibid.* 113.

⁷ Israeli Government

money, and declared that all income was to go to the hospitals or other public institutions.⁸ The original system, a monthly drawing, evolved into a weekly drawing by 1961. According to a statistic, with 2.7 million residents, an average of 460,000 tickets was sold each week.⁹ This overwhelming response to lottery is characteristic of communities in other parts of the world. Although it was the intention of the Finance Committee to raise money for government institutions through this lottery, the fact that by its nature, it created addictions, must not be ignored. The moral repercussions of legalized gambling are grand.

Despite the potential negative consequence of gambling, the addiction that it can cause, rabbinic authority still has not developed a compelling reason to forbid gambling. At best, rabbis can, and should, emphasize the devastation and destruction that can result from gambling. Although attractive, state-run lotteries and privately owned casinos often times provide an addiction in addition to recreational fun. They often take money from people who do not have enough to pay taxes to the government for schools and hospitals. While occasional gambling should not be banned, appropriate education and prevention information needs to be more readily available in order to reduce the number of people who become compulsive gamblers.

⁸ *Ibid.* 109

⁹ *Ibid.* 110

History of Gambling in the Synagogue

Perhaps more significant than Judaism's view of gambling in the public sector is the opinion that Jewish authorities assert concerning the issue of gambling within the walls of a synagogue. Rabbinic authorities have commented on gambling within the Jewish community since the time of the codification of the Mishnah. Since the time of the Mishnah, Jewish communal life has transformed dramatically. It is no longer the case that Jews live within walls. Moving from times when the Jewish community existed due to circumstance to times when Jews must make an effort to maintain unity, the concept of the synagogue has developed substantially. Today, congregations have enormous operating budgets to pay for expenses such as the clergy salaries, teachers, upkeep and programming. Now, the Jewish community must be built up because it is no longer a built in part of society. In the world of raising funds for a synagogue, bingo nights and other casino programs have delivered.

During the twentieth century, the Jewish world has explored the area of synagogue gambling. In 1957, Rabbi Phillip Sigel, representing the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly (the Conservative Movement), offered the following statement, "There would be no violation of Jewish law if the synagogue used games of chance for fundraising purposes in the synagogue."¹⁰ Rabbi Eric Lankin concludes that this was the case concerning the halakhic ramifications. He adds that because gambling violates the spiritual standards of Judaism, games of chance

¹⁰ Eric Marshall Lanken. *A Jewish Spiritual Group for Recovering Pathological Gamblers*. Doctor of Ministry thesis. Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York. 1999, 6.

should nonetheless not be allowed in the synagogue.¹¹ Weighing the positive and negative effects of gambling programs is difficult within a Jewish context. According to Jewish law, gambling is not explicitly prohibited. Considering the social aspect, however, gambling in the synagogue should not be encouraged.

In 1961, years after Rabbi Phillip Sigel made his statement concerning gambling, the Federations of Conservative Synagogues voted on a constitutional amendment. This led to the expulsion of sixteen congregations from the Rabbinic Assembly on the grounds that they sponsored bingo games.¹² Morally, bingo programs are problematic for two main reasons. Not only is bingo a form of gambling, in that people are paying money because they think that they will win something back, but it is also problematic because it tends to prey upon those who do not have money to lose. Often times, weekly or monthly bingo nights are attended not by Jewish congregants, but instead by addicted gamblers who tend to be financially irresponsible. This is not only a concern of the Conservative Movement, but also contributes to the Reform Movement's disapproval of bingo for fundraising.

In 1967, the issue of gambling in the synagogue, at least within the Conservative Movement, was revisited.¹³ Members of the Conservative Movement demonstrated their support of gambling in the synagogue as a way to raise funds needed for synagogue operations. Congregations were struggling financially, and Bingo was seen by some as the best solution to overcome such financial difficulties. And so it remains that although gambling is not encouraged by rabbinic authorities, it is also not generally condemned by

¹¹ *Ibid.* 6

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.* 7

them. Recognizing the need for raising large sums of money, a significant number of congregations rely upon gambling events.

Similar responses to gambling as a form of fundraising have been issued by the Reform Movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis. The Reform Movement, also a liberal movement of Judaism, adopted the following resolution at their 90th Annual Convention in 1979. "The CCAR deplores the use of gambling devices to raise funds for Jewish religious and communal institutions, as being contrary to our faith and tradition. The CCAR calls upon its members to discourage such practices." This issue is not new to the CCAR as the original resolution was issued and adopted at the 1949 convention of the organization.¹⁴ In addition to discouraging gambling within the synagogue walls, the Reform Movement does not support gambling in secular venues.¹⁵ Despite this position, lotteries and casino nights continue to be widely used as instruments for fundraising within the Reform Movement.

Weighing heavily on the side of prohibiting gambling in the synagogue is the moral responsibility that the congregation has to the community, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Preying on those who are not financially stable, bringing the poor and the elderly in for an evening of entertainment, weekly bingo nights raise money at the expense of people who do not necessarily have the money to hand over. Along with this is the risk of exposing people to gambling, potentially contributing to the development of an addiction to it. Hosting regular gambling programs, synagogues are partially liable for ones inability to distinguish between recreation and compulsion.

¹⁴ www.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/resodip.pl?file=gambling&year=1979 - CCAR website

¹⁵ See index for the resolutions and responsum issued by the Reform Movement concerning the issue of gambling.

When operating a gambling program in a synagogue setting, it is of primary concern that those involved are aware of the moral agendas attached to the program. In 1999, one Rabbi in Cincinnati, Ohio, found himself caught in a tremendous mess due to synagogue gambling. On the surface, a regular bingo game or lottery does not seem destructive. Unfortunately, there are opportunities for unethical behavior when dealing with the exchange of money on a regular basis. The situation in Cincinnati, where a local Rabbi plead guilty to allegations of stealing one million dollars from synagogue bingo receipts, illustrates one way in which gambling can have a negative effect on a person. The consequences reach far beyond losing money to another player or to a charitable organization.

In conclusion, Judaism's support of gambling is severely limited. There is some difference of opinion when it comes to the type of gambling, but in general, it is clear that Jewish authority does recognize the realities of gambling. Becoming addicted to the behavior is natural because the activity is so thrilling and seems so harmless, as there is no substance ingested to receive the high associated with gambling. Although gambling is a major source of synagogue and Jewish organizational fundraising, with planning, other programs can result in financial success as well. Occasional gambling must not be banned, but increased programming on the risks associated with gambling should be implemented by the synagogue. As is the case with wine that enters into so many Jewish observances, it is not the substance (the wine or the gambling) that is problematic, but the way in which the substance is used. Following the Jewish value of *Kol Yisrael Aravin Zeh le Zeh*, each Jew is responsible for other Jewish people. Gambling as recreation is not bad, but the risk of this sport turning into addiction is high. Therefore, the Jewish

community must respond with appropriate prevention programming coupled with strong recovery programming to positively impact those who enjoy a social game of poker, an occasional trip to Las Vegas, carefully choosing lottery numbers, a good spin of the dreidle, shouting bingo, and placing bets on a big sporting event.

Appendix A

CCAR Responsa

American Reform Responsa

166. Games of Chance in Connection with Fundraising

(Vol. XLVI, 1936, p. 126)

QUESTION: Several organizations of our Temple are planning to raise a special fund for the erection of a school house adjoining our present building. One of the principal means they hope to use is a bazaar. That will involve certain gambling devices such as wheels of chance and other similar contrivances. They would like to know whether such measures are ethically permissible.

ANSWER: Legally, there is no objection. We can look at the matter from the following aspect: the Jewish law, while disqualifying a gambler from giving evidence in lawsuits, stipulates that this applies only to professionals whose sole occupation is gambling (see Choshen Mishpat, 34.16). Moreover, although one lending money on interest is debarred from being a witness (*ibid.*, 34.10), if he does so with monies belonging to orphans whose guardian he is, he is not disqualified "because he thinks he is doing a *mitzvah* in order to increase the funds of the orphans" (*ibid.*, 34.11).

There is further the case, bearing more directly on the subject of the question, of a respected Jew of Modena (Italy) who was in straitened circumstances and was about to sell a very valuable *Sefer Torah*. The rabbi of Modena, R. Ishmael Sacerdote (died 1811), a famous Talmudist and author of *Responsa Zera Emet* (3 volumes), even issued a letter of recommendation for this scheme, urging its furtherance as a "*mitzvah*" (see *Zera Emet* III, no. 144).

However, "ethically" there are grounds for scruples, especially if the attractive features of the bazaar are advertised and brought to the notice of the non-Jewish clergy. The *New York Times* (June 14, 1935), for example, devoted a column to the report of a special committee of the United Lutheran Synod of New York, which strongly condemned games of chance at bazaars for raising money for the

support of Lutheran churches. Such Jewish affairs, especially if much publicized, may lower the respect for Judaism in the eyes of non-Jews. Hence, discretion is advisable even from this angle alone.

