WHERE HUMANITY MEETS DIVINITY:
STRIVING TO LIVE THE COMPASSIONATE ATTRIBUTE OF GOD

LAURA STEIN

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Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music
Graduate Cantorial Program
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Advisor: Dr. Adriane Leveen

This thesis is dedicated to
all of the people whose suffering has not yet been met with compassion.

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The Gemara asks: What does God pray? To whom does God pray?

God says: May it be My will that My mercy will overcome my anger towards Israel for their transgressions, and may My mercy prevail over My other attributes through which Israel is punished, and may I conduct myself toward My Children, Israel, with the attribute of mercy, and may I enter before them beyond the letter of the law.

— *Brachot* 7a

INTRODUCTION
THE CASE FOR COMPASSION

This thesis explores the role of compassion in our lives and the power it has to shape relationships, create possibility for connection and heal suffering. I arrived at this topic as a result of my own personal struggles with anger. Over the past few years, I found myself stuck in a familiar yet excruciating place. Too often I was either consumed with anger at someone else's hurtful behavior, or on the receiving end of someone else's anger toward my own. My emotion consumed my time and energy and brought me to a dangerously dark place. I turned to Judaism in search of answers, desperate to find solace and guidance. That search turned into this project.

My research into the Jewish perspective on anger taught me a lot about the Divine-human relationship, the potential for repair, behavioral integrity and spiritual wholeness. I learned that Judaism has a lot to say about the struggle to be kind to those who hurt us, and that our Bible and liturgy were good places to start. I came to realize that compassion is the Jewish response to anger and that Judaism wants us to recognize the suffering in those who act badly toward us so that we may help relieve them of that suffering. I came to know God as a God who wrestles with this very same issue. Humans are flawed but God falters too. Knowing this, I felt less alone.

I sought guides on the implementation of these teachings but was disappointed to find that Judaism doesn't provide much instruction on compassionate responsiveness. Rambam parses the laws to change our behavior and to improve our evil deeds, but does not supply us with the steps to do so. He emphasizes that being like God requires the intention and effort to improve oneself, including overcoming negative thoughts and inclinations, but does not tell us how to make these changes.[1] *Musar* and curricula in *tikkun middot* (cultivation of character) also

[1] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Teshuvah, The Laws of Repentance*, trans. Rabbi Eliyahu Touger (Jerusalem: Moznaim Publishing Corporation, 1990), 28, 58.

address behavioral change in substantial ways, but as a social worker, I was hungry for evidence-based protocols that have been shown to be effective for character development.

The thesis took shape as I began to integrate biblical readings, liturgical adaptations and social work interventions into my understanding of how to be my most compassionate self. I learned about compassion through many lenses, but decided that this paper would not explore compassion in contexts of orphaned children, welcoming foreigners, or the treatment of marginalized people. Specifically, this paper teaches compassion as the optimal response toward the suffering of those whose behavior hurts us. I do this in three parts.

Chapter 1 begins by exploring God's Thirteen Attributes with a focus on biblical Divine themes of anger and compassion. The commandment to emulate God informs our pursuit of His moral qualities and gives us insight into God's own struggle with compassionate responsiveness. Chapter 2 discusses prayer as a ritual for behavior evolution. In that chapter, I analyze the bridge built by liturgy, which serves as a way to connect us to God's narrative through our own attempts to reach Him, as well as the music that aids in this process. Chapter 3 approaches the shift from angry responsiveness to compassionate responsiveness by synthesizing human behavior research and providing training to that end. In that chapter, we will learn to see suffering as a cause of hostility, cruelty and offensive treatment of others and to respond by offering help and love.

This work is holy because human relationship is holy. As Jews, we do not leave people in their time of need. We show up, with kindness, and help them. This project began as a way to heal. Now that I have found my way from anger to compassion, I hope that this thesis will impact its readers in their recognition of and response to suffering. We can all do a better job. We have to at least try. We are commanded to do so.

CHAPTER 1
DIVINE-INSPIRED AND DIVINE-REQUIRED: BIBLICAL READINGS OF COMPASSION

As Jews, we find ourselves wondering daily, weekly, annually: מִי־כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִים יְיָ

מִי כָּמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ— *Mi chamocha ba'eilim Adonai? Mi kamocha nedar bakodesh?*[2] We stand in awe of this unwieldy question, striving to embody the spirit that filled Moses, Miriam and their people in Exodus 15:11 as they proclaimed this rhetorical yet seemingly open-ended question: "Who is like you, *Adonai*?" This question is rhetorical only because it is implied that of course no one is like God, "majestic in holiness."[3] And yet, the proclamation also suggests an open-endedness that tethers us to this question such that we ask it daily during prayer and seek its answer daily when we leave our prayer space. In our day-to-day pursuits and interactions, we find that assuredly, no one is like God. We also find, though, that we are called through text, rabbinic interpretation and tradition to, at the very least, attempt to be like God. We are meant, as it is commanded of us through these texts, to spend our lives striving to know and emulate God's essence so that we may become closer to Him.[4] In becoming closer to Him, we learn to live the values we espouse and to act toward others, even in our most trying moments, with integrity.

We are first introduced in Genesis 1:26-27 to this idea when we learn that we were and are created *b'tzelem Elohim,* in God's image. We read: וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ— *vayivra Elohim et ha'adam b'tzalmo, b'tzelem Elohim bara oto*— that God created human in His image, in the image of God He created him."[5] As with many biblical phrases whose

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[2] All Hebrew excerpts are copied verbatim from their cited sources. Translations that are not accompanied by a citation are my own. I have included transliteration for the sake of accessibility to all readers.
[3] Elyse Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis Press, 2007), 16.
[4] Although it is common to use a gender-neutral moniker for God, my personal practice is to refer to God as male.
[5] The repetition of the language here is curious. Perhaps it is repeated in order to highlight not just the importance of the creation of human beings, but of their inherent responsibility to reflect God's image throughout their lives.

meanings are sometimes lost in translation or whose significance becomes an arena for debate, we are left to wonder what such a loaded phrase could possibly mean for our task here on earth. As Rav Kook writes in "For the Perplexed of the Generation," the phrase "in His image" reflects the free will inherent in God's creations. Humans were not created to be replicas of God, but as I will argue in this chapter, in our behavior, we hope to learn from God and to demonstrate our most Divine qualities in our everyday comportment. According to Kook, the phrase "in His image" implies a balance between God's likeness and human freedom.[6] The very basis for the *Torah* and for God's instruction, Kook reminds us while referencing Maimonides, is that humans reflect God, but are also free to make their own choices. To be created entirely to be God's mirrors here on earth would obviate the need for God's *Torah*, and the entire autonomy of humans to live without any derivation from a holy source would surely annihilate God's authority. Instead, when we read that we were created *b'tzelem Elohim,* we understand that our creation is of a holy purpose and woven into a Divine tapestry, but that our journeys on earth, while reflective of that tapestry, are fated to us through our own behavior and choices.

Our own behaviors and choices can be misguided because of our flawed human nature. Luckily, we are not left entirely on our own to learn how to reflect God's divinity through our behaviors and choices. Because our mission to make God's essence manifest is not only an expectation of us but a codified commandment, the charge comes with instructions, context and incentive. In fact, no fewer than eight times in the *Torah* are the Jews reminded of this commandment to *halachta b'drachav,* to walk in the ways of God. In *Parashat Eikev,* for example, Moses continues his closing address to *b'nei Yisrael* by communicating a summation of

[6] Rav Kook, "For the Perplexed of the Generation," trans. Sefaria Community (Unpublished manuscript, 1904), chapter 1.

God's expectations. In his address, Moses reminds the children of Israel of the laws of God, as well as God's great potential to love them and also to destroy them. Three times in this address alone, God punctuates His list of commandments with a reminder to, above all else, "walk in His ways."[7]

Similarly to the phrase *b'tzelem Elohim,* "in His image," the phrase *halachta b'drachav*, "walk in His ways," has long been studied and dissected by commentators. Rashi writes that our specific behaviors should be modeled after God's— for just as God performs acts of loving-kindness and acts mercifully, for example, so too should we.[8] Rabbi Ibn Ezra takes a more literal approach, stating that to walk in God's ways means to not stray too far from His teachings, nor to turn our backs on His instruction.[9] But "walking in His ways" can also bear more concrete fruit, for as God promises, if humans "love God and walk in His ways," they will receive an abundance of gifts, such as the Promised Land. However, while Rabbi Ibn Ezra comments on the language of the phrase itself, he also focuses on the repetition of this phrase throughout Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 19:9, for example, he offers that the word "continuously" might be added to the phrase "walk in His ways."[10] According to my own reading of Ibn Ezra's choice to add the word "continuously," it occurs to me that walking in God's ways is not a singular activity that has a start and end time, but a gerund— an act that is happening now, in real time, and continuously. As we make our way through the Book of Deuteronomy, we feel the continuous nature of this reminder as it pulsates under all of God's other commandments. For example, in a verse of *Parashat Ki Tavo,* God states that by accepting the

[7] Deut. 8:6, 10:12, 11:22.
[8] Rashi on Sifrei Devarim 49:1. https://www.sefaria.org/Sifrei_Devarim.49.1?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en.
[9] Ibn Ezra on Parashat Eikev. https://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.11.22?lang=bi&with=Ibn%20Ezra&lang2=en.
[10] Ibn Ezra on Parashat Devarim.
https://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.19.9?lang=bi&with=Ibn%20Ezra&lang2=en.

role of being God's chosen people and entering the Promised Land, we will walk in His ways, observe His laws and commandments and obey Him.[11]

It is not until we have reached this verse, Deuteronomy 26:17, and have seen this phrase's penultimate appearance, that we are asked to consider not its inherent meaning, but the motivation behind its inclusion and repetition. While we may have a developing sense of what it means to walk in God's ways, we still find ourselves wondering why it is so important to God that we do so. It is Rabbi Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno's commentary on this verse that seeks to find God's motivation. In pursuing its answer, Rabbi Sforno harkens the reader back to the core of "God's ways" which were made known to us in Exodus 34. Here, Sforno highlights that we may only "try and emulate God's characteristics to the extent He has seen fit to reveal these to you."[12] By including the phrase "He has seen fit to reveal these to you," Sforno is highlighting God's intentional choice. According to Sforno, it is not simply that God is responding to Moses' plea, but rather that God *wants* to be known by us. I wonder if, perhaps, even God needs to be seen. Perhaps for God, our commitment to walk in His ways is another step in building the crucial covenant that sustains the most holy relation between God and the Jews. Maybe for God, emulating Him shows that we know Him, and knowing Him means that we love Him.

God sees fit to reveal Himself and His Attributes to us in Exodus 34. The conditions that give rise to God's decision to reveal Himself and His Attributes to Moses, however, are somewhat precarious. In Exodus 32, we read about *cheit ha'egel,* the sin of the Golden Calf— a moment in which the children of Israel, acting out of fear of abandonment, construct a golden statue of a calf to worship in place of *HaShem*. God becomes roused, threatening the destruction

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[11] Deut. 26:17.
[12] Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno on Deut. 26:17.
https://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.26.17?lang=bi&with=Sforno&lang2=bi

of His people in light of their idolatry and warning that in addition to the complete obliteration of His people, He will make a great nation only from Moses alone. Moses is able to disabuse God of his temptation by summoning the memory of the forefathers and God's covenant with them. Nevertheless, God is seemingly hurt and likely keeps His distance, knowing that no good will come of His proximity to His people during His state of great anger. The Israelites, unabashed in their shame, are instructed in Exodus 33:7 to attend the Tent of Meeting, for if they wish to show that they are still with God, they will show their devotion there. Moses, too, pleads with God to give His assurance that He will not abandon them. God, seeing that His people are truly repentant of their sinful ways and reminded of His close relationship with and trust in Moses, agrees in Exodus 33:12 to continue to accompany Moses and the Israelites on their journey toward the Promised Land. Consequently, the reader's sense of hope is renewed, for God, despite His earlier rage, continues to draw Moses closer to Him and to continue their partnership.

It is quite remarkable that mere verses after God learned of His people's betrayal and was besieged by disappointment, He shows a willingness to enter back into a place of renewed covenant with them. God does this in Exodus 33:19, and responds to Moses' appreciation for their relationship with a gift: אַעֲבִיר כָּל־טוּבִי עַל־פָּנֶיךָ וְקָרָאתִי בְשֵׁם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ וְחַנֹּתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אָחֹן וְרִחַמְתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם— *a'avir kol tuvi al panecha v'karati v'sheim Adonai l'fanecha v'chanoti et asher achon v'richamti et asher aracheim*— I, [God], will make all of My goodness pass before you, [Moses], and I will proclaim the name *Adonai* before you, and I will grant grace and show compassion."[13] This great gift assures Moses that God is willing to enter back into a place of renewed covenant. It also appears that God needs to be known, seen and appreciated for His

[13] Exod. 33:19.