Jacob Mann and Committee

CCAR Responsa

American Reform Responsa

167. Jewish Attitude Towards Gambling

(Vol. LXXXIX, 1979, p. 115)

QUESTION: Is it permissible for a synagogue to use a lottery as a means of fund raising? What is the Jewish attitude toward gambling? (Mrs. A.S., New York)

ANSWER: It is clear that the early tradition saw professional gambling as sinful (*Midrash Tehilim* 26.7; Yer. San. 23d). Those who were engaged in gambling were ineligible to serve as witnesses or as judges (San. 24b); yet it was never made a criminal offense. Every effort was made to help the compulsive gambler away from his vice. Those who had taken an oath to refrain from gambling were not allowed to abrogate it, no matter how difficult the circumstances (*Pachad Yitschak*, vol. 5, Cherem); some, however, felt that this was too difficult and that vows to avoid gambling should not be enforced. *Responsa* have been written on both sides of the question (Leo Landman, "Jewish Attitudes toward Gambling," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 58, pp. 302ff). A wide variety of communal ordinances have been enacted, but few proved successful (Adret *Responsa* II, 35; VII, 244, 270). Gamblers were even barred from synagogue honors and from being counted toward a *Minyan*. None of these strictures against professional gambling proved to be successful, and they are repeated century after century in the responsa literature.

Despite the views held against the professional gambler, occasional gambling was permitted, and ordinances against gambling were often lifted for Chanuka, Purim, and the intermediary days of Passover and Sukkot, as well as Rosh Chodesh (Leo Landman, *op. cit.*, p. 42). Chanuka was, in fact, known as the New Year of the gamblers (I. Rivkind, *Der Kampf Kegen Azart Schpielen bei Yiden*, pp. 29ff). Elsewhere it was suggested that card playing even be permitted on fast days so that the individual would not feel excessively hungry (Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages*, pp. 284, 291). Although rabbinic authorities frowned upon the playing of cards and gambling within a *Sukka*, they realized

that some people would not sit in a *Sukka* unless they were permitted such entertainment, so they allowed it as well (Leo Landman, *op. cit.*, pp. 46ff). It is clear from all of this that gambling was permitted with some reluctance by the Rabbis. Yet a few rabbis also participated in various forms of gambling. Leo Landman's monograph in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, his article in *Tradition*, and Rivkind's Yiddish book have discussed gambling in great detail, and shown the ebb and flow of the changing attitudes throughout the century.

Lotteries have also been discussed, and Jews seem to have been heavily involved in them in the 18th and 19th centuries, so major winnings were reported with approval in the responsa. One rabbi ruled that he who wins a lottery should recite the blessing "*Shehecheyanu*," as well as the blessing "*Hatov vehameitiv*," if he had won with a partner (B.D. Levin, *Shemen Sason*, p. 27). Landman also reported an incident in Bresova, Hungary, in which the congregation each year purchased lottery slips with excess funds from their budget. They inquired then whether the winnings would go back to the general treasury or be divided equally among the members of the *Kahal* (Landman, "Gambling in the Synagogue," *Tradition*, vol. 10, pp. 81ff). Sacerdote permitted lottery tickets to be sold in order to save a valuable *Sefer Torah* for a synagogue (*Zera Emet*, vol. 3, #144). There are also reports of rabbis winning considerable sums (I. Rivkind, *op. cit.*, pp. 285ff). It is clear from all of these statements that a lottery was considered as legitimate entertainment, unlikely to lead to compulsive gambling, and, therefore, it should not be generally prohibited.

We must also ask whether our tradition was concerned with the source of funds used for religious purposes. Gifts of prostitutes and criminals were rejected in Deuteronomy: "You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the price of a dog to the House of the Lord, your God, for any vow" (Deut. 23:19). The discussion in the *Talmud* (Bava Kama 65b; Temura 29a) makes it clear that the prohibition was restricted to harlotry and idolatry or to the bringing of the actual object used in payment. If that object had been changed to money or into another object, it became acceptable. This was the view of Maimonides (*Yad*, Hil. Isurei Mizbeach

IV.14). This law was subsequently applied to the synagogue (*Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chayim 153.21); Rabbenu Yeruham (14th century, *Toledot Adam VeChava*—Chava, 23.1) and Isserles expressed concern over such funds being used for a *Torah* or for synagogue lights. In other words, funds from a tainted source may be used to support a synagogue, and it is incumbent upon *all* Jews to do whatever they can to maintain the synagogue. It would be wrong to deny this right even to criminals, gamblers, etc., though they should receive no recognition for their help (Isserles to *Shulchan Aruch*, Yoreh De-a 249.13). We may conclude that Jewish tradition has found it impossible to prohibit gambling and has many concessions in this regard; it would, however, not favor lotteries or any other form of gambling as a regular means of raising funds for the synagogue. It is one thing to accept the human frailty, but another to approve it or to encourage it through the synagogue. Although funds from dubious sources may be accepted by a synagogue, it would be wrong to make such funds a basis for synagogue life. We would, therefore, urge synagogues to refrain from using gambling as a way of raising funds on a regular basis.

Walter Jacob, *Chairman*

Leonard S. Kravitz

Eugene J. Lipman

W. Gunther Plaut

Harry A. Roth

Rav A. Soloff

Bernard Zlotowitz

See also:

"Resolution," *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 89, 1979.

S.B. Freehof, "Gambling for the Benefit of the Synagogue " *Current Reform Responsa*, pp. 56ff; "Occasional Gambling and State Lotteries," *Reform Responsa For Our Time*, pp. 229ff;

"Resolutions," *Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, 1957 and 1959.

THE TARGUM TO 'THE SONG OF
SONGS'; THE BOOK OF THE APPLE;
THE TEN JEWISH MARTYRS; A
DIALOGUE ON GAMES OF CHANCE

Translated from the
HEBREW AND ARAMAIC.

By
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—
1908.

On Games of Chance.

BY LEO DE MODENA.

CHAPTER I.

*In which is shown how two loving friends, named
Eldad and Medad, came to converse concerning
gambling.*

A pure and disinterested affection, such as the
love which existed between David and Jonathan,
grew up between two young men advanced in
knowledge and well-versed in the sciences, who
were fellow-students in every sense of the word,
ever enjoying each other's company and never sepa-
rated. The name of one was Eldad, and the name
of the other Medad.

Now Medad for a time continued to apply him-
self to the demands of the business which his father,
who was a great merchant, imposed upon him; but
soon foolish and light-hearted men inclined his

heart unto vain pursuits, and he consented to follow them in untried ways. He began to gamble with cards and dice uninterruptedly both by day and by night, placing his trust in these things, so that he gradually became quite a different man, spurning every good quality, and neglecting his studies and occupations. He found his delight no longer in wisdom, but in the pursuit of sporting. On all sides he was the object of shame and derision, and all who saw him mocked at him.

Now when Eldad heard this evil thing, he mourned for his friend, for he loved him as dearly as himself: many a time he would reprove him, until at length he besought him to turn from his evil ways.

Nevertheless, Medad, as a man who heareth not, neither moved nor stirred from his course, but continued in his bad habits, until after length of days Eldad, happening to take a walk beyond the city in the cool of the day, chanced to meet his friend Medad with fallen countenance engaged in deep thought, and Eldad said within himself: This time will I send my reproofs straight into his

heart; peradventure he will listen and gain understanding on this point. So he began to converse with him concerning this matter as aforesaid.

But Medad answered him in a manner contrary to his expectation, for he began to praise and glorify gambling, and those who devoted themselves to it. And Eldad was much astonished, and he replied unto him. Thus they gave expression to their ideas, each in his own way, in the following conversation which ensued:—

ELDAD.

Whence comest thou, and whither goest thou, my friend Medad? Thou alone here in the field beyond the city! And why do I see thy face so sad? Nay, before thou answerest me, I know full well that thou comest from the gambling den, and that in consequence of the money which has gone from thy purse, and been emptied out of thy pockets, thou art cast down, dejected, and grieved, and thou hast lost heart.

Hast thou not yet made up thy mind to forsake the evil way of sport, and to apply thyself to the

study of the Law, and to commercial pursuits, as thou wast wont to do of old? Hast thou not yet learnt by experience that the words which I have spoken to thee these hundred times are words of truth, that such action is evil and bitter, that it is a net and a snare crippling our success in life, proving thorns and thistles to our very souls, and the immediate cause of numberless transgressions? And since from thy youth until now I have known thee to be possessed of wisdom and understanding, it is wondrous strange to me that thou shouldst turn aside thine ears at the voice of those who seek thy welfare and thy good, as I do this day, who speak to thee in all kindness, in order that it may be well with thee in thy latter years.

MEDAD.

I am weary of bearing it: I am annoyed at having to listen to such idle words as these day by day! They press upon me as a heavy burden, especially when they come from thee, who art so far ahead of me in wisdom and knowledge. But I will not reply to thee as one who hates reproof,

for I am well aware of thy love towards me. Yet I cannot help saying that thou speakest as one who moves among the common folk, who have agreed to despise and abhor this kind of sport, to such an extent indeed, that parents pray to God not that their children may not grow up murderers, whoremongers, or drunkards, but that they may not grow up as gamblers.

I am but grieved on thy account, that thou shouldst be blind to the fact that not alone do they speak falsely who exaggerate this practice into an evil, but that it is accounted by Heaven as a positive good, and as a benefit unto mankind.

I just had three gold pieces, and lost them after they had brought me in a return of fifty; and these, too, have gone, and still I'm not vexed about it. And had I not delayed in returning to the city, for fear of my father being in search of me, and if I only had the leisure, I would soon acquaint thee with arguments in defence of my conduct and in favour of gaming, and I should no longer appear in thy sight as a deceiver, when thou shouldst hear it said concerning me that I am a sporting-man.

ELDAD.

Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time to go home yet: besides I have just seen thy father, standing by the sailors, engaged in sending off consignments of stuff by the ship which sails to Eastern countries, and the sun will have gone down before he returns. Do not, therefore, be in a hurry to go, for thy father will not think of thee, and deny me not the favour of acquainting me with thy reply in defence; for I cannot understand where-withal a man shall cleanse a way of life so wicked as this.

MEDAD.

Since my father's concerns do not stand in the way, and you are desirous of knowing my views, let us select a spot here, under the vine or fig tree, and sit down in the cool of the day. I will then instruct and enlighten you as to how nearly the occupation of gaming approaches the path of rectitude, arising as the sun of righteousness with healing on the wings of the flying wheel.

ELDAD.

Then open thou thy mouth, and let thy words enlighten us.

CHAPTER II.

Being a dialogue between them on the subjects of sport and commerce: Medad exerting himself to demonstrate that gaming is a delightful pursuit, one form of commercial dealing, while Eldad holds a contrary opinion, and replies accordingly.

MEDAD.

I said of sport, it is praiseworthy, laudable, and glorious: it exists among mankind like every other well-defined and regulated mode of traffic which is usually found to exist among them. There are a number of vanities in the world, 'tis true: but this is least objectionable, inasmuch as it is a polished mirror, in which is seen and found everything that is desirable to look upon for a man that is cast into a dead sleep, and whom both chariot and horse drag hither and thither, until the fury of this fleeting world, bearing so many ills during its brief span, shall have passed away. Nay, it acts as a goad and an instructor, spurring him on, and teaching him that it may be well with him all the days of his life.

I will not deny that he is a better man whose delight is in the Law of the Lord, and who performeth the will and commands of the Creator of all, and turneth not to excitement and vain matters; but this I do say, that among all the other avocations of mankind whereby human beings labour to possess themselves of wealth and earthly goods, or to make a profit by means of them in a round of travail and vexation, this is no less correct and righteous a method in the sight of a man who follows that which is altogether just.

Attend and hearken: "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth" and established His world in love: nay, with an exceeding great love did He compassionate His creatures, when "He pondered, and sought out, and set in order" all their wants, and "continues to look forth from the place of His habitation."

For if there existed but one form of industry among all men the earth and its inhabitants would be subject to destruction; and therefore God has commanded that men should be engaged in diverse occupations, one following the art of the apothecary,

cary, another plying the trade of a tanner: the tailor employing his needle, the scribe his pen: others again being keepers of cattle and shepherds: in order that one should be of help to the other, each in his respective sphere; the result being that every man has the desire of his soul gratified according to a pre-arranged and well-ordered plan.

If, for example, all men were engaged in weaving linen and woollen garments as a covering for the human body, and there were no men to till the ground; or if everyone ploughed the ground by means of oxen, what would become of the paymaster, the scribe, the builder of houses and the house-breaker; the medical man, the travelling merchant, or the shopkeeper; kings, and princes; and such as provide other necessary requirements indispensable to life under the sun?

It is in this connection that our Sages have remarked: How much labour must Adam have endured before he was able to obtain bread to eat! He had to plough and sow and reap, and only after all this was he able to eat. And what did he have to endure before he had a garment to put

on! He had to shear and comb and bleach, and then he was able to clothe himself. But as for me, I rise in the morning and find everything ready prepared for me!

Our Sages wished to intimate by these words, that as Adam was alone, and had no assistance in his days, he had to obtain the bread he ate by the sweat of his brow, and only by the labour of his hands was he able to obtain the garment with which he covered himself; whereas to-day, all these things may be found without trouble to the individual. And for this reason. Because it was decreed by the Creator that one man should be dependent upon the other for his livelihood, whether it be through manual labour and wages, whether through silver-money in buying and selling, through trading, sale and exchange, through profit and the getting of money from his fellow-creature. For by means of commercial enterprise men become smart: in very deed, the Hebrew word for merchandise, namely סחורה (*Sehora*), is derived from a root סח which means "to go round," denoting that the money circulates, and the coin is current,

going round and round, passing from hand to hand, in the course of payment for goods received, or exchanged.

And now I ask, why should gambling be worse than any of the other pursuits and enterprises in which men engage daily in order to obtain money and to gather gold, which also have their fluctuations, at one time lifting up, at another time dragging down a man; why should we not make it a means of "hunting our venison," and adding to our stores, or, on the other hand, of exerting ourselves in fruitless efforts, if it be so willed by Providence? What disgrace attaches to this latter pursuit any more than to the former?

Was not this the very advice, the sound and splendid reply, which our Lord and King of Jesse's stem, David, of blessed memory, gave to the wise men of Israel (as narrated in the Talmud, Treatise *Berachoth*) in reply to their inquiry, how the people of Israel were to obtain their sustenance, and maintain themselves. He simply said to them: Let them go and support themselves at each other's hands!

For he understood that it had been so ordered

from on High, that the earth, once planted, could only rest on a solid foundation and be perpetuated by means of the currency of money in people's hands in one way or the other, provided always that the way of the wicked be excluded, and that false dealing, theft, and over-reaching be not tolerated.

And what better application could his words have, "Let them go and support themselves one from the other," than that with regard to the law of sport, removed, of course, from wicked and cheating methods? It is not, indeed, by unduly persuading another, robbing and deceiving him, that one man lives on the other; it is rather that his lot is determined by that which proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord: it is a matter resting with God, allowing it to fall as He pleases; and that this is the will of the Maker of All we can infer from His own ordinance in connection with the service on the Holy Day of Kippur, that "one lot shall be for the Lord."

By the same method, He willed and ordained that the land which He gave as a possession to

the congregation of Jacob should be divided, as it is stated, "Only by lot shall the land be divided" (Numb. xxvi. 55); and in the same terms did David appeal to God, when he said: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup, Thou supportest my lot" (Psalm xvi. 5); whilst his wise son confirms his view in saying: "The lot causeth contentions to cease" (Prov. xviii. 18).

Hence sporting-men traffic in the land in the same way as all other men of commerce; nay, more, they have even this preference, that all their actions are pre-determined from Heaven above.

ELDAD.

Let not such expressions fall from thy mouth, and speak no more. How can it enter thy mind to compare sport to commerce, and to institute a comparison between something which is indispensable to the perpetuation of the human species (as you have presumed to do) and that which bears the taint, and is the cause of indolence and silliness.

For you must remember that in business the purchaser makes a profit, and the seller incurs no loss;

both of them are happy, "they do each other neither harm nor injury": but in sport, on the other hand, one rejoices and is glad, he is all restful and peaceful, whilst his companion is seized with misfortune; he has neither rest nor quiet, and he goes on playing, not with pleasure, but chafing under his losses. Do you think this can be good and pleasing in the sight of God, that one person can only aggrandise himself by the shame of his fellow, that the former can only ascend the rungs of the ladder of fortune by dragging the latter down to earth, and that one man may rise only that another may fall?

Can that be called one of the world's pursuits which breeds enmity and feud in the hearts of men, and is hostile to the solidarity of mankind?

MEDAD.

"Stay, and I will teach thee!" "If a man sell unto his neighbour, or purchase from his hand," say, one hundred measures of produce, with the idea that when the time comes he will make a double profit on the transaction, and that his granaries will be filled with corn; his face is now

turified to the skies to see whether there is a rain-cloud; he would be delighted to see a big famine in the land; he would be gratified if he saw the whole world in trouble, provided he alone were easy and comfortable. Or take this case. Your winepresses burst forth with new wine, with wine that rejoices your heart; and you see hail and lightning-fire destroying and burning up others' vines, so that no fruit or grape remains; and vinegar becomes so dear that it is sold at the price of wine; and you are happy because you are growing rich yourself, and your descendants will reap the benefit. Now, I ask you, do you consider such attitudes right and just, beneficial to both sides, when the gratification of one man's wishes means the destruction of all Nature, by means of which he becomes great and exalted, and attains to a position from which he is not dislodged? And who does not know that all should tend to one end, namely, that one man should help the other; for it is only by such and similar means that the world can exist.

ELDAD.

"It is bad! it is bad! will such a gainer of the

world's goods exclaim; and when he is gone his way, then he will not boast" of the proceeds of this sport, when once he will be made to realise that the cup (of misfortune) passes also over the head of the one who makes a profit, that his gains will not remain his for all time, for the money will return whither it once came, and he will never experience any blessing attaching to it. As the withering grass and the fading flower will his possessions be; and like owner, like possessions, all will be swept away; and dearth in place of satisfaction will remain to him, for not one out of a thousand prospers through such a pursuit. Our eyes witness daily how many victims it has laid low and brought within the bands of the suffering, bound as it is to do harm and to involve men in greatest danger.

And why do you labour so heroically to praise up what is evil, and to decry commercial pursuits, which give us such things as "wool, flax and drink," without bringing about in the acquisition of them, as this pursuit (Sport) does, misfortune, sickness, and injustice, nor effecting destruction;

producing only that which is right and good in the sight of God and man?

MEDAD.

Why do you treat this occupation so badly, regarding it as an outsider doomed to destruction? Look around, and you'll observe that the same arguments apply to every pursuit in which man is engaged, some get poor, others become rich through them; nay, more, some have elements of evil in them which may cause much more injury than gambling, and yet they are constantly in the running. To take a few examples: What about those who go to sea in ships, and cargo them with thousands of pounds' worth of spices, balm and myrrh, silk, purple, scarlet, woollen and linen garments, confiding them simply to a cedar-plank, which is sent upon the ocean at the mercy of the winds? Should the owner of these wares be on board, his life also is in danger; at times there is but one step between him and death, for if God would cause the breeze to turn to a strong wind and dash it against a rock, in an instant it would

upset and be shattered, no one being able to rescue, and the man would lose his life and his wealth together.