Attributes. Not only is the reader sustained by the hope of Divine-human repair, the reader also gains insight into God's vulnerable side. Maybe God and humans share in the same fundamental needs. Maybe we are not that different after all. Maybe our ancient covenant is not a contract of mutual dependence but one of mutual understanding and compassion for the shared experience of existence.

With Exodus 34, we arrive at a notable moment in our biblical history. In His first act of renewed covenant, God instructs Moses to פְּסָל־לְךָ שְׁנֵי־לֻחֹת אֲבָנִים כָּרִאשֹׁנִים— *p'sol l'cha sh'nei luchot avanim karishonim*— to carve two tablets of stone, just like the first— so that God may reinscribe upon them the Ten Commandments that Moses had previously shattered.[14] In an exclusive invitation to an intimate meeting with Him, God also instructs Moses to ascend Mount Sinai alone so that God may make good on His promise to reveal Himself to Moses. In Exodus 34:5, God comes down in a cloud, a moment that is captured by the word *yayetyatzev,* translated by many to signify a spiritual and intimate standing. The reader's invitation to eavesdrop on this intimate meeting arrives in Exodus 34:6-7, the verse in which God finally reveals Himself to Moses and in turn, to the Jewish people. We read: וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה עַל־פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה ו יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת: נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לָאֲלָפִים נֹשֵׂא עָוֹן וָפֶשַׁע וְחַטָּאָה וְנַקֵּה— *vaya'avor Adonai al panav vayikra: Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey! Yud Hey Vav Hey! Eil rachum v'chanun, erech apayim v'rav chesed ve'emet, notzeir chesed la'alafim nosei avon vafesha v'chata'a v'nakeh*— "And Adonai passed before [Moses] and proclaimed "Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey! Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey!"[15] A God who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and truth, who

[14] Exod. 34:1.

[15] Exod. 34:6-7. Most translations of God's self-identification of His name say "Lord." I have chosen to write out the ineffable version of God's name. It is also important to note that God's names, *Adonai* recited twice and *El* recited once, comprise three of The Thirteen Attributes, leaving ten adjectives.

preserves His loving-kindness to the thousandth generation, is forgiving of iniquity, pardoning of willful sin and error, and who cleanses."[16] The sentiment continues into verse 7, wherein God assures that even sins committed generations before will still be looked upon with the same loving Attributes listed above. For, knowing that humans may try and try but not succeed, God's mercy has no statute of limitations.[17]

These Thirteen Attributes of God, known in Hebrew as the *sh'losh esrei middot*, have been interpreted in a multitude of ways, both in meaning and in the grammatical structure of their recitation. It is fascinating to view the full spectrum of interpretations for God's characteristics. For example, Nahum M. Sarna, in his commentary on the Book of Exodus, calls our attention to the order of The Attributes, highlighting that "emphasis and priority here are given to God's magnanimous qualities rather than to His judgmental ones" as opposed to the order that is given in the Decalogue.[18] This point begs the question of truly how much God wants and perhaps even needs Moses to know Him for his positive qualities. For Everett Fox, on the other hand, it is important not to view God in too soft of a light. After all, as Fox points out, God is merciful, but also just. More so than just the content, Fox also highlights the limits of The Attributes. It's not that these thirteen are all of who God is, or all that we, the people, are allowed to know. Rather, he says, "this is all that one needs to know" in order to know God.[19]

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[16] I expand on the meaning behind each word: "*El"* is a powerful ruler. "Compassionate" means filled with sympathy of human fragility. "Gracious" means showing mercy to those who may not deserve it. "Slow to anger" refers to the time to reflect and improve. "Abundant in loving-kindness" is the giving of gifts and blessings to all, even to those who have not earned it. "Truth" is integrity of promises made. "Preserver for the generations" is the memory of the righteous for the benefit of future progeny. "Forgiver of iniquity" speaks to intentional sin, "willful sin" refers to malice, and "error" refers to sin committed out of thoughtlessness. Finally, "God who cleanses" refers to God's favorable response to those who have repented.

[17] I am aware of the condition of the third and the fourth generation. However, it is later overturned in Ezekiel 18. Also, the scope of this project limits its exploration.

[18] Exod. 20:5-6; Nahum M. Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 216.

[19] Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses: The Schocken Bible, Vol. 1* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 441.

In fact, God becomes so identified with these Thirteen Attributes that they almost become a part of His default description and name in numerous other examples throughout our textual tradition. In Joel 2:13, for example, as the prophet speaks to the people about the impending Day of Judgment for which the nation will be accountable for its sins, Joel describes God with ease, including, in one breath, His moral qualities, as if they are a suffix to his name included on His birth certificate and other official documents. Joel asks the people to "rend your hearts rather than your garments and turn back to the Lord your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and renouncing of punishment." Here, Joel does not include an overt reference to the origin of these qualities by saying "as God made Himself known to Moses…"[20] Instead, these qualities of God have become so synonymous with His name that Joel's description of God seems unequivocally accepted by the people. Not only that, the people respond to Joel's appeal to offer their hearts because they see that God, who is gracious and compassionate, models this behavior and expects it of them too.

Psalm 145 also mentions God's Attributes in verse 8 as David praises God's name, for God is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in kindness."[21] Similarly, Jonah, on the subject of Ninevite vindication from sin and punishment, speaks directly to God while describing Him: "For I know that You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment."[22]

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[20] Joel 2:13.
[21] Ps. 145:8. The Attributes are also evoked in other instances through the book of Psalms. See, for example: Ps. 86:15, 103:8.
[22] Jonah 4:2.

The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, however, which are known as "the fullest statement about the Divine nature in the whole Bible" are not included only as descriptors.[23] As we know, the true testament to someone's character is not the words used to describe his qualities, but the expression of those qualities through action. God is held to the same standard and is expected to be compassionate in behavior, just as He described Himself in spoken word. With Jonah in particular, God models what compassion looks like while also teaching Jonah a masterful lesson. Even though Jonah may seem to appreciate God's promise to show compassion on the people of Nineveh, God also shows that He is indiscriminate with his mercy. Jonah stands in protest, pushing back against God's desire to save the people Jonah so fervently believes to be evil. And yet, God's mercy follows His actions just as the Thirteen Attributes follow His name. As Shai Held points out in his *d'var Torah* for Exodus 30:11-34:35, "Whereas in laying down the law [in giving the Ten Commandments], God begins with the threat of punishment, in the wake of apostasy, God leads with the possibility of forgiveness."[24] As humans, we may not always understand God's mercy, but we can rely on it to be found in His actions.

Similarly, after Joel invokes God's Thirteen Attributes in order to appeal to God's merciful side, God delivers on the very qualities He self-disclosed. For, after Joel asks God to spare His People, the text reassures us that soon after, "God was roused on behalf of His land and had compassion among His people."[25] Lessons abound in Joel's teaching. First, we see that modeling a behavior is an effective way to teach others of its importance. We also learn that understanding does not always beget compassion. This interaction between God and Joel

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[23] R.W.L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2015), 192.
[24] Shai Held, "God's Expansive Mercy: Moses' Praise and Jonah's Fury," Sermon on *Parashat Ki Tissa*, Mechon Hadar, *Adar* 5775 (March 2015), 2. https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/gods-expansive-mercy.
[25] Joel 2:17-18.

demonstrates that compassion, when delivered in its purest form, is given to people because they suffer, but not because we first judge, understand and deem the suffering worthy. Here, God is symbolic exemplar and, as we will learn in Chapter 3, by modeling our behavior after His, we can spread the message of compassion to others. However, just as we struggle with this shift, we see that God is not always able to be His most compassionate self.

God's Struggle for Behavioral Integrity

God is a complex character whose behavior doesn't always cohere with His self-proclaimed virtues. In fact, right after God self-identifies as compassionate and gracious, God goes on, in the second half of Exodus 34:7, to say that He will not clear those who are guilty, but will instead visit the iniquity of the parents upon the children and children's children until the third and fourth generations. What a harsh caveat to throw in after promising to be charitable in so many other ways! But while this addendum may seem out of place in a description characterized by benevolence, I believe that the balanced nature of God's full self-definition defines the universal struggle that this paper explores. God's struggle to exhibit only His positive qualities parallels the human struggle. While God is compassionate and merciful many times throughout the Bible, He is often just as angry, threatening and likely to punish. God identifies as *erech apayim,* slow to anger, but is quick to anger quite often. Sometimes, even God struggles to be like God.

God's wrath is prevalent throughout the Bible, even from the beginning. God's approach to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:14-19, for instance, is spiteful. Upon learning of their indiscretion, God is consumed with judgment, closing Himself off from the opportunity to learn more about the situation before exacting punishment, and eliminating the opportunity to educate

Adam and Eve in the process. Only a few chapters later, God sees the wickedness of His creation, deeming His people unworthy of His gifts. In Genesis 6:5 and 6:11-13, God proclaims the violence and corruption of His people beyond rehabilitation and vows to destroy them. God's anger is so great that He brings a flood to match its power in Genesis 7:10. God deems Noah suitable for repopulation, but shows little compassion for the rest of the people who He then obliterates. The story of God's judgement upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18-19 brings a similar outcome, demonstrating God's fury toward His people's disobedience. Once again, God approaches the people with a plan to punish, rather than a sense of compassion to understand and instruct. And how can we forget that although God shows compassion to Moses and His people after they commit the sin of the Golden Calf, He first resorts to anger, calling the people stiff-necked and threatening to leave them? It is through these examples that we finally understand: while God has the capacity to be merciful, He, like us, struggles to approach others with compassion in times of anger.

Compassion: The Catchall Attribute

We have parsed the *mitzvah* to walk in God's ways and reflect the essence of God in the world. So too have we seen the manifestation of God's Attributes in response to our suffering and His limitations in embodying them. And yet, we still wonder: can we fully know God? The Rambam, known as Maimonides, suggests that humans will likely never truly be able to grasp God's qualities or essence. As the Rambam writes, we can only understand God by the way we understand the words used to describe Him.[26] While some may translate a word to mean kindness, others may call it loving-kindness, and regardless of the word itself, what matters more

[26] Rambam on *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 1:9-1:11.

is our personal association with that word. In order to truly understand God's character, we must isolate those traits attributed to Him and identify their uses in other texts of *Torah* so that the contexts in which they appear will strengthen our understanding of their future usage. As described in the introduction of this paper, I believe that compassion summarily delivers support, care, a recognition of suffering, a shared sense of humanity and a willingness to help. In Chapter 3, I will provide an in-depth exploration of the utility and efficacy of compassion as a response to others. First, let us try to better understand the Hebrew words most commonly translated as compassion— רַחוּם *rachum* (adjective) and רַחֲמִים *rachamim* (noun)— with the hope that its Divine usage will inspire its presence in our own lives.

The mention of *rachum* in Exodus 34:6, the list of God's Attributes, is the very first use of this word in the Hebrew Bible. This may be why the word *rachum* is thereafter used only to refer to the quality of Divine compassion, but never human compassion. Another usage of the word *rachum* can be found in Deuteronomy 4:31, as the Israelites receive guidance on available sources of support they may consult during times of distress. Here, God is once again described as אֵל רַחוּם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ— *el rachum Adonai Elohecha*.[27] Likewise, in Psalms 111: 3-4, during songs of praise to God, it is said that God's deeds are awesome because God is kind and compassionate. The interesting thing about this exercise in concordance work is that the word *rachum*, translated by the Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon (BDB) as compassion, is so substantial in meaning, yet only appears thirteen times throughout the Hebrew Bible. One would think that because the quality of compassion, and the weight of God's exercise of it, are so grand, the word might appear more than thirteen times. The BDB also shows, though, that *rachum* shares its root,

[27] Deut. 4:31.

resh-chet-mem, with another word translated as compassion: *rachamim,* which appears quite a bit more.

It is important to note that the root ר–ח–ם *resh-chet-mem* also serves as the structural basis for the Hebrew word for womb, *rechem*. Compassion, like a womb, is a warm, enveloping feeling that is the origin of human connection and closeness. Within the compassion of another, and especially of God, the receiver is meant to feel safe, protected and cared for as an unborn baby would. I believe that the connection to the word womb is also meant to elicit an image of someone who is unable to help oneself and thus needs to be shown care, love and compassion. This was true of the word *rachum,* a word used in Jewish text exclusively to describe God's compassion, and it is also true of the word *rachamim,* appearing forty-four times throughout the Hebrew Bible and applied to examples of human compassion as well.