I tell you, better one handful of satisfaction obtained in a game by the handling of cards and dice than two handfuls of the worry endured by those who travel by sea, who are in constant anxiety as regards the wind, watching whether it comes from the north, east, or west.

Next, I'll take those who are fond of the art of Alchemy. These say in their hearts: "In place of copper I will bring gold"; they pretend to manufacture pure sterling silver out of quicksilver; they waste their days between the oven and the range, blowing the coal with fire until it becomes hot, and exhausting their own breath. Now these persons surely scatter that which they really possess; whilst instead of the silver which they long to make, they lose the silver they once had in the attempt to make more. They indulge in many schemes, working in gold, silver and copper, the result being that they make one slip after another; and then they fall in their misfortune altogether, coming down from

gold to silver, from silver to copper, and ultimately to the level in which their faces are covered with shame, falling into disgrace.

Then again there are some who are so very glad of the opportunity to quarrel and fight, that they do not stop short at dragging a man before the magistrate for the sake of a penny. They will give their counsel, or the one who pleads on their behalf, whether present or absent at the trial, to the secretaries and notaries (of the court), their fees to-day and to-morrow, and over and over again if necessary, until they will leave with empty pockets, drained of their resources even to the last farthing or half-farthing. It may even happen that there may be a miscarriage of justice, and the guilty defendant may gain the day into the bargain, in which case the Scriptural text holds good: "They do not understand how to judge" (Psalm cxlvii. 20).

Furthermore, there are many ways in which a man may shed his life-blood, in other words, lose his money, besides gambling; and yet no one speaks against them with anything like the same aversion.

I need but adduce in support of my contention regarding the legitimacy of this kind of occupation the saying of the Rabbis of the Talmud (*Bab. Mex. 29 b.*): "There is no surer way for a man to lose the fortune which his father had left him than to dress in expensive (linen) clothing, to use china services, and to have a staff of dependents without looking after them."

Now if, according to your view, they had thought that gambling was equally a means of losing money, why did not the Rabbis add the words: "Let him go and play." This indicates that it is included in the same category as the other pursuits which partake of monetary transactions; there are times even when a little folly or nonsense avails more than knowledge and honour.

ELDAD.

Why are you defending a position devoid of strength, and trying to justify a pursuit which fills the world with robbery? It's a saying as old as the hills, having come down to me from my grandfather, that there are three primary sins in the

world, the sources of all evils, and these are gambling, gormandising, and whoring, hinted at in the three Scriptural terms occurring in Deuteronomy xviii. 3, "the shoulder, the cheeks, and the maw" (the physical organs employed in the three acts referred to); but the worst of all things, and particularly base, is the act of gambling.

We might even add, that as regards the other two, they come to man naturally, by reason of the evil inclination resident within him, which is drawing him on and inciting him, saying, in one case: "Snatch and eat, be quick and drink, etc." . . . "Shall not the palate taste its food?" In the other case, that of the "strange woman who flattereth with her words," who brings many victims low, and it may also be said, that as "all flesh is grass," the one hour of imagined satisfaction which man enjoys in this world is the net spread (for his downfall), for while he is enjoying his desires, which are fleeting, he forgets the life which is eternal.

But what can be said in favour of, or to the advantage of the sporting propensity, which cannot be

classed under the head of desire natural to man, belonging neither to "the easy-going pleasures of the wicked, nor to the hardships incidental to the lot of the righteous"? What boots it a man if he indulge in it, and what profit is it unto him, except that it engenders the bitterest of pangs, when he swoons and pours forth his plaint, and in bitterness of spirit curses God and the King; or it causes him to cast wistful eyes on another's purse, leading either to the gallows, or to his plunging his own sword into his heart when the money is gone, or he has no rest within himself.

Furthermore, when a man has once eaten to satisfaction, having blessed the Lord his God for what he has enjoyed, when his stomach is full, he can eat no more, until the mill of the organs of digestion has done its work, and discharged the overplus; or in old age, when "the grinders are few," the desire for food abates; nevertheless, eating within limits, so as to repair the waste going on in the human body, is a function indispensable to the life of man.

The same may be said of the men who "give

their strength unto women"; the pleasure once indulged, the desire passes, so that as time advances and age creeps on, "the silver cord of that desire is loosened," he makes a virtue of his necessity—"it becomes the steadfastness of his time," whilst Nature has determined that it is "the way of a man with a maid" (Prov. xxx. 19).

But as far as concerns gambling, it is not a natural instinct, but an evil devised by man himself, stopping at no time between youth and old age. For, whether a man gains or loses, "the eyes of man are never satisfied" (ibid. xxvii. 20); with specious arguments he says to himself, "I shall return to my post," but he never leaves off or gives it up, "and at his end he shall prove himself the fool" (Jer. xvii. 11).

MEDAD.

Your prejudice has raised arguments—"your hatred stirreth up strife" (Prov. x. 12)—against gambling, so as to make you condemn it more than all other diversions, but the case is not as you put it; for the first two evils to which you refer are sins in themselves, more especially to be considered so

by us of Israel, those who keep the Law of the Lord; but as regards gambling, according to your own showing, it is but a stepping-stone to wrongdoing, and it is not the way to impose a restriction in order to ward off another restriction.

The glutton and the drunkard are stoned, for the simple reason that their apparently harmless indulgence might urge them to eat of forbidden meats out of pure desire; and an adulterer, in destroying his very life and soul, for he commits an abomination and a punishable offence, might be led to the further commission of the sin of "marrying the daughter of a strange god" (Malachi ii. 11), or he might come in unto his neighbour's wife—"a crooked thing which cannot be made straight" (Eccl. i. 15). May God protect us against such, for hell and destruction is their dwelling and their death-chamber!

Sport, on the other hand, is simply a question of money. It is perfectly fair and proper, and there is no risk of profanation connected with it. God employs it in his own delightful way as a beneficial and proper agent to bring upon man

either a curse or a blessing, and in this respect it is in no wise different from the rest of the commercial pursuits in which mankind engages.

CHAPTER III.

In which Eldad endeavours to prove that the gambler trespasses each one of the Ten Commandments, and Medad retorts.

ELDAD.

If with all human effort you draw out words and arguments to institute a comparison between gaming and commerce, in order to prove that one is similar to the other, inasmuch as they both equally tend to increase or diminish one's possessions, wealth and the coveted things of this world; I would still ask, how you could possibly defend this pursuit when it is understood that "they who walk in its ways are workers of iniquity"; each commits thereby an act of rebellion towards his Maker, and gradually estranges himself from Him, since he takes money from his fellow-man by wicked and

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thievish methods, without giving him a *quid pro quo*, and without any labour on his own part.

If you go into the matter thoroughly, you will see that the gambler trespasses all the Ten Commandments, the very foundation of the Law of Moses and of his Prophecy, acknowledged not alone by the people of Israel, holy unto the Lord, but also by those nations among whom we dwell. First, with regard to those Commandments from the words "I am the Lord thy God" unto the fourth, "Remember the Sabbath Day." These all warn against the sin of idolatry: and beyond doubt he trespasses against each one of them. For, as soon as his star is unlucky, and he loses everything, he will be beside himself, will grow full of fury and anger; and it is clear to us that our Rabbis were right when they said that "the man of anger is like the idolator" (in forgetting his God). They have even expressed the same idea more clearly when they remarked: "A gambler is as an idolator," basing their dictum on the Scriptural phrases "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar . . . playing" (Gen. xxi. 9): "And the people sat down to eat

and drink, and they rose up to play" (Exod. xxxii. 6).

As regards the third Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord Thy God in vain," etc., it is self-evident to all, that at every moment during play, at every opportunity for sinning, or differences among players, a man will commit perjury, he will swear thousands of vain and false oaths, dragging his soul down to earth—a dark and weary outlook.

And how easily the Commandment referring to the Sabbath-day is broken! A man is playing on Sabbath-eve, near dusk; the loser, in the forlorn hope of winning back what he has lost; the winner, whose greed for gain is not satisfied, hoping to make more, suddenly find that the Sabbath has overtaken them, and they have infringed the sanctity of the day. In many other ways, too, this can happen to players.

The "honouring of father and mother" is equally jeopardised by this pursuit. Properly speaking, it is the duty of father and mother to correct and chastise the son who is addicted to gambling, in

the endeavour to bring him back; but the son who is steeped in this sort of thing, which has become to him as second nature, will give them no ear, he answers them harshly, and this is a source of bitterness to their lives; for he has ignored the command "A man shall fear his mother and his father" (Levit. xix. 3).

Furthermore, when a man realises that he has lost his money, the fire of envy and hatred will burn within him against his fellow-man, or he will seek a pretext to quarrel with him, remarking, "The game was not so," calling him a wicked scoundrel, anxious to rob him of his own; the other will retort, and the discussion, having become heated, we cannot predict where it will end. It may even be that each will draw his sword, so that one gets killed, and the command of the Lord, "Thou shalt not murder," be transgressed.