In the search for literary examples of the usage of the word *rachamim,* it is clear that not every translation of the word is cited as compassion. In some cases, *rachamim* is translated to mean mercy, while in others the word is interpreted to mean pity. *Rachamim* also applies to examples of human compassion, such as in Lamentations 4:10 and Isaiah 49:15 which discuss the relationship between mother and child. Here, it is made clear to the reader that while Divine compassion, *rachum,* is reserved for acts of God's mercy and care, compassion is made available to people in the form of *rachamim.* In other words, if we are meant to walk in God's ways and reflect God's essence in His image, then we are able to do so by not only following examples of God's modeling of compassion, but by watching others emulate God too. We can also be assured that acts of *rachamim* are expected of us because of the inverse of the examples already given. In

Jeremiah 6:23, for example, God bemoans the actions of "a people…from the northland" who are "cruel" and who לֹא יְרַחֵמוּ— *lo y'racheimu*— who have no compassion.[28]

Seth Brody furthers the connection between compassion and human creation, claiming that "we have found no reason for the human's creation, which is the essence of the world, save to be righteous, serve his Creator, walk in His ways and take on His likeness through his activity. [As] our sages said: 'As He is compassionate, you, too, be compassionate. As He is holy, you, too, be holy.'"[29] In other words, for Brody, human compassion, which he mentions in the same breath as holiness, justifies human creation, giving us purpose and worth. Rabbi Kaganoff of Baltimore says this of emulating God: "We need to realize that the most important of the 613 *mitzvos* is the commandment to emulate *HaShem*." Kaganoff goes on to quote Gemara, *Shabbos* 133b, stating that "Just as *HaShem* is gracious and compassionate, so you should become gracious and compassionate."[30] If modern commentaries are not enough to convince us, we can return to Deuteronomy 11:22, where we are commanded to walk in God's ways, and to Rashi's interpretation of it. He states in *Sifre* 49 "To walk in all His ways— [Just as] He is compassionate, so too you should be compassionate."[31] The commentary gets right to the heart of the matter: To walk in all of His ways, Rashi says, is first and foremost to be compassionate toward one another.

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[28] Jer. 6:23.
[29] Seth Brody, "Human hands dwell in heavenly heights: Worship and mystical experience in thirteenth-century Kabbalah" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991), 94-95. In this passage Brody refers to Mekhilta Shirata 3.
[30] Yirmiyohu Kagonoff, "Who Knows Thirteen? -- Slichos," The Torah Writings of Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff, October 3, 2011, http://rabbikaganoff.com/who-knows-thirteen-slichos/.
[31] Rabbi Yirmi Cowen, ed., "Being Like God," in NLE Morasha Syllabus: Purpose of Man in the World, 2016, http://nleresources.com/nle-morasha-syllabus/purpose-of-man-in-the-world/being-like-god/#.Wk0bmLQ-dE5.

Human Demonstration of Compassion

Joseph serves as an excellent example of the virtue of compassion, not as bestowed from God to humans, but from one human being to another. In a Bible otherwise defined by acts of Divine modeling, Joseph serves as a welcome deviation from God's repeated attempt to "show us how it's done" and instead, shows us how we, as humans, can truly act as agents of God.

Joseph has ample reason to be angry with his brothers. After being left for dead in a ditch by his brothers in Genesis 37:24, Joseph is hurt, wrestling with the betrayal of his own family and wondering what's next for him. What's more, Joseph was cast out because of the love of his father, for his own self-confidence, and for being a bit overzealous with his pride. To be thrown into a ditch over this? To not get to say goodbye to one's father? It's a wonder Joseph ever recovers at all.

But he does. Joseph goes on to serve the Pharaoh, sharing his marvelous gifts of dream interpretation and winning favor and the power to rule in his new land. Chapters later, Joseph encounters his brothers again when they travel to Egypt in desperation over their starvation. Bowed down before Joseph, the brothers beg, but do not recognize him. Joseph, recognizing his brothers, feels his anger bubbling up and accuses the men of being spies. (Here, we see human example of the struggle to like God, to be *erech apayim*). Joseph even tests his brothers by demanding that one brother stay behind while they go back to Canaan to retrieve Benjamin, who had stayed with their father Jacob. Finally, though, in Genesis 42:24, Joseph keeps only Simeon and fills the brothers' bags with sustenance, answering their plea. When the brothers finally return with Benjamin in tow, Joseph is so overcome with feeling that he weeps. The Hebrew in Genesis 43:30 וַיְמַהֵר יוֹסֵף כִּי־נִכְמְרוּ רַחֲמָיו אֶל־אָחִיו וַיְבַקֵּשׁ לִבְכּוֹת וַיָּבֹא הַחַדְרָה וַיֵּבְךְּ שָׁמָּה— *vay'maheir Yosef*

ki-nichm'ru rachamav el-achiv vay'vakeish livkot vayavo hachad'rah vayeiv'ch shamah— that Joseph hurried out, for he was overcome with feeling toward his brother, and was on the verge of tears, so he went into a room and wept— reflects Joseph's shift from anger to feeling with none other than the word *rachamav*, had compassion. Even more poignant, the words preceding this conjugation of *rachamim, ki-nichm'ru rachamav,* tell us that Joseph was moved, stirred, roused to a place of compassion. He first resorted to anger, but eventually, Joseph made this holy shift.

On this verse, Sforno comments that Joseph was so moved because he was thinking about the anguish that his father and brothers had experienced all of those years.[32] I couldn't agree more with Sforno. According to my reading of the Joseph narrative, it is the suffering of others— even others who have hurt him— that moves Joseph from a place of anger to a place of compassion and reconciliation. Joseph knows that the only way to reunite with his family is to recognize their suffering and tend to it. Whereas years earlier Joseph looked upon his brothers' abhorrent behavior with confusion, disgust and deep hurt, Joseph now sees that they have been lost for a long time. His brothers were lost without their father's attention which at the time, was dominated by Joseph, and now, they are lost in a famine, unable to provide and unsure of their future. Joseph's compassion does not obviate the need for an apology from his brothers, nor excuse their behavior— but he can be patient. Rather, Joseph accepts that multiple truths can exist— that the brothers can be both hostile, cruel and wrong, and also suffering and in need of great care. Joseph knows that a likely road to resolution is to first reach out with compassion.

Joseph is an incredible character here, displaying a shift from anger to compassion that not only escapes the human reader, but often eludes God. The ability of Joseph to emulate a

[32] Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno on Gen. 43:30.

quality that God values so highly leads us to hope that we may also be worthy of God's promised devotion and protection by bringing compassion into the world ourselves. We could all learn a lot from Joseph's strength and courage to be compassionate in the midst of understandable anger.

Compassionate Covenant

Compassion is so central to the Divine-Human relationship that it becomes the very basis of a covenant renewed between God and His chosen people. In Exodus 34, after God reveals Himself and His moral qualities to Moses, Moses bows down to the ground to show his respect for and awe of God. After their exchange, in which God exposes His inner self to Moses and Moses respectfully listens and then pays homage, God renews the covenant which He had threatened to break only a chapter earlier. Exodus Chapter 34:10 declares that He will make a covenant with His people in which He will "make marvels."[33] In fact, this moment of self-revelation and connection is so pivotal that Bible scholar Everett Fox refers to it as the covenant broken and restored.[34] Some rabbis even refer to this covenantal restoration as *b'rit sh'losh esrei*.[35] This moment of covenantal renewal is also pivotal because it crystallizes this new stage in the Divine-human relationship. This new stage brings an added layer to the relationship, one in which humans have the access to and knowledge of God and can therefore hold Him accountable. In what Rabbi Moshe Silberschein calls an Audacious Covenant, God is not only

[33] Exod. 34:10.
[34] Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 32.
[35] Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig, "How the Bible Became the Prayer Book: Not Threats of Punishment but Rabbinic Promises of Forgiveness," in *Encountering God: El Rachum V'chanun God Merciful and Gracious*, ed. Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman (Woodstock, Ver.: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2016), 35

telling His people that He will be there for them.[36] This time, God is saying: I have shown My best qualities to you so that you might hold Me to My own standard.

"By creating human beings," Rabbi Shai Held says, "God has taken an enormous risk—the risk that God will be painfully and repeatedly disappointed. In an act of infinite love, God has chosen to need us."[37] God's covenant is evidence of God's need to not only have us near, but to see in us His own shortcomings realized. I argue that God struggles to live His professed virtues just as humans do and provides the covenant as a way to feel less alone in this struggle. God's covenant ensures that we will hold Him to His own standards and that in our striving to be like Him, we will match and maybe even surpass God's attempts at compassionate and moral behavior.

[36] Rabbi Moshe Silberschein, lecture from "Introduction to Liturgy." Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Jerusalem, October 2012.
[37] Rabbi Shai Held, "Daring to Dream with God," *Forward*, September 22, 2010, https://forward.com/opinion/131500/daring-to-dream-with-god/.

CHAPTER 2
PRAYING THE ATTRIBUTES TO FIND OUR WAY: LITURGICAL ADAPTATIONS OF COMPASSION

Philosopher Roger Scruton claims that for much of the *Torah*, both God and Israel are homeless. For the Israelites, the pursuit of a stable home is chronicled in their journey from Egypt through the desert. But according to Scruton's interpretation, the Hebrew Bible is just as much a story of *God's* search for a stable home and the Israelites' efforts to provide Him one. Scruton asks us to consider that the construction of the *Mishkan* and the Temple were ways not only to meet God, but also to house God. As Scruton puts it, God needs "a place to land— to settle down, to be present, to be known, to be encountered."[38] Likening the quest to that of a butterfly, Scruton says that both God *and* humans are like butterflies, "looking for a perch where we can be appreciated— the way a butterfly lands gently but deftly on a flower, briefly to be sure, but enough to be encountered."[39] This is a good metaphor for the prayer experience this chapter describes.

We see this type of dance, or brief encounter, play out between Moses and God in Exodus 34. Only verses earlier, Moses was so overcome with anger against the Israelite people that he shattered the two tablets on which God had inscribed His commandments. Modeling great compassion, God grants Moses a second chance and instructs him to ascend the mountain to receive another set. Just as God was quick to convert His anger to compassion, Moses is also moved to action, imploring God: הַרְאֵנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבֹדֶךָ *hareini na et k'vodecha*— let Moses behold God's presence.[40] As we know from our study of the text in Chapter 1, God promptly responds

[38] Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Encountering God: Can God be Known?" in Hoffman, ed. *Encountering God*, xxxvii.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Exod. 33:18.

by offering His Attributes to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7. For, just as Scruton suggests, God wants a place where He can be present and known. For Moses, still, knowing God and beholding God are not synonymous. Moses wants more from God, Moses needs more from God and so, Moses asks more from God. In his attempt to truly behold God's presence, Moses humbly prostrates himself in Exodus 34:8. While bowed to the ground, Moses continues to pray in Exodus 34:9, petitioning God יֵלֶךְ־נָא אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבֵּנוּ כִּי עַם־קְשֵׁה־עֹרֶף הוּא וְסָלַחְתָּ לַעֲוֹנֵנוּ וּלְחַטָּאתֵנוּ וּנְחַלְתָּנוּ— *yeilech-na Adonai, b'kirbeinu ki am-k'shei-oref hu v'salachta la'avoneinu ul'chatateinu un'chaltanu*— that God stay in the midst of the people even though they are stiff-necked. In acknowledgement and atonement, Moses asks for forgiveness and for a continued relationship with God. Following in the footsteps of Abraham and Jacob, Moses, who heretofore knew God only through words, has turned to the act of prayer in order to truly behold Him. In this moment, it is as though Moses invites God home, speaking his prayer so that God might find residence in their connection.

Later, in Chapter 13 of the Book of Numbers, Moses once again models this effort to find a mutual dwelling place, however this time, with a somewhat reversed dynamic. The twelve spies have returned, with ten of them reporting harsh and threatening conditions in the Land of Canaan, and only two promising a hopeful future there. Upon hearing the overwhelmingly cautious report, the Israelites are inconsolable in their doubt of God, expressing fear and a loss of faith. Similar to the way God reacted after learning of the Sin of the Golden Calf in Exodus, God becomes angry and threatens to disown the Israelites for their seeming apostasy. God, like the Israelites, seems inconsolable in His disappointment and is unable to soothe Himself or invoke the qualities He had boasted of earlier. But it is in this moment that the once theoretical Audacious Covenant is put into practice and where the Book of Numbers shows a role reversal in

the Divine-human dynamic. Here, a human not only holds God accountable to His promises, but uses his human behavior to manifest the likeness and essence of God. For Moses enters into a space of prayer, inviting God to dwell there with him and asks for forgiveness, as he says, "Therefore, I pray, let the Lord's restraint be great as You, [God], have declared, saying" that the Lord is "slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness, forgiving of iniquity, and pardoning of willful sin."[41] Moses not only uses prayer to appeal to and connect with God, he uses God's own self-description to do so! Moses' two-fold strategy is brilliant. First, Moses quotes God to remind Him to be compassionate in His response to the Israelites' cries. He then models compassion in the *way* he holds God accountable by being gentle, acknowledging God's mistake, and showing God that he cares enough about Him to ask Him to be better. It is prayer that provides Moses with a point of connection and calms him enough to approach God's anger with a compassionate spirit. After this refractory period, God, who has not only calmed down but has been held to His own standard in a compassionate way, relents and promises to pardon the people. Exodus taught us that compassion is powerful. Numbers proves again that prayer begets compassion, even in God.

Although these examples in Exodus and Numbers are not the first to illustrate spontaneous human prayer, these two stories mark a shift in the function of prayer for the Israelites going forward. It is not only Moses' prayer but Moses' *preparation* for his prayer that provide for us a template, an example, an expectation, for our own offerings of atonement. In Exodus 34:8, Moses readies himself to pray by bowing low to the ground, showing that prayer to God is not just about the words that are spoken, but also about the physicality and muscle

[41] Num. 14:17-18

memory of the ritual. From Numbers 14:17-18, we learn that actually embodying the qualities and values we espouse, or more colloquially— practicing what we preach— is powerful enough to appeal to even God's desire to grow.

Today, our ritual of penitential prayer finds its roots in these biblical stories of compassion, the desire for personal growth, and forgiveness. Rav Yohanan makes the connection in *Rosh Hashanah* 17b, where he claims that Exodus 34:6, in which God passed by Moses and proclaimed His Attributes, is the origin of the use of a *tallit*. Rav Yohanan envisions this scene as having taken place with God in the role of leader, dressed in traditional prayer garb and all. "This verse teaches us," he says, "that the blessed Holy One wrapped in a robe like the leader of prayer (שָׁלִיחַ צִיבּוּר *shaliach tzibbur*) and showed Moses the order of prayer. God said to him: 'Whenever Israel sins, let them do according to this order before Me, and I will forgive them.'" Rav Yohanan bridges Bible and liturgy for us, stating that the practice of reciting the Thirteen Attributes, God's moral qualities, first occurred as a way to establish a pattern for "Israel's future petitions to God" much like what we use today. Rav Yehudah then expounds on Rav Yohanan's commentary, saying that the Thirteen Attributes are at the core of our covenant with God. Invoking the Thirteen Attributes reminds God of God's promise to us and reengages us in a practice of mutual dwelling and closeness.[42] In teaching Moses the order of the words used for penitential prayer, says Cantor Cheryl Wunch, God becomes "the ultimate *shaliach tzibbur.*"[43] I argue that there is no purer way to emulate God and to find mutual dwelling than to model our prayers after God's instructed formula for His forgiveness.

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[42] Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, 216.
[43] Cantor Cheryl Wunch, "Yom Kippur Torah Service: Emulating God," RJ.org, The Reform Movement Blog, October 24, 2013, http://blogs.rj.org/blog/2013/10/24/yom-kippur-torah-service-emulating-god/.

Appearances in our Liturgical Calendar

The commanded formula of the *sh'losh esrei middot,* the Thirteen Attributes, for the purpose of forgiveness, can be found throughout the liturgical calendar, and most relevantly for this project, in the *N'ilah* service of *Yom Kippur*.[44] Joel M. Hoffman translates the formula, including its introductory text as:

God is a king seated on a throne of mercy, governing graciously, pardoning the sins of his people, removing the first, first extending pardon to sinners and forgiveness to transgressors, dealing generously with all living beings. You do not treat them according to their evil. God, You instructed us to recite the Thirteen Attributes today, as You once revealed them to the Humble One, as is written, "Adonai descended in a cloud, and he stood with him there, and he said God's name. Then Adonai passed before him and said, Adonai, Adonai, merciful and gracious God, endlessly patient, most kind and truthful, extending kindness to thousands, forgiving sins and transgressions and misdeeds, cleansing." Pardon our sins and transgressions, and take possession of us. Forgive us, our father, for we have sinned; pardon us, our king, for we have transgressed. For You, Adonai, are good and forgiving and most kind to all who call on You.[45]	אל מלך יושב על כסא רחמים, מתנהג בחסידות. מוחל עונות עמו, מעביר ראשון ראשון. מרבה מחילה לחטאים, וסליחה לפושעים. עשה צדקות עם כל בשר ורוח, לא כרעתם תגמול. אל, הורית לנו לומר שלש עשרה, וזכר לנו היום ברית שלש עשרה, כמו שהודעת לענו מקדם, כמו שכתוב: וירד יי בענן, ויתיצב עמו שם, ויקרא בשם יי: ויעבר יי על פניו ויקרא: יי, יי, אל רחום וחנון, ארך אפים ורב חסד ואמת: נצר חסד לאלפים, נשא עון ופשע וחטאה, ונקה. וסלחת לעוננו ולחטאתנו ונחלתנו. סלח לנו אבינו כי חטאנו, מחל לנו מלכנו כי פשענו. כי אתה אדני טוב וסלח, ורב־חסד לכל־קראיך.

The formula takes the original form of Moses' prayer in Numbers 14:17-18 and adorns it with imagery of God from Proverbs 20:8, Leviticus Rabbah 23:24 and other biblical texts.

[44] The formula can be found after *Chazarat HaShatz*, in the *S'lichot* section of the service.
[45] Joel Hoffman, "The Thirteen Attributes: Translation and Commentary," in Hoffman, ed. *Encountering God*, 3-9.

Before studying the usage of this formula as prayer today, it is important to make a few disclaimers. First, as Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman points out, it is hard to ignore that we only inherit the merciful traits of God in this formula, not the qualities that portray God as harsh or vengeful. This was of course purposeful, we must remember, for the High Holidays themselves represent the shift from judgment to mercy. According to the *midrash Leviticus Rabbah* 23:24, "God normally sits on a throne of justice, but upon hearing the shofar blasts of the people Israel, God stands up and moves to a throne of mercy."[46] Though this shift is apparent and perceptible to anyone who has witnessed High Holiday worship, it might leave us wondering why the liturgy itself was altered originally.

Marc Brettler sheds light on this question, stating quite convincingly that the prayer formula quotes selectively from the Bible in order to paint God in a benevolent and merciful light and accomplish the composers' goal. In this case, the inclusion and recitation of the Thirteen Attributes was meant to send the message that "prayers are heeded by a forgiving deity."[47] For the liturgists, it was more important that this message endure than its original content. This alteration feels strategic and successful. It seems, from my perspective, that one is more likely to willingly admit wrongdoing and seek forgiveness if she knows that she will be received with mercy and compassion. The liturgy, therefore, may have been crafted not only with God in mind, but with the worshipper herself, providing aids to encourage the worshipper to move toward God.

Finally, I must address the much discussed caveat that comes at the end of God's self-disclosure and which is not included in the formula: that God will not forgive all punishment

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[46] Ibid., 4.
[47] Marc Zvi Brettler, "God, Merciful and Compassionate?" in Hoffman, ed., *Encountering God*, 21.

and will revisit future generations to track the sins of past generations. To some, this phrase in Exodus 34:7 depicts God as relentless, even indefatigable, in his pursuit of human atonement. Some might even conclude that this aspect of God's self-disclosure was omitted from the prayer formula because it was too harsh and was antithetical to the purpose of the ritual of reciting The Attributes. Alternatively, we might instead consider other motives, as listed in the Jewish Encyclopedia article on the Thirteen Attributes.[48] For example, it is possible that for God, man is most often moved to repent after sinning and therefore, the threat to not forgive all sin impels a person to keep working on himself until God sees him fit to be forgiven entirely. With these disclaimers in mind, let us study the architecture of the Thirteen Attributes in our liturgy.

The Architecture of the Thirteen Attributes in the Reform *Machzor*

The Thirteen Attributes appear in the liturgy in the *S'lichot* month of *Elul*; during the month of *Tishrei:* before removing the *Torah* from the ark on *Rosh HaShanah* morning, *Yom Kippur* evening and morning, and the three pilgrimage festivals; during the *S'lichot* prayers for *Yom Kippur* evening; before *Tachanun;* and when a person is critically ill.[49] Before we can attempt to understand more about the function of the Thirteen Attributes as a prayer vehicle both for God and for us, let us gain a better understanding of their specific placements in Reform *machzorim*.[50]

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[48] Emil G. Hirsch and Kaufmann Kohler, *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906 ed., s.v. "Compassion." Online edition, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4576-compassion.
[49] *Encyclopedia Judaica,* 2nd ed., s.v. "Adoni, Adonai, El Raḥ Um Ve Ḥannun." Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2006, vol. 1, 412.
[50] See Appendix I.

This project will focus on *Mishkan HaNefesh*, the Central Conference of American Rabbis and Reform Movement's newly published two-volume High Holiday *machzorim.*[51] Not only is *Mishkan HaNefesh* the principal *machzor* I will use in my career as a Reform cantor, it is the most recently produced prayer book of our movement. *Mishkan HaNefesh* accurately reflects the current liturgical trends, styles and choices of today's Reform clergy and gives us insight into our movement's current relationship with the Thirteen Attributes. In *Mishkan HaNefesh,* God's Thirteen Attributes appear many times, both in Hebrew liturgical form and in the form of creative, English readings. The CCAR prayer book series includes The Attributes in the *Rosh HaShanah* Morning *Torah* service, the *Yom Kippur* evening service (three times in the *Vidui*/confession section), the *Yom Kippur* morning *Torah* service, and three times in the *S'lichot* section of the concluding *N'ilah* service. The *Mishkan HaNefesh* series allows the worshipper to ponder the meanings behind each text. This goal in *Mishkan HaNefesh* is further supported by short essays and modern commentaries published by spiritual leaders in the field such as Rabbis Sheldon Marder, Janet Marder and Edwin Goldberg.

The way in which *Mishkan HaNefesh* presents The Attributes helps us to understand the function of this biblical verse in the exercise of Reform prayer. Throughout the prayer book series, we are asked to recite the formula through call-and-response, as a community, and by using its refrain to punctuate confession and atonement. The modern Reform worshipper is more noticeably oriented to the modern liturgists' goals than ever before. In the *Yom Kippur Ma'ariv* service, for example, the entire *Vidui* section is introduced with commentary on atonement, confession and forgiveness. The worshipper is overtly told in this section introduction that the

[51] Hara Person, ed., *Mishkan HaNefesh: Machzor for the Days of Awe* in 2 vols. (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis Press, 2015).

Vidui and *S'lichot* sections of the service, imminent in their arrival and eminent in their significance, are "grounded in two verses of *Torah*, known as the Thirteen Attributes of God."[52] This is only the first of many commentaries throughout the book that we will encounter as a means of explanation, or painting of a desired spiritual landscape that grows compassion and shines forgiveness of human flaw.

Rabbi Sheldon Marder, one of the editors of the prayer book series, admits that the Jewish High Holiday landscape is painted quite deliberately for the modern Jew.[53] Specifically, he explains, *Mishkan HaNefesh* deviates from the previous High Holiday *machzor,* Gates of Repentance, in the way that it emphasizes God's compassion. In the new *Yom Kippur machzor*, for example, the first time that the Attributes appear, they are accompanied by a footnote that elucidates the phrase *el rachum* – God, compassionate— itself.[54] The footnote helps to introduce the *S'lichot* section of the *Yom Kippur* evening service which, in its own creative way, *Mishkan HaNefesh* has rebranded as "Songs of Forgiveness." Stating that "Focusing on God's compassionate qualities is meant to prompt our own action in kind," the contributors to this sacred book paint a crucial brushstroke of the landscape.[55] For it is now self-evident that implicit in the editors' motivation is the encouragement for us, the human worshippers, to see ourselves in God and to act in kind once we leave the prayer space. The important point here is not that God's compassionate qualities are brought to the fore of the canvas, since as Marder points out in the book, this was done first and foremost by the Geonim and Eliyahu da Vidas.[56] Rather, that the twenty-first-century editors saw these qualities fit to persist says something significant not

[52] Person, ed., *Mishkan HaNefesh*, vol. 2, 94.
[53] Rabbi Sheldon Marder, phone interview with author, August 11, 2017.
[54] Person, ed., *Mishkan HaNefesh*, vol. 2, 100.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 682.

only about the permanence of certain colors of our landscape, but about the permission we have to find our own place among this ancient, Divine backdrop.