A gambler will mix with loose women; in his rage he will utter obscene and filthy expressions, and concerning such a sin our Rabbis have said, "The one who defiles his mouth with unhallowed words has no share in the bliss of the world to come."

Words are the index to actions; the mouth makes the first move, and the organs of action do the rest. This is all contained in the prohibition: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Now, when he has been left destitute, left entirely without money, it is natural that all his thoughts are misdirected the livelong day; he broods upon how he may steal secretly, or rob his fellow-creatures openly, hoping by this means to make up for his deficiencies, with the result that he will be like "the chief baker, Pharaoh's servant," hanging between Heaven and earth, for not having observed the warning: "Thou shalt not steal."

It may happen, too, in the course of a game with his friend, that they may form a compact to share the profits equally, and a misunderstanding arising, a third party is called in to arbitrate; but he, being a friend of one of the players, gives the decision in favour of that friend, to wit, unjustly; what becomes now of the command, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour"? It is thrown overboard.

And it stands to reason, that if a man is not

particular with regard to the law of stealing, he will be less careful as regards the prohibition, "Thou shalt not covet"; for whatever his eyes see, his heart will desire with a longing which will never satisfy the eye of covetousness.

Consider and answer now, whether the evil of this wicked pastime is not monstrous enough to reach unto Heaven (and draw down punishment)—a pastime which sets aside every precept of the Law of the Living God, both written and traditional, and the end of which is bound to be bitter as wormwood: surely the one who touches such a diversion cannot go unpunished!

MEDAD.

You have employed many words to condemn this sport, but you have nevertheless said nothing effectual to cast a stigma upon it which might not apply equally to every other human pursuit. For "anger resteth in the bosom of fools" even in trivial matters, but the sensible man is patient at all times.

This is my experience. I saw a man yesterday losing 400 gold-pieces, and he never uttered a word

by way of cursing his luck; only once he exclaimed; "Thou, O Lord, art righteous!" On the other hand, I knew a man who, on receipt of the news that corn had depreciated in value (he was a corn and wine-dealer), went up to the roof, threw himself down, and was killed.

And where will you find the occasion for more wicked and perplexing oaths than among merchants, which they employ to confirm their statements in the course of buying and selling?

And with regard to your apprehension as to the violation of the Sabbath, this may apply as well to the tailor, shoemaker, and every other workman who is desirous of increasing his profits.

There are, furthermore, many other diversions which might lead to the breaking of the command to "honour father and mother," or to the commission of murder and adultery.

And the same is the case with stealing, which a poor fellow in straitened circumstances justifies by saying, it is not for stealing that he is hanged, but owing to his unlucky star, and hard times.

As far as concerns false swearing, this may occur

in any form of partnership; and covetousness, even outside gaming is well known to reside naturally in the heart of man.

To sum up the matter: a perfectly righteous person will be as upright in commercial pursuits as in sport or anything else; whilst a wicked person will act wickedly in the one matter as in the other. And now, finally, I say, go and reflect upon this one point. If, as you insist, this is such robbery and an intolerable sin, why did not our Rabbis of old prohibit it to us and our descendants in a clear, decisive and express manner? Considering, too, as is well known, that their object was ever to keep us aloof, not alone from transgression and wickedness itself, but even from that which in a remote degree might lead to its commission, and they therefore, in their exalted and perfect wisdom, instituted one fence and safeguard upon another to protect the law—what conclusion can we arrive at from the consideration that they never lifted up their voice against this diversion, but that they found therein nothing of vice or vanity, as you would have us believe?

CHAPTER IV.

In which Eldad wishes to prove from the Talmud and other later Rabbinic works that the gambler is disqualified from acting either as judge or witness, while Medad tries to argue the contrary from these very works.

ELDAD.

Even though you may be versed in the Bible, you have learnt nothing of Rabbinic literature, if you mean to assert that the writings of our Teachers contain no statements in disparagement of gambling and in prohibition thereof.

"Come, I will take you to one place . . . you shall see but one part" of its shame, namely, that passage contains in the Treatise *Sanhedrin*, ch. iii., where it states: "The following are disqualified (from taking part in judgment):—the one who gambles with cards and dice, the one who lends money at usurious rates, pigeon-flyers, and dealers in the prohibited produce of the year of release": to which R. Jehuda adds, "provided that this is their sole occupation"; while the commentator

"Rashi" explains that those enumerated above all partake of the character of thieves; and Scripture cautions: "Put not thy hand with the wicked to be witness of violence" (Exod. xxiii. 1).

The question asked in the *Gemara* with reference to the classes of gamblers stated above is, "What sin do they commit?" and the answer given in the name of Rabbi Shesheth is, that they are not engaged in anything adding to the civilization of the world.

I ask you, what better evidence could the Rabbis have given to show that they regarded these pursuits as vile and unlawful, than by disqualifying all those who followed such callings from judging, or acting as witnesses, and by including them in the category "wicked" and "men of violence"?

The very words of R. Shesheth are a refutation of your former arguments in favour of this pastime, when you said that it might be compared to the other pursuits indispensable to any civilized community, for he clearly states that this does not contribute to the support of the world; and the same decision has been upheld by earlier and

later Rabbis, who have simply confirmed and strengthened the view that it is entirely unlawful.

Maimonides, in the sixth chapter of his treatise on "Robbery," writes: The gambler, according to the Rabbis, is guilty of an act of robbery, for in spite of the fact that he takes the money with the knowledge and consent of the owner, nevertheless, since he obtains it by way of play and fraud, and gives nothing in return, he must be regarded as robbing his neighbour. And even in such instances in which the direct charge of robbery would not apply, (when, for example, a man plays with a sharper), yet the player sins, for he is guilty of wasting his time in frivolous pursuits, while it should be his business to engage in such wise and sensible work as tends to the civilization of mankind. In a similar strain Maimonides pursues the subject more fully in the treatises referring to "witnesses" and "selling," etc.

In the work, too, known as the "Semag" (*Sepher Mivvot Gedoloth*) it is written: The Rabbis held that a gambler was a robber; and the book *Tur* and the *Responsa* of R. Shelomo b. Adereth con-

tain the same view, namely, that it is unlawful to play cards and dice.

How, then, can you possibly assert that "there is no speech nor language, on the part of the Rabbis, and that their voice is not heard" in denunciation of gaming, when they thrust it aside with both hands, and say unto us: "Depart, draw not near, nor approach it."

MEDAD.

Don't be in such haste to reply to me, and to draw your argument from that passage in "*Sanhedrin*" which you quoted, for I am well aware and am not ignorant of the fact that every Rabbinic authority who had anything to urge against playing has drawn his support from that self-same passage. And even if we take it as a law, settled and fixed, that, according to the Rabbis, the gambler cannot legally act as judge or witness in any suit, they suffer no loss of dignity or prestige, when we consider that in this respect they simply labour under the same disability as a King; and in reality, in consequence of this legislation, they are rendered free from sin, no mishaps being pos-

sible on their account. For do we not read in the treatise of the *Pirké Aboth* ("Ethics of the Fathers") that "he who holds himself aloof from law-matters keeps himself free from enmity, robbery, etc."? So far so good; but it is in reality not the case that players are disqualified from participating in the administration of justice because their business savours of robbery.

Remember, we referred before to the question asked in the *Gemara* in this connection: "What is the actual sin in card and dice-playing?" and Rabbi Shesheth replied that one might be better employed in the work of doing something for the world's progress. Now since the question is put in the form: "What sin does he commit?" it must occur to everyone that, according to the *Gemara*, a player ought not to be disqualified, inasmuch as it does not regard him as a thief. Wherein then consists his guilt?

This is made clear by the dictum of R. Shesheth, namely, that he contributes not by his vocation to the world's progress.

Even "Rashi," who holds that all gambling is

a sort of robbery, did not really mean that sport of this kind is prohibited because of its being *actual* robbery, for he distinctly uses the expression "a sort of robbery"—there being no reciprocal benefit in the pursuit; even at the present day the idler and loafer are punished, not for any specific wrong which they have committed, but as a precaution against their ultimately being guilty of some misdemeanour.

Furthermore, in the work "Nimuké Joseph" there is a long disquisition as to the question whether the idea of robbery or not is uppermost in the minds of those who disqualify players, on account of their engaging in the risky game of chance or betting.

Besides R. Shesheth and R. Jehuda practically agree in their attitude regarding playing, for the latter only prohibits it when it is a man's sole occupation, but regards it as lawful when it is a diversion or pastime, and he has some other means of livelihood.

Consequently my position is unassailable, and cannot fall to the ground. For, certainly, it is self-evident that the man who plies but one calling does

not add anything to the support of the world. Our Sages applied this principle even to the study of the Torah; for they held that "all learning which has no other occupation combined with it must ultimately become neutralised, and a source of sinfulness." And if this be the case with the Torah, how much more with games of chance and other pursuits, when they are a man's only means of passing the time?

I should mention, moreover, what the author of the commentary called "Magid Mischna" has to say upon the opinion of Moses Maimonides, who holds that the view of the Rabbis was that "gambling was robbery." He remarks: it seems rather strange to me that he should hold this opinion, for in the debate in the Talmud the plea of robbery is not upheld, nor, in other words, that being a case of betting, the winner is not entitled to possession, more especially in view of the opinion of R. Shesheth, that when a man loses at play, he does so with his eyes open, and makes up his mind beforehand to give up his money. How then can Maimonides attribute the said view to Rabbinic

authority? This requires consideration; the more so, as he himself decides the point (in his Treatise on "Testimony," ch. x.), that only in the case in which a man follows no other occupation can the player be disqualified and deprived of the aforementioned rights.