As an example, the *Yom Kippur* evening service contains three creative, supplemental readings to The Attributes which serve to highlight God's moral qualities.[57] First, before reciting The Attributes in Hebrew, a modern moment of *kevah* asks us to speak to God, saying "we come before You in need of compassion."[58] We go on in this reading to invoke the core Exodus story of the Golden Calf and to confess to God that we still revel in the fact and are relieved by the fact that God was "compassionate in the face of [the Israelites'] rebellion." We need God to remember that God showed incredible "forgiveness in that moment of human weakness and doubt" and that perhaps, in *this* moment of forgiveness, God could show similar compassion.[59] We reveal more transparently our motivations for reciting the upcoming repetition of the Thirteen Attributes when we read "Eternal God, You reveal to Moses Your thirteen Attributes of mercy: they exist in the world through our awareness; they transform the world through our actions. We speak them now as prayer and aspiration."[60] Here, the modern liturgists' goals position us to admit, in our native English language, why it is that we came to temple on this day. The reading clearly states that our efforts to walk in God's ways and to live *b'tzelem Elohim* influence our awareness, help God's Attributes to manifest and cause them to exist in the world. Moreover, the editors want us to know that the Attributes are so powerful that through our actions, they can transform the world. Our prayer is powerful because we speak into being the hope and aspiration of what it could mean to emulate God.

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[57] Ibid., 100, 105, 108.
[58] Ibid., 100.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 105.

We continue to meet God's compassionate qualities in *N'ilah* when we read in English that God does "not treat us harshly for the harshness of our deeds" and that we are taught to proclaim God's Attributes. We ask God to remember, "for our sake, the Covenant of Your Thirteen Ways."[61] We also see mentions of The Attributes in added introductions such as a discussion of *Tikkun Middot HaNefesh*, a nod to Musar, which the editors of this new prayer book series saw fit to reintroduce to the worship experience.[62] And let us not forget the importance of the Thirteen Attributes in the *S'lichot* service, codified for us in the *Mishkan HaLev machzor.*[63]

The *Mishkan HaLev* prayer book guides us first through *Elul,* breaking down our barriers and opening our hearts over the course of an entire month so that when we face God's Attributes, we arrive with the strength necessary to behold them. During the *S'lichot* service itself, we get our first taste of the ritual of reciting The Attributes on page 20, as we face the white and pure *Torahs*. Perhaps because of the white and clean slate, this first recitation of The Attributes during the High Holidays mean that much more. It shows an earnest promise that has yet to be sullied by failed attempts. Finally, we call out God's Attributes again, on page 136, right before the sounding of the shofar. Once again, our recognition, recitation and rededication of The Attributes paves the way for our *teshuvah* and for God's answer to our prayers.

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[61] Ibid., 644.
[62] Ibid., 354. The Musar movement was developed in the 19th century by Israel Salanter to reconcile the gaps between professed belief and action. Today, Musar is taught in synagogues and practiced by individuals.
[63] Rabbi Janet Marder and Rabbi Sheldon Marder, *Mishkan Halev: Prayers for S'lichot and the Month of Elul* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis Press, 2017), 120, 136.

The Function of their Recitation

With so many examples of the Thirteen Attributes in our liturgy and ample explanation and context clues to help guide us through them, we are still left to wonder what function their recitation serves for us as worshippers and for God as receiver of said worship. Unfortunately, not much has been written about the early liturgists' motivation for including the Thirteen Attributes in prayer. We have a sense of The Attributes' origins for prayer, for as we learned earlier, Moses borrowed God's own quote to appeal to God's forgiving power. The *JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions* also reminds us that the Kabbalists first introduced this custom of including the Thirteen Attributes in the *Torah* service during the Three Festivals. According to JPS, "this was followed by a silent prayer beginning 'Master of the universe, fulfill my heartfelt requests for good,'" which they believed demonstrated an understanding that "all too often one's personal goals are not for his or her benefit."[64] JPS' perspective opposes that of the modern *Mishkan HaNefesh machzor*, teaching that the recitation of The Attributes is done for God's sake. JPS also teaches us that the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are never recited on Shabbat nor on festival services that take place during Shabbat, for we are granted a reprieve from supplication and penitential during the Sabbath. Still, we are left to wonder about the significance of The Attributes themselves.[65]

As we know, God appears to the Jewish people under the influence of great anger throughout our people's narrative, too. It is this equipoise of qualities that reminds us of the precarious nature of our relationship to God— precarious enough that such a relationship requires constant work, displays of devotion, and adherence to commandments. Why then is God

[64] Ronald L. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions: A JPS Desk Reference*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 225.
[65] Ibid., 125.

personified in our liturgy by His positive Attributes? Furthermore, if God's identity is so multi-hyphenated, why does some of the more modern liturgy focus on God's compassion specifically? One could fashion an entire project around God's more fractious qualities, painting God as one who favors censure in times of judgment. Why, then, do our modern guides favor God's compassion side, leaving us with this image as we leave the sanctuary after the gates have closed on *N'ilah?*

To help answer that question, let us turn to Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman. He takes a three-pronged approach to making meaning out of liturgy. First, he suggests that we consider what he calls the "official meaning" of a prayer. In order to do this, we must ask what experts and liturgists think the prayer means. Next, he shifts our focus to the "public meaning" of the liturgy. Aside from the words themselves, he says, which some people cannot translate, we have to ask: with what is this prayer associated? Family? Freedom? For some it might be joy or even sorrow. Finally, Rabbi Hoffman asks us to consider the "idiosyncratic meaning" behind a prayer. For each individual, Hoffman says, there is personal meaning to the liturgy.[66]

The official meaning behind the insertion of the Thirteen Attributes into liturgy is based in Talmudic Midrash. According to Hoffman, Jews in the Talmudic era believed firmly in their status as individual sinners, an idea that endured through Antiquity, the Middle Ages and all the way through the Modern Period. In what Hoffman refers to as "The Game Of Limits," the limits and boundaries of *Torah* have served as the basis for human, and therefore Jewish, survival throughout our people's history. Limits gave people metrics for "permissible/forbidden" or "*mutar/asur*" and imposed upon the Jewish religious culture a sense of intense recourse for

[66] Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, phone interview with author, August 11, 2017.

action or inaction. Prayer's role in The Game of Limits, Hoffman explains, was to facilitate the compliance of people to *mitzvot*, and to instill in them a sense of urgency, obligation and reward for praying to God what we hope to see made manifest in the world. For people who consider themselves to be sinners, penitential prayer is a chief component of ensuring God's continued approval and closeness.[67]

Even as the idea of limits and sin dissipated and became associated more with Christianity, the meaning of the Thirteen Attributes, invoking God's moral qualities in penitential prayer, took on a public meaning because of habit, tradition, and the popularity of Jewish music. The value of beautiful music-making, Hoffman says, should not be minimized. Sometimes, he affirms, prayers stick simply because they are accompanied by a beautiful and memorable melody.

Modern Voices of Meaning to Guide our Prayer Experience

Examining the importance of idiosyncratic meaning brings us to the idea of prayer as a spiritual exercise meant to encourage personal growth and change. "In reciting the Thirteen Attributes we accept— for the moment— the fiction of a moral universe," says Catherine Madsen.[68] I add to this idea by circling us back to the core biblical idea of the possibility of human emulation of God. We spend time wondering where God is when terrible things happen but, to suspend those doubts and instead consider, even for a fleeting moment, that God is moral and the universe is moral, we find that our actions are consequential and *do* have cosmic significance. Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig highlights the human responsibility even more,

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[67] Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Limits, Truth, and Meaning: A Foundation for Dialogue." Lecture, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, 1988.
[68] Catherine Madsen, "Whose Attributes?" in Hoffman, ed., *Encounters with God*, 104.

claiming that "the recitation of the Thirteen Attributes is not a purely intellectual exercise. The mere proclamation of a doctrine would require only a single recitation, not the constant reputation we have here. Repetition does more than express ideas; it engenders feelings." The idiosyncrasy of not only the words but the *ritual* of repeating the words, Wenig highlights, sheds light on its function in the human prayer experience. As individuals, we may each experience different feelings, but the recitation and repetition of the Thirteen Attributes causes us to feel and illustrates the power of prayer.[69] The Thirteen Attributes are well suited to the process of personal change and growth, for as the biblical scholar Sarna says, "the idea is to inculcate the human imitation of God's moral qualities: compassion, graciousness, forbearance, kindness, fealty and forgiveness."[70]

If we take into consideration the location of the Thirteen Attributes in the aforementioned liturgical calendar, we realize that they are strategically placed. Rabbi Wenig teaches that Moses is given the second set of tablets on the tenth of *Tishrei*, *Yom Kippur* itself, "making *Yom Kippur* the day par excellence of pardon and covenant renewal"[71] Rabbi Sheldon Marder, editor of the *Mishkan HaNefesh machzorim* corroborates this idea. He admits that the *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur* prayer books were written and formatted in order to orient the worshipper to the values of compassion and forgiveness. We even read Jonah on *Yom Kippur*, Marder reminds us, to remember a human example of the struggle giving compassion can bring. Jonah sought from God predictability; the guarantee that those who do wrong will be punished.[72] Jonah, instead, was disappointed to see God engage in a compassionate approach towards those who seemed

[69] Wenig, "How the Bible Became the Prayer Book" in Hoffman, ed. *Encounters with God*, 34.
[70] Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, 216.
[71] Wenig, "How the Bible Became the Prayer Book" in Hoffman, ed. *Encounters with God*, 36.
[72] Marder, phone interview with author, August 11, 2017.

otherwise undeserving. And yet, this is precisely what the ritual of reciting and repeating the Thirteen Attributes in a prayerful context can teach us: We recite them as a community in order to hold each other accountable, and invoke God's name in order to remind God of our audacious covenant, all so that we may act towards each other with understanding, kindness and compassion. Rabbi Asher Lopatin puts it this way: "We have to follow God and let everyone know, righteous and not-so-righteous, that we will not abandon them in their moment of failing." He goes on to say, "Our world's only hope for repair, for that sin offering for God on *Rosh Chodesh* and *Rosh HaShanah*, is our readiness to reach out lovingly to those who have failed us, in order to help them reconnect with the inherent goodness."[73] And so, throughout our liturgy, we recite and repeat The Attributes to inure ourselves to the practice of embodying The Attributes. The hope, therefore, is that we will be inspired by God to leave the synagogue walls and act as God acts.

I understand prayer as a vehicle to reimagine what is possible for the human experience. The practice of prayer we inherit is a gift of *Torah* ritualized, and our time together in the synagogue is the gift of reflection, unencumbered by outside responsibilities. Specifically, praying The Attributes provides an opportunity for a deep reflection on the possibility and role of compassion in human relationships. As a cantor, prayer is about the ritual of singing, both as I lead and follow my congregants in song. Musical expression of God's Thirteen Attributes can help us as individuals, and as a community, to strive to live them by rehearsing them and in turn, rehearsing who we want to be as people. I know that, personally, this exercise has helped me to affirm my commitment to striving to be like God.

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[73] Rabbi Asher Lopatin, "God...God!: Before, After, and Forever," in Hoffman, ed. *Encounters with God*, 82.

As laid out in this chapter, the Thirteen Attributes appear in a variety of moments throughout the liturgical calendar, each characterized by different qualities. In certain settings, it might feel more appropriate to sing a large, choral arrangement of *Adonai, Adonai,* such as those composed by Max Helfman and Abraham Moshe Bernstein. Both of these settings are call-and-response, wherein the cantor recites The Attributes and a choir repeats them. We know, from reading about Moses and our people's struggles with God's trust in Chapter 1, that recitation of The Attributes must take place communally, for it harkens back to the covenant we, as a people, made with God. Both Helfman and Bernstein's settings of the text are majestic, reflecting not only the weight of the words, but the weight of the commitment to try to live them.

Cantor Moshe Ganchoff composed a solo, a cappella setting of *Sh'losh Esre Midos*, whose barebones approach leaves the cantor vocally exposed. The piece's pauses and spaciousness render the cantor vulnerable to the fragility of the human condition and the doubt we may have in our ability to be more like God. Similarly Louis Lewandowski's setting of The Attributes is sung solo and with a sense of urgency, pleading with God as if to ask God for more patience as we try and try again to be like Him. The Israeli Renewal group *Nava Tehila* has set this text to music as well, relying on modern Eastern sounds to make the words accessible to all people. Even more accessible is an English setting of The Attributes composed by Congregation Nevei Kodesh, a Jewish Renewal Community based in Boulder, Colorado. Although The Attributes in English can feel a bit cumbersome, their translation ensure that members of our North American Reform community understand what they're praying. Finally, Leon Sher's version of *Adonai, Adonai,* popularized by the NFTY and camp movements, feels deeply Western in its sound and comforting in its familiarity.

There are many more musical settings of this text that beautifully express The Attributes. While singing is not comfortable for every Jew and music is not necessarily the entry point for every congregant, the exercise of hearing the cantor proclaim The Attributes, respond to that proclamation, or make it as a community alongside family and friends helps to unify us in our shared human struggle. When I lead The Attributes as cantor and sing them as congregant, I feel comforted by the ease of their delivery. There is a moment, and in fact many moments, designated for the proclamation to be more like God, which gives structure to my commitment. Singing The Attributes in synagogue allows me the chance to feel less alone. And on a personal note, when I sing, I know that God can hear me. I sing The Attributes so that God will hear the sincerity of my attempt. Though I may not always succeed, I am striving to be like God. Sharing my music with God is the best way I know to show Him I mean it.

Both God and the people need a place to land. We sit safely within our synagogue walls and explore the depths of our failing and potential. God, however, resides within the lives we live once we leave those walls. On *Rosh HaShanah*, we pray *M'loch.* In *Mishkan HaNefesh*, we are asked to bear witness to the tension in God's reign. Based on *Talmud B'rachot 7a,* a quote that appears at the opening of this paper, we gain insight into God's struggle as we pray:

> This is the prayer God utters:
> 'May My mercy conquer my anger.
> In all My actions toward My children, may My compassion prevail.'
> And this is the prayer I say:
> Compassionate One, rule over me today and always.
> Let mercy and forgiveness hold sway.
> Let the good within me prevail.[74]

[74] Marder and Marder, *Mishkan HaNefesh*, 57.

We leave the synagogue walls after we have prayed, sustained in our pleading that our actions will reflect compassion and goodness. That, in moments when anger feels natural, we will remember our sacred covenant, project God's moral qualities and choose to be more like the Divine.

CHAPTER 3
~~DIVINE~~ INTERVENTIONS:
BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE AND COMPASSIONATE RESPONSIVENESS

An old friend, Jeremy, contacted me, and told me the following tale of woe.
Quite by accident, he had discovered that his cousin Norma had been stealing money from the family business–hundreds of thousands of dollars.
At first, Jeremy was furious with Norma. "How could she have financially endangered our family like that? My cousin is a thief and a liar. She must pay back every cent she stole–I won't be satisfied until she does."
*Welcome to the mode of judgment, the demand for strict, uncompromising justice (*din*): people should get precisely what they deserve. About a week later, Jeremy changed his tune.*
"Poor Norma. I had no idea that she was so needy. Surely, that's the only reason why she would have done such a thing to our family."
*Welcome to the mode of mercy, of compassion, of loving-kindness (*rachamim*): people should get the benefit of the doubt.*[75]
— Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin

I read this story with awe; awe because I am struck by the enduring human struggle for love and acceptance that persists as much today as when the Israelites committed the sin of the Golden Calf. I also read this story with curiosity: curiosity because I yearn to understand how Rabbi Salkin's friend Jeremy was able to make the journey from anger to compassion in only one week's time. How did Jeremy, as God modeled in Exodus 34, overcome his anger and find his way toward compassion when his loved one needed it most?

Our biblical reading in Chapter 1 teaches that even for God, time, self-discipline, and an open heart are necessary for this shift to occur. Similarly, our study of liturgy reveals texts, formulas and melodies that can aid in this process. But while Judaism provides anecdotal evidence of this struggle through its biblical and liturgical lenses, it is limited in its ability to supply guidance to build the concrete skills necessary for an individual to orient himself toward

[75] Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, "Cutting God Slack," in Hoffman, ed. *Encountering God*, 121.

that shift. *Musar*, originating in the nineteenth century, and more recently Jewish meditation practices have, in part, responded to this need. In my own studies of non-religious methods for the development of character, however, I have discovered that modern behavioral science provides a rich array of accessible therapeutic interventions that can be used to train individuals in the development of compassionate thoughts and behaviors both towards others and self.

This chapter will explore the contributions that the contemporary human behavioral sciences have made to our understanding of initial responses to relational conflict. Specifically, it aims to understand the journey from conflict-induced anger to a more constructive response, with a focus on character development to that end. The chapter investigates the mediating factors that make the transition from anger to compassion challenging, and suggests that adequate training can make compassion more readily accessible. In so doing, I will add to earlier Jewish attempts, as explored in the introduction of this paper, concrete interventions that have a high level of generalizability for Jews and people of all faith backgrounds.

I will argue that it is important for us to learn to recognize suffering, especially when it is masked by hostility or rejection, so that we can respond to the suffering itself and not to the expression of the suffering. Our instinct often leads us to respond to the expression of the suffering, causing us to bring fear, defensiveness and our own anger to the situation. Through this research, we learn that we do in fact have a choice about how we respond and that the choice we make matters. We will discover that we are not doomed to dwell in anger, nor are we born knowing how to be compassionate. We realize that those who act aggressively toward us are merely calling out for help and that by cultivating the skill of compassionate responsiveness, we can offer it to them. Although our society promotes competition, criticism and perseverance as

strategies for progress, this chapter shows that in fact it is compassion, a natural yet little-cultivated response, that moves us forward as a people.

Introduction to Intervention: Understanding Anger as a Coping Strategy

As evidenced by Jeremy's experience, anger has the ability to take us to an extreme emotional place. It destabilizes us, distances us from the needs of the other, and overshadows the potential pro-social or affiliative outcomes of the interaction. And yet, despite its drawbacks, anger is perhaps the most universal and prevalent of the emotions that are responsible for our ability to cope with unmet expectations, fear, sadness, and perceived social threats. Anger responsiveness is conditioned, both through socialization and through the neuropathways that form as a result, to help us cope with the ups and downs of life. Considering its presence in our development at such a young age and its chemical origins in our neuroplastic brains, it is not surprising that anger continues through adult life to serve as a prevailing response to interpersonal conflict.[76]

If we review our own experiences, we might be reminded of a time when a person rebuked or betrayed us and we reacted in kind with antagonism, judgment, and resistance to helping resolve the conflict. We may even look back on those experiences with a phantom adrenaline rush, recalling how cathartic and cleansing it felt to express our anger. Although anger can be maladaptive and correlated with increased reactivity, its substantial and determinative role, as evidenced by Jeremy's story, God's narrative, and in our personal experiences, merits further consideration. The consideration in question is not whether anger itself is healthy or

[76] Pinar Celik, Martin Storme, and Nils Myszkowski, "Anger and sadness as adaptive emotion expression strategies in response to negative competence and warmth evaluations," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 55, no. 4 (December 2016): 795.

unhealthy, but rather to determine how the expression of anger impacts the interlocutors, influences the probability of their reconciliation, and to evaluate how the expression contributes to each individual's chances of getting his or her needs met.[77]

A 2016 study conducted by Celik and colleagues addressed this issue by investigating the role of anger in dyads after an aggressor showed hostility and the target of the aggression responded with anger. The evidence collected by the study reveals that anger serves as both a maladaptive and adaptive coping strategy. The participants in the study who were targets of the initial offensive behavior— either by being verbally or physically assaulted— described themselves as becoming easily activated and angry toward the aggressor whose behavior they did not understand. These participants reported a positive relationship between the expression of disappointment and hurt through anger, and their sense of protection from and power over the person who offended them. Simply put, the angrier the participants became toward those who had offended them, the more powerful, safe and in control they felt.[78] In this way, anger is one of the only members of the negative emotion family that is motivational, for it compels us to regain agency after we have been offended, insulted or feel that our rights have been compromised. On the other hand, those participants who had initiated the conflict either by snapping, shoving or presenting hostility, described the other person's angry response as not leading to a pro-social outcome. Overwhelmingly, participants who had initiated the aggression and were therefore on the receiving end of the anger response reported feeling alienated, less trusting and less likely to

[77] Todd B. Kashdan, Fallon R. Goodman, Travis T. Mallard, and C. Nathan DeWall, "What Triggers Anger in Everyday Life? Links to the Intensity, Control, and Regulation of these Emotions, and Personality Traits," *Journal of Personality*, 84, vol. 6 (December 2016): 740.
[78] Celik, *et. al.,* "Anger and sadness as adaptive emotion expression strategies," 804.

reconcile.[79] In this way, the uncontrolled expression of anger is shown to be a destructive and maladaptive ego function.

Any unregulated emotional response, no matter its concomitant benefits of power or control, puts us at risk of social isolation. Anger as a response, when unmoderated by more adaptive ego functions such as curiosity, distress tolerance or stronger stimulus barriers, not only threatens the stability of an interpersonal relationship, but also obstructs the potential for understanding, connection, and support. After all, if we are meant to emulate God's character and walk in God's ways, then we are meant to strive to moderate our responses and be *erech apayim*, slow to anger. We can increase our chances of being slow to anger by utilizing the more adaptive ego functions listed above. Increasing distress tolerance, for example, has been shown to be effective in the Dialectical Behavioral Therapy model (DBT), for it asks the individual to test the limits of his or her discomfort. If a person is verbally offended, for instance, employing a distress tolerance exercise would ask the individual to consider how much discomfort that person could tolerate for the sake of the interaction. He might want an apology right away, but asking the aggressor for an apology may inflame the aggressor. If the receiver of the aggression could tolerate a bit of distress and stay unreactive until the other person has calmed, both parties would likely benefit. Engaging in exercises of distress tolerance can help us on our road to becoming slow to anger and to walking in God's ways.

As we know, even God stumbles to walk in God's own ways. I am reminded of God's intemperate reaction after learning that the Israelites had contravened His Ten Commandments and cannot help but wonder how the story and lesson might have been different had the writer of

[79] Ibid., 805.

it been oriented more to compassion himself. What if in the story, God's character was written to have understood the Israelites' construction of the Golden Calf not as a rejection of Him, but as an indication of their suffering, a cry for help, even a longing for Divine connection? What if, in acknowledging the Israelites' behavior as a symbol of their suffering, God had responded first with compassion? Might a compassionate-based response have brought the Israelites closer to Him sooner? Might it have engendered a feeling of trust instead of fear? Might God's compassion-first approach have set a precedent that would have taught humankind the empirical power of love? The author's instinct to write God's response as an angry one provides more evidence that we are preadapted toward anger and that compassion needs to be taught and trained. If only the writer himself had learned the virtue of the compassionate-response and been trained in how to develop such a skill, perhaps God's portrait might have reflected this lesson and could have benefited billions of readers who study the Bible and follow its teachings.

As we learned from studying the story of the Golden Calf, God, rather adaptively, turned to anger in order to express His disappointment, hurt and disapproval. God's anger served as a way for Him to retain control over His people, demonstrate investment in the relationship, and protect Himself from further pain. Had God's initial reaction been oriented more toward compassion, though, God may have turned to His children and said: "I see that you are lost and scared, so much so that you had to commit the sin of idolatry. I accept your sin not as a rejection of our relationship, but as a symbol of your suffering. It seems as though you need more assurance that I will not leave you. How can I help to ease your suffering and in the process, bring you closer to Me?"[80] The impulse to help another, especially someone whose behavior has

[80] Exod. 32:4.

just alienated, frightened or disgusted us, can feel impossible when anger sets in. Luckily, compassion has been shown to cushion our instinctive anger and lead us to a place where offering help to the aggressor feels possible.

Introduction to Intervention: Understanding Compassion as a Coping Strategy

Contemporary behavioral science understands compassion in a few ways. While some believe compassion to be an emotion, others see it as a motivational system. A widely referenced definition put forth by J.L. Goetz and colleagues recognizes compassion as "the feeling that arises in witnessing another's suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help."[81] The operative words being "feeling" and "motivates," this definition teaches that compassion is not simply a quality that a person possesses and exhibits, but the answer to the questions: what do you need right now? What can I do to help? Specifically, how can I convert my feelings into actions?

Compassion serves as a particularly adaptive and pro-social coping strategy because it engages cognitive, affective, intentional and motivational skills, building one upon the other to help a person sublimate his or her anger into more productive outcomes.[82] Geshe Thupten Jinpa's Stanford Compassion Cultivation Training Program is predicated on these four layers and serves as a helpful foundation for the compassion-response therapeutic interventions that we will explore below. Jinpa outlines the four requisite steps for cultivating compassion as: 1) awareness of another's suffering (cognitive component), 2) sympathetic concern after being moved by the

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[81] J.L. Goetz, D. Keltner, E. Simon-Thomas, "Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review," *Psychological Bulletin,* 136, no. 3 (May 2010): 351; James N. Kirby, Cassandra L. Tellegen, and Stanley R. Steindl, "A Meta-Analysis of Compassion-Based Interventions: Current State of Knowledge and Future Directions," *Behavior Therapy*, 48, no. 6 (November 2017): 779.

[82] Kirby, *et. al.*, "A Meta-Analysis of Compassion-Based Interventions," 779. The authors reference Geshe Thupten Jinpa's definition of compassion. Jinpa developed the Stanford Compassion Cultivation Training program.

suffering (affective component), 3) a desire to see relief of that suffering (intentional component) and 4) a readiness to relieve that suffering (motivational component). Jinpa's program adds support to my hypothesis. By tempering anger with an acknowledgment of suffering, a sharing of sympathy, a desire to help, and a plan to help, a person can rehabilitate the injured relationship, help the other person find relief from his or her distress, and personally feel generative in his ability to produce a positive outcome.