The same view is expressed in the "Semag" (§ 214) under the head of "the prohibitive commands."

From all this you will understand that there are circumstances and conditions in which the very authorities which you have quoted as your proof in favour of prohibiting sport, would allow it. And what is the use of continuing to argue? All the various opinions of the greatest authorities have been collected by its author in the work "Shilté Haggi-borim": he has carefully weighed them, and pitted one against the other, coming ultimately to the conclusion that it is permitted to play for ready money, "when the cash is on the board," for in such a case the idea of betting does not apply, the results of games in which skill does not enter being considered valid, and entitling the

winner to the right of possession. When, however, the Rabbis referred to gambling as robbery, they had in mind playing on credit, in which instance the winner could recover his due only by means of a law-suit, for practically all agree that this is real betting; there is, nevertheless, some opinion that betting does not enter into the question. The author deals exhaustively with the subject.

And this excellent advice is proffered,—let all players lay it ever to heart,—that it is by no means a good thing for people to play on credit, without ready money being on the table.

Besides, we know of old that, among our immediate and more remote ancestors, there were always wise and sensible men who did not refrain from having a game—"I would not bring their names upon my lips," for it would be unbecoming; and my daily experience confirms the fact that scholars and scientists are not particular in this matter, and "rise to play," for they are but too well aware of the Rabbinic decision on this point.

Listen, further, and you will confess that the bad name given to playing is simply sheer pre-

judice. For we find in the Talmud that the card-player and the usurer, being mentioned side by side, are placed on the same footing. Now we know how much greater is the wrong done by usury than by card and dice playing; for the former is distinctly forbidden in the Torah, while the latter, as shown above, is not even forbidden absolutely by the Rabbis. Yet, if we observe the times in which we live, we shall see how complimentary and respectful people often are to the usurer; not only are they not disqualified from acting in the capacity of judge or witness, but, on the contrary, their evidence often counts against a hundred witnesses; they are our men of position, our magistrates, our judges, and our leaders, even though their houses contain the spoil of the poor. They interpret in their own way the words of Scripture: "Of the stranger thou mayest exact usury, but not of thy brother," and "their bite is indeed the bite of a fox."

Now, as regards professional players, what do we see? As a rule, they are driven into a corner, cut to pieces and despoiled, called "worthless fel-

lows," and woe unto the man who does not join the general chorus of indignation against them!

And having endeavoured to show that gaming with cards and dice is, after all, not so vain and wicked a thing, I will go a step further and prove to you that it contains elements of positive good, for there does not exist a better test and touchstone of human nature, trying it as one would the quality of silver and gold. It will tell you all about the qualities of the player, whether they are good or bad; whether he is a babbler, or one easily roused to anger, whether he is happy, generous, or contented; and whatever you can glean of his qualities, you may learn on the first occasion that you play with him.

This is just what our Sages meant when they said that "you can tell a man by three things, by his drinking, his spending, and his temper"—some adding, by his writing, others, by his play, for in the latter, pocket and temper are included; whilst playing is a better index of character than either drinking or writing.

There is even a great moral advantage that might

accrue to a man from the fact of his losing, and it is this: it will train and accustom him to bear with the ills of life; he will not be bowed down by anxiety when the demand comes upon him unexpectedly to spend, and spend freely, as the one is wont to do "who is settled on his leas." For he has learnt the lesson by daily experience at the card-table, that when he thought to win, he lost; that it was a matter of ups and downs; and so he comes to understand clearly that there is no such thing with us mortals as constant and permanent possessions. Hence, should any calamity overtake him, he will "bless God for the evil as for the good," and even though it might involve the absolute loss of his money, he will simply say to himself, "What can I do? Let me imagine I lost it at play." This will be his comfort, and he will magnify the blessed Name of God amid all conditions of life.

There is another point which is not to be ignored. By playing, a man's mental vision becomes vaster, his wits are sharpened, he may learn arithmetic without a master, he may acquire the science of language and logic, and how to persuade his partner.

He may even learn, incidentally, through playing the art of drawing and geometry, for mathematical instruments enter into the fashioning of cards and dice.

Finally, the sporting-man, especially the one who deals with cards and dice, may be said (playing upon the words of Scripture) to have "his hand in everything, and the hand of every art in him." The Hebrew equivalent for the term "in everything" כָּל has the numerical value 52, just the number of cards in a pack; and the numerical value of the word יָד ("and the hand"), namely 20, plus 1, (to stand for the word itself), thus (21) equals the number of spots on each die.

Thus even can a man learn the lessons of "justice, kindness and humility" amid this diversion, and teach them unto others.

CHAPTER V.

In which Eldad produces a poem composed in contempt of Gambling, and Medad replies with a poem in the same metre in its favour.

ELDAD.

What will you now say about that fine and beautiful poem composed, as I understand, by one of the most excellent scholars, which dilates upon the evils of gambling? Listen to it and pay heed!

AGAINST GAMES OF CHANCE.

1

Who lives by chance, by cards and dice,
Will find himself soon desolate,
And suff'ring all the ills of vice,
He'll curse his lot in the city gate.

2

What he holds, that he'll stake,
And not think of his ties,
Saying, his fortune he'll make,
'Mid oaths and 'mid lies.

3

He dreams he will win,
But ill-luck is his brother,
Sin follows on sin,
And his days are all pother.

4

He hath not hearth nor home,
Save the doorway or the sills,
Or heaven's vaulted dome,
When skipping o'er the hills.

5

See the result of his lust,—
The Pascha or Succah
He'd fain change for the dust,
To win back his lucre.

6

His hair is not curled,
And his clothes are all torn;
To himself and the world,
He is ill and forlorn.

7

With him Blessing and Grace,
Are things of the past,
'Tis proclaimed by his face,
E'en on the Great Fast.

8

So having left them for years,
His own now forsake him,
And shed but few tears,
When God calls to take him.

MEDAD.

Lead me not into temptation (and false conclusions) through this poem, composed probably by some player in his passion, or by one who had never been able to see the science of the game; no won-

der that he spoke in derision of sport. In spite of the fact that it has been attributed to the scholar, Ibn Ezra, or to R. David Kimchi, I say that such a thing never really entered their minds; and this is proved by its defects. It has the appearance of a poem, but is yet no poem, for it violates the rules of poetry, both by reason of the matter and the metre.

Now you listen to me, and I will reply with a poem composed on similar lines, but yet more correct as regards metre and rhythm: the only fault and pity being that it is necessary to answer the fool according to his folly. Incline thine ear and listen.

IN DEFENCE OF GAMES OF CHANCE.

1

Who lives by chance, by cards and dice,
Will find the lord and squire his mate,
He'll gain the day whate'er the price,
And sit in joy at the city gate.

2

And if to God it seemeth well,
That he should lose his all,

It means that God doth tell
His sin, wishing him to fall.

3

He may win, he may lose,
As the merchant or banker,
It's but to amuse,—
And after this all men hanker.

4

Each man tries the game,
That makes or that kills;
Both the fleet and the lame,
Must skip o'er the hills.

5

And so on Succoth at least,
Sport is his Thummim and Urim,
And on Hanucah's feast,
On Pesach and Purim.

6

He's the devil's own child,
Who steals and is lavish
To the dissolute wild,
To whom men are slavish;

7

Tho' he gobble in haste,
To say "Grace" at repast,
And has nothing to taste
On the great Day of the Fast.

8

Sport is decent and grand,
 In chasing all sadness,—
 The true Promised Land,
 Full of singing and gladness!

CHAPTER VI.

In which Eldad tries to speak to the heart of his opposing friend and to conjure him to acknowledge the truth, and Medad obeys and does so without being ashamed.

ELDAD.

My dear Medad, the Almighty has blessed you with a "mouth uttering great things," and with an intelligence and knowledge in all that thou turnest thyself unto; for I observe how shrewd thou art in thy wisdom, pronouncing that which is unclean clean, and the clean unclean, so that none can confuse thee. I have all along observed how, by reason of the sharpness of thy wits, thou art able to prove the reptile clean in seventy different ways, and this same method thou hast applied in all our conver-

sation concerning Sport; thou hast demolished the entire battery of my best arguments, thou hast reduced to earth all that I have advanced in opposition to it, and thou hast shown forth the sporting man as one capable of only doing that which is just and righteous.

Not that this was really the true attitude in your estimation, knowing as you did that the one who praises gambling speaketh falsely, and would only be laughed at; but I know full well that in your innermost soul, and in your secret thoughts, this pursuit was clearly regarded by you as a hellish trade, an evil prompting, a very agent of destruction. Your motive in defending it was simply to prove the goodness of something base, for if one might really boast of his attainments, it would be in the case of one who is clever enough to praise the bad and blame the good, merely to show the world that he has a shrewd head, of course intending ultimately to confess to the truth.

Similarly, "I now conjure thee by Heaven, and thou wilt not deal falsely with me," and by the standard of our affection, which is unending, to declare

now if it be really your opinion, and whether by your life you really believe, that sporting is a true and just pursuit, or what you think of it. And may I beg of you to eradicate out of your being the root of every thought which might cause you to turn to it, so that in future you may rather watch at the doorposts and gates of the Houses of Learning, or apply yourself to the ways and means of earning a livelihood.