The Compassionate Responses to Anger Expression (CRAE) model also advocates compassion as a highly skilled coping strategy and adds to our foundational understanding of the importance of concrete interventions. The CRAE model asserts that compassion is a crucial way to make people feel seen and known, to feel less alone in their suffering, and to feel less othered. This compassion-first model believes that anger, though itself not adaptive, can be productive because it sets into motion a process through which people communicate, give each other feedback, and make changes to their behaviors. Anger, in other words, can serve as a catalyst to promote resiliency.[83] Research on the CRAE model shows that when anger is not eradicated but rather sublimated into understanding through communication, relationship-building and organizational policy change, compassion is more easily felt and dispensed.[84] While this model acknowledges the social function of anger, it promotes gratitude and compassion as key moderators in the relationship between expressed anger and positive outcomes. According to the CRAE model and its progenitors, anger begets compassion through a process of feedback and reflection.

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[83] Angela Zenteno-Hidalgo and Deanna Geddes, "A Model of Compassionate Responses to Anger Expression," in Charmine E. J. Hartel, Wilfred J. Zerbe, and Neal M. Ashkanasy, eds., *Experiencing and Managing Emotions in the Workplace* (Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd., 2012), 259, 261.
[84] Ibid., 265.

Intervention: Compassionate Mind Training

Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) and Compassionate Mind Training (CMT) were developed by Paul Gilbert for people struggling with negative emotional responses due to attachment disorders, trauma and emotional regulation disorders.[85] CFT operates from the belief that our cognitive competencies have evolved in maladaptive ways and often lead us to destructive behaviors. We may know, for example, that lashing out at family members will not strengthen our bonds with them, but in spite of our need to stay connected to them, we do it anyway. Despite some dissonance between our motivational systems and emotional systems, though, Gilbert believes that the human brain has also evolved to include the capacity for altruism, caring and compassion which, if honed, can offset our destructive tendencies. CFT works to increase an individual's capacity to access, tolerate and cultivate affiliative emotions so that individuals can stay connected, especially during times of great conflict and stress.[86]

CFT provides context for some of the mediating factors that threaten our ability to approach others from a compassionate place. Gilbert cites competing social ranking, evolutionary-based fears of resource-sharing, feelings of shame and self-preservation, and a lack of cooperation as obstacles. It is not our cognitions alone, however, that prevent us from moving toward compassion. The emotions that are triggered by our cognitions play a large role in thwarting our path toward compassion as well.

While Gilbert recognizes the obstacles and self-destructive behaviors that get in our way, he reassures that instinctively, humans are programmed with pro-social motivations but must be

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[85] Elaine Beaumont and Caroline J Hollins Martin, "Heightening levels of compassion towards self and others through use of compassionate mind training,"*British Journal of Midwifery,* 24, no. 11 (November 2016): 780.
[86] Paul Gilbert, "The origins and nature of compassion focused therapy," *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 53, no. 1 (March 2014): 10.

trained to remain close, especially during and immediately following conflict. To that end, CMT, the primary CFT intervention tool, was developed to help individuals reconcile the cognitions, emotions and behaviors that threaten their social stability and supplant them with compassion-focused responses.[87] According to CMT, cultivating a compassionate mind first requires attention to 1) the threat and protection system, which alerts us of perceived threats; 2) the drive, resource-seeking, and excitement system, which orients us toward activities that help us reach our goals; and 3) the affiliative/soothing and safeness system, which controls physiological responses and keeps us attached to support networks. With these three systems engaged, CMT takes place in six stages, as paraphrased from Gilbert, Elaine Beaumont, and Caroline J Hollins Martin:

- **Step 1:** *Education regarding self-care— educating the individual about the importance of taking care of oneself first.*
- **Step 2:** *Psychoeducation— educating the individual about the intervention and its expectations and effectiveness.*
- **Step 3:** *Formulation— using a psychodynamic approach to explore the individual's past and to gain insight into coping strategies that have previously worked for the individual.*
- **Step 4:** *Building compassionate capacities— breathing exercises and imagery techniques (e.g. "safe-place exercise"[88]) that will be practiced and employed during times of emotional stress or activation.*
- **Step 5:** *Using behavioral exercises to build compassionate capacities— exercises that foster wisdom and challenge unhelpful cognitions and behaviors including compassionate letter writing, art and imagery that portray compassion, toward the goal of helping the individual reflect on their needs in the 'here and now.'*
- **Step 6:** *Engaging with difficulties using a compassionate mind-set— using exercises aimed at listening to the sad-self, angry-self, critical-self, and offering non-judgment and compassion to the different selves.*[89]

[87] Ibid., 13.
[88] This term is borrowed from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.
[89] Beaumont and Martin, "Heightening levels of compassion towards self and others," 781-784; Gilbert, "The origins and nature of compassion focused therapy," *passim*.

Exercises specific to the CMT intervention include mindfulness and focused attention, soothing rhythm breathing to interfere with somatic symptoms such as elevated heart rate, creating a safe place, compassion focused imagery and developing our ideal compassionate other. We can also borrow techniques from other modalities in order to achieve these steps. For example, Step 3 uses a a transtheoretical psychodynamic approach to help the client better understand her history, patterns of thoughts and behaviors, and any past events that contribute to current behaviors and cognitions. A psychodynamic approach can also help the client to understand any vulnerabilities the she might have as a result of past events or triggers. For Steps 4 and 5, which help the client to build compassionate capacities, we might use elements from a strengths-based approach, building upon the client's already developed capacities in order to expand them into the area of compassion building. The DBT opposite-action exercise can also be helpful in Steps 4 and 5, as it asks a person to behave in the opposite way to the person's thoughts or feelings.[90] If, for example, a person feels upset at another person, the individual might consider acting in the opposite way, in a way that instead shows care and concern. Finally, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy teaches that multiple truths can exist. When dealing with compassion as deserved by another, it can be helpful to remember that the other person can both have been the one to act inappropriately and still feel wronged, hurt and vulnerable. There is power in remembering that the person who has hurt us can also be hurting, and that both things can be true.

Zhang et al. tested the effectiveness of Compassionate Mind Training in their study of the mediating effects of anger, compassion, and guilt in interpersonal conflict. Their results showed

[90] This strategy is borrowed from DBT.

that those who had been trained in CMT— specifically those who had developed coping strategies to de-escalate anger and increase compassionate capacities - were not only able to diffuse conflict more quickly, but eventually arrived at a place of cooperation with the other in order to solve the problem. Their study highlighted the positive relationship between anger and competition/domination, concluding that anger pitted participants against each other instead of creating room for both people's feelings and experiences. The study's findings further stress the importance not of a compassionate response, but of the training for compassionate responsiveness. Insight does not equal behavior change, and while we may understand in the moment that compassion would be the most productive response, we do need training in order to habituate ourselves to its use.[91]

Matos et al. corroborate Zhang et al.'s work while providing evidence of CMT's positive impact on compassion for others and the training's reduction in shame, self-criticism, fears of closeness and stress. Specifically, this study found that engaging in exercises such as "imagining a compassionate other" and "a personal compassionate best" improved heart rate variability and increased the levels of oxytocin in the brain, the hormone/chemical associated with human bonding and closeness. Matos and colleagues' study concludes that CMT teaches people to rely on three core principles: 1) *wisdom* about their own vulnerabilities and baggage, 2) *strength and authority* about the control they have over their physical responses and the insight they bring and 3) *compassion commitment*, which is the knowledge that they can be helpful, validating, empathetic and supportive of others.[92] While this study measures the impact of CMT by using

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[91] Qin Zhang, Stella Ting-Toomey, and John G. Oetzel, "Linking Emotion to the Conflict Face-Negotiation Theory: A U.S.–China Investigation of the Mediating Effects of Anger, Compassion, and Guilt in Interpersonal Conflict," *Human Communication Research*, 40, no. 3 (July 2014): 378.
[92] Marcela Matos, Cristiana Duarte, Joana Duarte, José Pinto-Gouveia, Nicola Petrocchi, Jaskaran Basran, and Paul Gilbert, "Psychological and Physiological Effects of Compassionate Mind."

the Compassionate Attributes and Action Scales developed by Gilbert, we can often measure the impact of our compassion simply by the way a conflict occurs and ends, and by the closeness we feel to our conflict partner as a result of our compassionate-focused approach to their suffering.

Finally, research on the effectiveness of CMT shows that different techniques are more helpful for different people. Hoffmann and colleagues, for example, advocate loving-kindness and compassion meditation as ways to interfere with anger responses while acknowledging that meditation doesn't work for everyone because of religious backgrounds and neurobiological factors.[93] Kelly and Dupasquier remind us that our proclivities toward giving compassion are correlated with the experience we had with warmth and attachment early in life. Still, CMT can train us to learn skills we may not have received from early caregivers.[94] Steinmann et al. reassure us that interventions such as attachment-based family therapy and CMT helped people to develop the skills they may not have seen modeled in their earliest relationships from parents or caregivers.[95] We learn from both studies that it is never too late to learn to become more compassionate and that if we discipline ourselves through the interventative steps of CMT, we can learn to overcome our anger responses and change our behavior towards others who need our help.

Training: a Pilot Randomised Controlled Study," *Mindfulness*, 8, no. 6 (December 2017): 1699-1700, 1702, 1708.

[93] Stefan G. Hofmann, Paul Grossman, and Devon E. Hinton, "Loving-kindness and compassion meditation: Potential for psychological intervention," *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31, no. 7 (November 2011): 1130.

[94] Allison C. Kelly and Jessica Dupasquier, "Social safeness mediates the relationship between recalled parental warmth and the capacity for self-compassion and receiving compassion," *Personal and Individual Differences*, 89 (January 2016): 158.

[95] Ravit Steinmann, Inbal Gat, Ofir Nir-Gottlieb, Ben Shahar, and Gary M. Diamond, "Attachment-Based Family Therapy and Individual Emotion-Focused Therapy for Unresolved Anger: Qualitative Analysis of Treatment Outcomes and Change Processes," *Psychotherapy*, 54, no. 3 (September 2017): 281-286.

Intervention: Self-Compassion

We can only truly care for others if we have first taken care of ourselves. Self-compassion is innovative because of the way it asks us to tend to ourselves so that we may bring a more compassionate self into the world. Whereas building self-confidence and developing self-esteem focus on the creation of positive thinking and feeling about the self, self-compassion focuses on the conversion of negative emotions and thoughts into positive and productive cognitions and behaviors. The attention given to the self in this intervention is radical, for it gives us the permission to be accepting of our weaknesses through love. Self-compassion separates the self from the struggle, gifting us the distance necessary to remember that we are not our flaws.[96]

Research into self-compassion, pioneered by Kristin Neff and Christopher Germer, provides evidence that showing self-compassion can have great benefits to the way one treats herself and consequently, to the way an individual interacts with others. Although the theory and its practice introduce seemingly intuitive changes to the way we have been taught to treat ourselves, its methodology is quite innovative in its codified and systematic approach. Self-compassion as its own discipline can seem so intuitive, in fact, that it gets conflated with problem-solving, self-esteem building, and cultivating happiness. Germer reminds us, however, that self-compassion is not meant to eliminate negative emotions, reactions or experiences—after all, no intervention can prevent life (or feelings) from happening. Rather, the goal of self-compassion is to embrace the negative feelings as they come up and replace them with positive ones to create a healthy, balanced and kind relationship with one's self. Self-compassion

[96] Christopher K. Germer, *The mindful path to self-compassion: Freeing yourself from destructive thoughts and emotions.* (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 92-93.

supports this process by orienting us to our potential strengths such as talent, curiosity and initiative and by reminding us that we can choose the way we talk about and to ourselves.[97]

Neff and Germer define self-compassion in the same way they define compassion toward others in that acknowledgment of suffering, desire to alleviate suffering and a plan to help are all necessary. Jeremy's story, told at the start of this chapter, demonstrates the human proclivity toward judgment (*din)* but also shows that a compassionate response is possible. According to Neff and Germer, the journey toward self-compassion is similar to the journey of compassion towards others, as we attempt to make our way from self-criticism toward self-compassion, or to skip the step of self-criticism altogether. The difference between an external compassionate response and compassion shown toward oneself, of course, is in the object of the compassion and in the methodology. Neff breaks down her methodology into three elements, which together comprise the approach:

Self-Kindness vs. Self-judgment:

- Being kind to oneself is an active process, beginning with self-care. Approach one's flaws, failings and suffering with the goal of caring for oneself, not judging oneself or tearing oneself down further. Self-kindness is the opposite of self-judgment.
- Avoid self-judgment both in critical thoughts and speech and replace with kind thoughts about self.
- Engage in self-soothing by responding to difficulties with warmth and understanding.

Common Humanity vs. Isolation:

- See one's own experience as part of larger human experience, not as isolating or non-normative. Thereby gain perspective.
- Recognize that the human experience can be painful and that the pain is natural.
- Avoid a "why me" attitude in recognition of life's imperfect nature.
- See problems or failings as a part of life instead of as something that has "gone wrong."

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[97] Germer and Kristin Neff, "Self-compassion in clinical practice," *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session,* 69, no. 8 (August 2013): 858.

Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification:

- Take a balanced approach to negative emotions so that the emotions are neither subjugated nor overvalued.
- Notice suffering instead of externalizing it. Be with the suffering in a caring way.
- Avoid extremes of suppressing pain or running away from it.
- Understand that mindfulness excludes problem solving. One can acknowledge difficulty without solving it.
- Refute the expectation that life is meant to be perfect.
- Stay mindful that it is one's problems, not oneself, that are abnormal.[98]

Self-compassion asks that we are willing to openly observe our negative thoughts and emotions so that we may address them from a place of mindful awareness. We are not asked to deny our feelings or to ignore our pain. We must embrace the aspects of life which are unpleasant and remember the three categories listed above. The intervention itself is a collection of exercises in applied theory, including guided meditations and techniques to influence change in a person's response to his or her life circumstances.[99] The exercise "How Would You Treat A Friend?" for example, asks the individual to consider how thoughts and words said to oneself might change if the subject of the suffering were a friend, and then to direct those thoughts and words towards the self. Neff also advocates "Taking Care Of the Caregiver," an exercise that uses mindfulness to help the individual nurture oneself while caring for others. Neff also supplies us with breathing practices, body scans and guided meditations that together comprise the clinical methodology used in the self-compassion intervention. Germer advocates using a self-compassion journal to address a particular schema or core belief about oneself and then track

[98] Neff, "Three Components of Self-Compassion." YouTube video, duration 6:19. Posted October 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11U0h0DPu7k.
[99] Neff, "Self-Compassion Exercises," last modified January 2018, http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises.

progress in the areas of self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness in order to break down or change that core belief.

Neff and Germer offer an 8-week course that teaches and trains in the methodology of Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC), and have published scientific results of its efficacy. The course of treatment for participants whose sense of self and interpersonal relationships suffer from criticism, anxious attachment, hostility and a lack of emotional regulation is laid out as follows, as paraphrased from Germer and Neff:

- **Session 1:** *Discovering mindful self-compassion*— psychoeducation and introduction. Noticing the difference between how we speak to ourselves and to others when things go wrong. Learning the mantra "This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is a part of life. May I be kind to myself."
- **Session 2:** *Practicing mindfulness*— exercising our awareness of our suffering and cultivating acceptance of our circumstances.
- **Session 3:** *Practicing loving-kindness meditation*— meditation practice that teach chanting and breathing as a means for self-soothing.
- **Session 4:** *Finding your compassionate voice*— learning to distinguish the "compassionate self" from the "inner critic." Practicing new language and re-learning how to talk to ourselves about our flaws.
- **Session 5:** *Living deeply*— exploring core values and the things that bring meaning to our lives. Getting in touch with the person we wish to be in the world.
- **Session 6:** *Managing difficult emotions*— learning and practicing the "soften-allow-soothe" skill which identifies a difficult emotion, softening its language, allowing it to arise, and soothing it with loving-kindness.
- **Session 7:** *Transforming relationships*— learning to think differently about the relationships that have hurt us or failed, and considering reconnection.
- **Session 8:** *Embracing your life*— learning to savor good things in our lives and qualities about ourselves to liberate ourselves from negativity bias or a lack of perfection in our lives.[100]

The research on the MSC intervention provides evidence to support the idea that self-compassion can be cultivated and integrated into everyday behavior. The study found that greater self-compassion is linked to less pathology, meaning that self-compassion is valuable not

[100] Germer and Neff, "Self-compassion in clinical practice," 861-865.

only because of its potential to diffuse conflict and form human connection, but because of its positive impact on overall mental health. Neff and Germer's study also finds that self-compassion training facilitates resilience by moderating people's reactions to negative and stressful events. Self-compassion does this by deactivating the threat system and activating the caregiving system, leading to decreased levels of cortisol and a greater ability to self-soothe. Overall, the study of the 8-week course in self-compassion training shows that systematic mind training can help us to undo some of the less adaptive skills we have learned and to replace them with supportive internal dialogues. If our internal dialogues ground us in a sense of safety and stability, we can self-soothe in moments of conflict, helping to stabilize ourselves and bring comfort to the others in the conflict who are likely in need of a secure supportive presence.[101]

Fresnics and Borders' study provides evidence that self-compassion leads to better processing of negative emotions and can specifically interrupt the expression of anger and anger rumination. The study also reveals that participants' perspectives on themselves changed for the better once they realized that they could control their responses and that their inner monologues were not fixed.[102] Finally, Wang et al. present findings that link practices of self-compassion to healthy attitude toward self and others, positive psychological functions and well-being, low incidence of depression, and a higher tolerance of moral transgression by self and others. In other words, this study adds support to the idea that the kinder we learn to become to ourselves, the more tolerant we are of our own humanity and deficits, and the kinder and more compassionate we are able to be toward others who share our experiences.[103]

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[101] Ibid., 856-867.
[102] Amanda Fresnics and Ashley Borders, "Angry Rumination Mediates the Unique Associations Between Self-Compassion and Anger and Aggression," *Mindfulness*, 8, no. 3 (June 2017): 554-564.
[103] Xue Wang, Zhansheng Chen, Kai-Tak Poon, Fei Teng, Shenghua Jin, "Self-compassion decreases acceptance of own immoral behaviors," *Personality and Individual Differences*, 106 (February 2017): 332.

Compassion training and especially self-compassion training offer instinctual steps to help us relieve suffering through love and human connection. They are radical not in their methods, but in their assertion that we deserve to feel supported and loved through our times of failing. In chapter 1, I cited Joel 2:13 wherein God tells the people to rend their hearts instead of their garments. It can be easy to engage in a ritual that symbolizes a feeling and to feel rid of the feeling after performing the ritual, such as tearing one's clothes. God knows how hard it is to break down one's barriers and address the feelings beneath. Our study also shows, however, that self-compassion is most effective when the underlying issues associated with our pain are acknowledged. The theories and applied interventions listed in this chapter can help us to uncover our defenses, cope with our barriers, and rend our hearts, especially in situations that call on us to be our most compassionate selves.

CONCLUSION
CREATING A MORAL UNIVERSE THROUGH OUR BEHAVIOR

I conducted this research and wrote this paper as a way to heal myself through the power of personal change. God commands that we try our best to be our best and I believe there is no holier work than confronting the ugly parts of who we are with the intention to improve them. What drove this work for me was not only my own personal change, however. I was motivated by the thought that this project could help others to grow in the same way.

God works hard to become identified with His compassionate quality. His wrath may be fierce and predictable, but eventually, He succeeds so much so that the God we know today is *El Malei Rachamim*, a God who is compassionate in words and deeds. It is my wish that those who read this project walk away with a sense of hope for their own ability to cultivate the same kind of compassionate responsiveness. That in time, the knowledge and training gained from this project cause the quality of compassionate responsiveness to become a part of their name as well.

Responding with compassion to those who hurt us is not always easy, nor it is always possible. Sometimes, the pain cuts too deep that we cannot see the suffering beneath the offense. That's ok. Let this training be a start and if desired, use the additional resources to guide further endeavors in this effort.

Should you find that it is possible to respond to others with compassion, practice that response often. Remember that it is God's wish to recognize each other's pain, tend to it and share in the experience of our common humanity. God doesn't expect perfection, for God knows and lives the same struggle. God does expect us to try, though.

May it be our will that our compassion overcomes our anger. May we make the world a better place through this effort.

APPENDIX I
THE MODERN VS. TRADITIONAL PRAYER BOOKS

The Birnbaum prayer book series can be used to examine the inclusion of this prayer formula both in festival services and those of *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*. According to the Birnbaum *siddur* for *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*, the *Torah* service for festival (*shalosh regalim)* services includes an insert of the Thirteen Attributes, though not the full prayer formula, after the ark is opened and right after *Ki Mitziyon Teitseit Torah*. The text, though limited to "*Adonai, Adonai El Rachum, v'chanun, erech apayim v'rav chesed v'emet; notzeir chesed la'alafim noseh avon v'pesha v'chaa'ah v'nakeh,"* brings us right to the core, to the nucleus of the aforetold stories that portray not only God, but also people, as capable of showing, encouraging and receiving great compassion.[104]

The Birnbaum *machzor* for *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur* cites the same Thirteen Attributes sentence listed above during the *Torah* service for *Rosh HaShanah* morning, after the recitation of *Av Harachamim*, once the ark is opened, and the leader and congregation have recited *"vay'hi bensoah*."[105] Again, the same insert can be found during the *Torah* service for *Yom Kippur*, with the exact same placement, with the exact same structure.[106] Finally, the traditional Ashkenazic Birnbaum *machzor* guides the worshipper through the *Ne'ilah* service where we finally encounter the full prayer formula as quoted in the box above.[107] Later in the High Holiday Birnbaum *machzor,* we recite *"el melech yosheiv…"* all the way through the Thirteen Attributes of God. While this is the most substantial inclusion of the Attributes, it is

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[104] Philip Birnbaum, *Ha-Siddur Hashalem Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1977), 181.
[105] Birnbaum, *Mahzor L'Rosh Hashanah V'Yom Kippur High Holy Day Prayer Book* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1979), 277.
[106] Ibid., 701.
[107] Ibid., 987.

only the first.[108] Soon afterwards, we meet the prayer formula again, complete with *"el melech yosheiv"* all the way through the Thirteen Attributes themselves. Only minutes later, again, reader and congregant are instructed to pray responsively words that discuss themes of glory, oneness, forgiveness and which end with the Thirteen Attributes.[109] Acting as a perennial *chatimah* of sorts, the Thirteen Attributes, as they appear in the Birnbaum *Ne'ilah* service, punctuate our profession of sin. It reads almost as if to temper our self-reflection with reminders of God's qualities and to remind us that we are bound in our mutual responsibility to act the way we describe ourselves. A few pages later, the entire prayer formula returns, again serving as a refrain that cushions our confessions of wrongdoing. We ask God to "*slach lanu*," to pardon us, and then remind God that God once described Himself, and therefore wants to be known, as a compassionate deity.[110] In sum, we recite the Thirteen Attributes 4 times during the *S'lichot* of *Yom Kippur* and 8 times during *Ne'ilah.*

Tachanun is not included in Reform liturgy but in the traditional Sephardi and Kabbalistic rites. Although it cannot be known definitively, the composition and codification of the Thirteen Attributes are thought to have been authored by Amitai, Sehfatai and Yosifia of southern Italy. Others believe that God is first portrayed as merciful in liturgy in *Pardes* in the eleventh century, with God being described as patient in the Geonic period. It is most likely that the prayer formula that highlights the Thirteen Attributes was composed by different authors and compiled from different petitions.[111] Famed liturgist Ismar Elbogin writes that the Sepharad were influenced by the Kabbalists' ritual of the recitation of sin in weekday *shacharit*, and thus

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[108] Ibid., 987-988.
[109] Ibid., 995-997.
[110] Ibid., 1001.
[111] Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 69-70.

introduced daily confession in the section known as *tachanun* of the *Amidah*. The Thirteen Attributes are also recited on the four biblical fast days in Jewish tradition – the seventeenth of tammuz, then ninth of Av, the Third of *Tishrei*, and the tenth of Tevet. On these days, *S'lichot*, in which the Thirteen Attributes appear, is inserted into the sixth benediction of the *Amidah*. This tradition can be traced back to the more medieval view of sin, which was believed to cause disasters and is commemorated today by designating fasting days.[112]

[112] Ibid., 107.

APPENDIX II
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR COMPASSIONATE RESPONSIVENESS

The Center For Compassion And Altrium Research and Education: Compassion Cultivation Training at Stanford University: http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/cct-teacher-certification-program

The Center for Mindful Self-Compassion: www.CenterforMSC.org

Chris Germer's Website: www.chrisgermer.com

Compassion Focused Therapy: www.compassionfocusedtherapy.com

Compassion Institute: https://www.compassioninstitute.com

Compassion Power (for anger management): www.compassionpower.com

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and Marsha Linehan: https://behavioraltech.org

Kristin Neff (Tedx Talks): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvtZBUSplr4

Kristin Neff's Website: http://self-compassion.org

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/Research/cognition-emotion/researchtopics/mindfulness.shtml

Mindful Self-Compassion for Teens: www.mindfulselfcompassionforteens.com

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