MEDAD.

You have conjured me in such a way that I can no longer conceal the truth and fail to acknowledge what I really, in my innermost thoughts, hold concerning the matter.

The reason why I almost staked my very life on behalf of Sport, and tried to prove that it possessed some merit (as you rightly observed), to demonstrate that the evil was good and that the good was evil, was merely for the purpose of sharpening my own wits, which, in consequence of my indolent life during several years past, had become somewhat clouded.

But now understand that I am also quite aware

of the fact that gambling is essentially and entirely a vain and most wicked occupation. And in spite of the consideration that the lottery is only an evidence of the Finger of God, and that when all is said and done, all human occupations are guided by heavenly causes, and that in this respect there is no difference between one and the other; nevertheless, it is improper for man to subject himself absolutely and without limitation to the Decree of Fate, either to lay in wait for the blood of his neighbour—I mean his money—and to use it up, or wilfully of his own accord to endanger himself by losing his own money, for this is certainly not the decree of the unity of the world: it is rather that "the prudent man shall look well to his happiness," and God will support him according to His will.

But as for those who gamble, they engage in none of the ordinary labours of man; for all they care, they prefer to destroy the world and create a new one, thinking that it might possibly come to an end while they are troubling to find their living.

There are three things which our eyes and all

our longings are fixed upon, namely, health, wealth, and happiness; and I have come to the conclusion that not one of these the gambler possesses, nay, they are far removed from him.

As regards the first, health, what a wretched and painful life he leads! His heart trembles within him; he eats (in as uncouth a manner) as Ben Drosai; and as far as concerns his sleep, he neither sleeps nor slumbers. The noise of warfare, the cry of strife reign in his house, contention with his own parents and supporters, as well as with his wife and children—the gifts of God's grace. "For the blood," the money-bag, "is the life"; and when the purse is empty there can be no soundness of the flesh, because the man is troubled and agitated, and continually brooding.

In the second place, such players "only imagine vain things." They fully believe that they will be able to support their household out of their winnings; the truth, however is, that whatever money is gained in this manner, as it came in vanity, so it goes in some obscure way; to-day forsooth, the cash-box—"the bottle"—is filled with coin, to-

morrow it emits the hollow sound of emptiness. "A man heapeth up riches, but knoweth not who shall gather them."

It is a common experience that many men have lost fortunes in cards and dice and similar sports; but very few have put wealth and honour into their pockets by their means—so few, that a child could write them down.

But more particularly we Jews, miserable through being scattered to the four corners of the earth, our lands in the possession of strangers, having nothing but our bodies which we may call our own, all the wealth and grandeur of our kingdom being concentrated in the few coppers and moveables which we hold in our hands, we should remember that "the man who enters this fool's paradise" and plays, will suddenly light on evil days, and then he will bargain away his very soul; for the Jew can no longer boast of the light and gladness which were his, when (in his own country) he possessed fields, vineyards and landed property in perpetuity. Therefore let not the Jew who would live expect to derive happiness from this pursuit.

Thirdly, this occupation is the worst of all evils; for of all the evils which exist in our times, this is the worst agent of sin. As you rightly observed, it transgresses each one of the Ten Commandments. And I firmly believe that if, in the early times of the world's history, the children of Israel had hankered after this folly in the same way as they do at the present day, not only would our Sages have issued a ban in connection with it throughout Israel, but it would even have been forbidden by Heaven, by the words, "Thou shalt not gamble," just as it was said, "Thou shalt not murder"; "thou shalt not commit adultery"; "thou shalt not steal."

The fact, however, is that our people could never have been suspected of such nonsense, of the folly of wasting the precious hours of life, which we should spend in such work as is pleasing to our Creator, such as is necessary and indispensable for our existence.

But as it is, what joy and happiness does the player hope to find in the very "festival of the Lord, the holy convocations?" Where is the joy

when one loses?—The festival is soon turned into mourning for many a one.

Now, to sum up the whole business! The gambler is, in fine, a stubborn and rebellious subject as regards the law of the land and the Law of God, "which Moses placed before the Children of Israel." The one who enters upon this path, and remains therein, shall not see the Eternal in the land of the living; but—sufficient for the time is the evil thereof.

We have said enough to enlighten the human being as to the shortcomings of this pursuit, for the purpose of rescuing him from its clutches; for it might well be said, touching cards and dice, "Happy the man who sees them not!" "I have tried everything in wisdom," and there is none so wise as the man of experience; and I now avow, I repent and regret it, I shall no more look upon its face; and I make this unqualified resolution to withdraw from it once and for all, and to stifle every thought of it that may yet linger within me. Thou hast, indeed, chastised me, and I stand corrected; I will receive thy correction, and listen to

thy counsel. And should this hideous monster ever in the future assail me, I shall avoid all contact with it, by betaking myself to College, and studying matters of more momentary concern; or by applying myself to commercial matters, whereby I shall be able to support myself and my family with the help of Him "who giveth strength to the weary," and encouragement to all who resolve to improve and do better things.

ELDAD.

May God bless you of all men, and be with you to direct aright and establish all that is in your heart to do, now that you have removed the veil of this folly from your eyes!

May I witness the comfort of our people as sure as I was afflicted and dejected at all times that I heard concerning you that you indulged in play; and I marvelled within myself how it was possible for so evil a propensity to co-exist with those other goodly and admirable qualities and capacities which you possess. And more and more did I groan and wail with grief when I heard you praise and extol it with your own mouth; I exclaimed,

"The mouth that is fit rather for study and research, what a search and study does it pursue!"

Now that I have heard your explanation, that your intention was but to sharpen your intellect by revolving the matter in your mind and debating upon it, and that you have made up your mind to return from enduring the service of this sinful propensity and never again to pass through it, you have indeed rejoiced me, and my spirit has become revived.

And may you be rewarded for the kindness through which you have permitted me to listen *en passant* to your pleasant words, and to your choice and eloquent language in the course of the debate!

MEDAD.

Let us continue our journey, so that we may come to the city, for the sun has set, and the day has waned. There will be many a day yet on which we shall discourse on Scriptural topics, for happy they who find their labour in the Holy Torah. Verily "it is a Tree of Life to those who take firm hold on it, and they who support her are made happy," both in this world and in the world to come.



Gamblers Anonymous offers the following questions to anyone who may have a gambling problem. These questions are provided to help the individual decide if he or she is a compulsive gambler and wants to stop gambling.

TWENTY QUESTIONS

1. Did you ever lose time from work or school due to gambling?
2. Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
3. Did gambling affect your reputation?
4. Have you ever felt remorse after gambling?
5. Did you ever gamble to get money with which to pay debts or otherwise solve financial difficulties?
6. Did gambling cause a decrease in your ambition or efficiency?
7. After losing did you feel you must return as soon as possible and win back your losses?
8. After a win did you have a strong urge to return and win more?
9. Did you often gamble until your last dollar was gone?
10. Did you ever borrow to finance your gambling?
11. Have you ever sold anything to finance gambling?
12. Were you reluctant to use "gambling money" for normal expenditures?
13. Did gambling make you careless of the welfare of yourself or your family?
14. Did you ever gamble longer than you had planned?
15. Have you ever gambled to escape worry or trouble?
16. Have you ever committed, or considered committing, an illegal act to finance gambling?
17. Did gambling cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
18. Do arguments, disappointments or frustrations create within you an urge to gamble?
19. Did you ever have an urge to celebrate any good fortune by a few hours of gambling?
20. Have you ever considered self destruction or suicide as a result of your gambling?

Most compulsive gamblers will answer yes to at least seven of these questions.

E-mail isomain@gamblersanonymous.org.

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THE RECOVERY PROGRAM

Here are the steps which are a program of recovery

1. We admitted we were powerless over gambling - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this Power of our own understanding.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.
7. Humbly asked God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Make direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.

The 12 Step Program is fundamentally based on ancient spiritual principles and rooted in sound medical therapy. The best recommendation for the program is the fact that "it works."

Gamblers Anonymous would like to indicate that we are not soliciting members. Our intention is to highlight that gambling for certain individuals is an illness called "*compulsive gambling*." Gamblers Anonymous provides the message that there is an alternative to the destruction of compulsive gambling and this alternative is the Gamblers Anonymous program.

Our ranks are filled with members who have recovered from the illness by stopping gambling and attaining a normal way of life. These members remain ready to help any individual who passes through the Gamblers Anonymous door.

**For further information, E-mail
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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF COMPULSIVE GAMBLING AND THE G.A. RECOVERY PROGRAM

What is compulsive gambling?

The explanation that seems most acceptable to Gamblers Anonymous members is that compulsive gambling is an illness, progressive in its nature, which can never be cured, but can be arrested. Before coming to Gamblers Anonymous, many compulsive gamblers thought of themselves as morally weak, or at times just plain 'no good'. The Gamblers Anonymous concept is that compulsive gamblers are really very sick people who can recover if they will follow to the best of their ability a simple program that has proved successful for thousands of other men and women with a gambling or compulsive gambling problem.

What is the first thing a compulsive gambler ought to do in order to stop gambling?

The compulsive gambler needs to be willing to accept the fact that he or she is in the grip of a progressive illness and has a desire to get well. Our experience has shown that the Gamblers Anonymous program will always work for any person who has a desire to stop gambling. However, it will never work for the person who will not face squarely the facts about this illness.

How can you tell whether you are a compulsive gambler?

Only you can make that decision. Most people turn to Gamblers Anonymous when they become willing to admit that gambling has them licked. Also in Gamblers Anonymous, a compulsive gambler is described as a person whose gambling has caused growing and continuing problems in any department of his or her life.

Many Gamblers Anonymous members went through terrifying experiences before they were ready to accept help. Others were faced with a slow, subtle deterioration which finally brought them to the point of admitting defeat.

Can a compulsive gambler ever gamble normally again?

No. The first bet to a problem gambler is like the first small drink to an alcoholic. Sooner or later he or she falls back into the same old destructive pattern.

Once a person has crossed the invisible line into irresponsible uncontrolled gambling he or she never seems to regain control. After abstaining a few months some of our members have tried some small bet experimentation, always with disastrous results. The old obsession inevitably returned.

Our Gamblers Anonymous experience seems to point to these alternatives: to gamble, risking progressive deterioration or not to gamble, and develop a better way of life.

Why can't a compulsive gambler simply use will power to stop

gambling?

We believe that most people, if they are honest, will recognize their lack of power to solve certain problems. When it comes to gambling, we have known many problem gamblers who could abstain for long stretches, but caught off guard and under the right set of circumstances, they started gambling without thought of the consequences. The defenses they relied upon, through will power alone, gave way before some trivial reason for placing a bet. We have found that will power and self-knowledge will not help in those mental blank spots, but adherence to spiritual principles seem to solve our problems. Most of us feel that a belief in a Power greater than ourselves is necessary in order for us to sustain a desire to refrain from gambling.

Do Gamblers Anonymous members go into gambling places to help former members who are still gambling?

No. Families and friends of these people have asked us to intercede but we have never been able to be of any real help. Actually, sometimes we felt we retarded a member's eventual recovery by giving them this unsolicited attention. It all goes back to the basic principle that a gambler ought to want help before he or she is approached by us.

I only go on gambling binges periodically. Do I need Gamblers Anonymous?

Yes. Compulsive gamblers who have joined Gamblers Anonymous tell us that, though their gambling binges were periodic, the intervals between were not periods of constructive thinking. Symptomatic of these periods were nervousness, irritability, frustration, indecision and a continued breakdown in personal relationships. These same people have often found the Gamblers Anonymous program the answer to the elimination of character defects and a guide to moral progress in their lives.

GAMBLING, for the compulsive gambler is defined as follows : Any betting or wagering, for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or 'skill' constitutes gambling.

If I join Gamblers Anonymous won't everyone know I am a compulsive gambler?

Most people made quite a name for themselves as full-fledged gamblers by the time they turned to Gamblers Anonymous. Their gambling was not usually a well kept secret. It would then be unusual if the good news of their abstinence from gambling did not cause comment. However, no disclosure of any affiliation with Gamblers Anonymous can rightfully be made by anyone but the member themselves. Even then, it should be done in such a way that will work no hardship on the Gamblers Anonymous fellowship.

If I stop gambling won't it make it difficult for me to keep some desirable business and social contacts?

We think not. Most of the world's work of any consequence is done without the benefit of monetary

wagering. Many of our leaders in business, industry and professional life have attained great success without knowing one card from another or which way the horses run around the track. In the area of social relationships, the newcomer will soon find a keen appreciation of the many pleasant and stimulating activities available - far removed from anything that is remotely associated from gambling.

How does someone stop gambling through the Gamblers Anonymous program?

One does this through bringing about a progressive character change within oneself. This can be accomplished by having faith in -- and following -- the basic concepts of the Gamblers Anonymous Recovery Program.

There are no short cuts in gaining this faith and understanding. To recover from one of the most baffling, insidious, compulsive addictions will require diligent effort. **HONESTY, OPENMINDEDNESS, AND WILLINGNESS** are the key words in our recovery.

Can a person recover by himself/herself by reading Gamblers Anonymous literature or medical books on the problem of compulsive gambling?

Sometimes, but not usually. The Gamblers Anonymous program works best for the individual when it is recognized and accepted as a program involving other people. Working with other compulsive gamblers in a Gamblers Anonymous group the individual seems to find the necessary understanding and support. They are able to talk of their past experiences and present problems in an area where they are comfortable and accepted. Instead of feeling alone and misunderstood, they feel needed and accepted.

Does Gamblers Anonymous look upon compulsive gambling as a vice?

No.

Is knowing why we gambled important?

Perhaps, however insofar as stopping gambling, many Gamblers Anonymous members have abstained from gambling without the knowledge of why they gambled.

What are some characteristics of a person who is a compulsive gambler?

1. **INABILITY AND UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT REALITY.** Hence the escape into the dream world of gambling.
2. **EMOTIONAL INSECURITY.** A compulsive gambler finds he or she is emotionally comfortable only when "in action". It is not uncommon to hear a Gamblers Anonymous member say: "The only place I really felt like I belonged was sitting at the poker table. There I felt secure

and comfortable. No great demands were made upon me. I knew I was destroying myself, yet at the same time, I had a certain sense of security."

3. **IMMATURITY.** A desire to have all the good things in life without any great effort on their part seems to be the common character pattern of problem gamblers. Many Gamblers Anonymous members accept the fact that they were unwilling to grow up. Subconsciously they felt they could avoid mature responsibility by wagering on the spin of a wheel or the turn of a card, and so the struggle to escape responsibility finally became a subconscious obsession.

Also, a compulsive gambler seems to have a strong inner urge to be a 'big shot' and needs to have a feeling of being all powerful. The compulsive gambler is willing to do anything (often of an antisocial nature) to maintain the image he or she wants others to see.

Then too, there is a theory that compulsive gamblers subconsciously want to lose to punish themselves. There is much evidence to support this theory.

What is the dream world of the compulsive gambler?

This is another common characteristic of compulsive gamblers. A lot of time is spent creating images of the great and wonderful things they are going to do as soon as they make the big win. They often see themselves as quite philanthropic and charming people. They may dream of providing families and friends with new cars, mink coats, and other luxuries. Compulsive gamblers picture themselves leading a pleasant gracious life, made possible by the huge sums of money they will accrue from their 'system'. Servants, penthouses, nice clothes, charming friends, yachts, and world tours are a few of the wonderful things that are just around the corner after a big win is finally made.

Pathetically, however, there never seems to be a big enough winning to make even the smallest dream come true. When compulsive gamblers succeed, they gamble to dream still greater dreams. When failing, they gamble in reckless desperation and the depths of their misery are fathomless as their dream world comes crashing down. Sadly, they will struggle back, dream more dreams, and of course suffer more misery. No one can convince them that their great schemes will not someday come true. They believe they will, for without this dream world, life for them would not be tolerable.

Isn't compulsive gambling basically a financial problem?

No, compulsive gambling is an emotional problem. A person in the grip of this illness creates mountains of apparently insolvable problems. Of course, financial problems are created, but they also find themselves facing marital, employment, or legal problems. Compulsive gamblers find friends have been lost and relatives have rejected them. Of the many serious difficulties created, the financial problems seem the easiest to solve. When a compulsive gambler enters Gamblers Anonymous and quits gambling, income is usually increased and there is no longer the financial drain that was caused by gambling, and very shortly, the financial pressures begin to be relieved. Gamblers Anonymous members have found that the best road to financial recovery is through hard work and repayment of our debts. Borrowing and/or lending of money (bail outs) in Gamblers Anonymous is detrimental to our recovery and should not take place.

The most difficult and time consuming problem with which they will be faced is that of bringing about a character change within themselves. Most Gamblers Anonymous members look upon this as their

greatest challenge, which should be worked on immediately and continued throughout their lives.

Who can join Gamblers Anonymous?

Anyone who has a desire to stop gambling. There are no other rules or regulations concerning Gamblers Anonymous membership.

How much does it cost to join Gamblers Anonymous?

There are no assessments in connection with Gamblers Anonymous membership. The newcomer signs nothing and pledges nothing. However, we do have expenses relative to our group meeting and our Gamblers Anonymous service facilities. Since Gamblers Anonymous has traditionally been fully self supporting and declines outside contribution, these expenses are met through voluntary financial support by the members. Experience has shown that acceptance of these financial responsibilities is a vital part of our individual and group growth process.

Why are Gamblers Anonymous members anonymous?

Anonymity has great practical value in maintaining unity within our fellowship. Through its practice at the level of press, radio, films and television we have eliminated the possibility of fame and recognition being given to the individual member; hence, we have not been faced with any great internal struggles for power and prestige which would prove highly detrimental to our essential unity.

Anonymity also has great value in attracting new members who initially might feel there is a stigma attached to the problem. Therefore, we guarantee the newcomer as much anonymity as they choose.

More importantly, we are beginning to realize that anonymity has tremendous spiritual significance. It represents a powerful reminder that we need always place principles above personalities.

Our survival as individuals demands that we renounce personal gratification . . . so our Gamblers Anonymous movement not only advocates but tries to practice true humility and it is through greater humility that we will be able to live in peace and security for all the years to come.

Is Gamblers Anonymous a religious society?

No. Gamblers Anonymous is composed of people from many religious faiths along with agnostics and atheists. Since membership in Gamblers Anonymous requires no particular religious belief as a condition of membership, it cannot be described as a religious society. The Gamblers Anonymous recovery program is based on acceptance of certain spiritual values but the member is free to interpret these principles as he chooses.

**For further information, E-mail
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