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RABBINIC CONCERN FOR ORPHANS

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A TEXTUAL STUDY WITH PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

BY

JOANNA TRACT

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
5759/1999

REFEREES
DR. EDWARD GOLDMAN
RABBI JULIE SCHWARTZ

IN MEMORY OF MY DAD
SAM TRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my thesis advisors: Dr. Edward Goldman and Rabbi Julie Schwartz. These two wonderful people have shared their insightful ideas and been extremely generous with their time. I would also like to thank my beloved husband and best friend, Tony, who has made my time here at HUC-JIR so very special. I would also like to thank my mother, Charlotte, and my sister, Kate, for their unending love and support.

CONTENTS

DIGEST

Rabbis, throughout Jewish history, have been concerned about the יתום, the "orphan." This thesis will analyze the rabbinic concern for orphans both within Jewish literature and in the modern mindset. It will then present several different practical ways that rabbis and other adults can help children who have experienced the death of a parent. The first chapter of this thesis will concern the biblical and midrashic sources which deal with the role of the יתום. The second chapter will focus on an analysis of the sources found within the Talmud and Mishneh Torah which also address this topic.

The third and fourth chapter will analyze the psychological aspects surrounding modern day children who have suffered the death of a parent. More specifically, the third chapter will discuss the developmental stages of children and how these play an important factor in the understanding of children's views about death, grief, mourning, and bereavement. The fourth chapter will consider ways in which children react to grief and a variety of therapeutic and educational opportunities that may be utilized in order to help them through the extremely difficult experience of a death.

The thesis will conclude with a fifth chapter that presents many counseling, ritual and educational opportunities that rabbis may choose to offer in their own congregations in order to help bereaved children.

INTRODUCTION

At the age of fifteen, I was similar to all of my high school friends. I was a good student. I enjoyed participating in extra-curricular activities such as drama and tennis. I looked forward to moments when I could spend time with my friends. I felt as if I was a "normal" teenager. All of this changed on February 2, 1988. On that dreadful day, my father died of a heart attack. He had been diagnosed with heart disease six months earlier. The day that he died was the day before he was scheduled to have by-pass surgery. Unfortunately, that day did not come.

My mother, my younger sister and I were left alone. On February 2, 1988, I learned what it felt like not necessarily to be an adult, but rather, what it felt like no longer to be a child. I learned what it meant to be a mourner. I learned about heartbreak and grief.

Over the next ten years, I formed a very strong relationship with my mother and sister. Together, we learned how to survive the pain and relearned how to relish the joys in life. Also, during that time, I realized that that experience had guided me towards the Rabbinate and had led to my interest in helping other children who had experienced the death of a parent. I began to formulate my ideas and had hoped to address them in my senior

thesis. I wanted to better understand the process of mourning in children. I also wanted to learn how to help children successfully undertake this arduous task.

My interests were primarily based in psychology. I needed also to find a way to root my ideas within Judaism. In order to accomplish this goal, I began to read a variety of sources on the subject of grieving children. One of the books that I found is called The Orphaned Adult by Dr. Marc D. Angel. The author begins his book by describing his mother's difficult struggle with cancer. He continues:

> That Saturday night, I received another call from my father. Mom had died. On Sunday, I again traveled to Seattle, this time for the funeral. Being a rabbi, I participated in the funeral service and delivered a eulogy for Mom. The chapel was filled with relatives and friends. In the course of my eulogy, a thought forced itself into my mind: I am an orphan.[1]

I had always thought that an orphan was a person who had lost both parents. After reading this passage, I realized that according to Angel's definition, I was an orphan even though only one of my parents had died. I decided to research the definition of "orphan" in Webster's dictionary. The first entry stated that an orphan was "a child who had lost both parents through death or less commonly one parent."[2] This finding led to a very powerful realization for me. I was an orphan. I began to struggle with what

this term meant. I neither felt like Little Orphan Annie nor Oliver Twist. I wasn't sitting alone in an orphanage without the love of my family members. However, I knew that these fictitious characters and I had something in common. We all knew what it was like to have a parent die.

The term "orphan" was still foreign to me. I decided to look within Jewish tradition in order to better understand this concept. I remembered that one of the most important lessons in the book of Deuteronomy was to be kind to orphans, widows, and strangers. I researched the term "orphan" within the concordance and I realized that this valuable lesson was not solely contained within the book of Deuteronomy. Many verses are found throughout the entire Tanach that deal with orphans. These verses are also expanded upon within the midrashim, the Talmud, and the Mishneh Torah.

After realizing that a plethora of sources deal with orphans within Jewish literature, I decided to analyze the ideas and laws contained within these sources in order to derive modern day lessons about the plight of orphans and how best to treat them due to the difficulties in their lives.

CHAPTER I

*****

BIBLICAL AND MIDRASHIC SOURCES DEALING WITH ORPHANS

BIBLE

I began my search of Jewish literature by looking at all of the references within the Tanach which deal with the word יתום (*yatom*) or "orphan" and attempted to find a biblical definition of this word. Based on the reading of these forty some verses, it appears as if the definition of the word יתום is vague as it could mean a person who experienced the death of a father and/or a mother. Neither parent is specifically mentioned. This is with the exception of one verse, Lamentations 5:3, where it states "We are become orphans and fatherless, our mothers are like widows."[1] This verse seems to define an orphan as a person whose father had died but whose mother is still alive. The word fatherless in this verse is אין אב which literally means without a father. This is placed in the verse as a parallel construction to the word יתום; therefore, it apparently has the same meaning. In addition, the second part or the b part of the verse states that the mother is still alive and now holds the status of a widow. Therefore, based on the interpretation of this verse, it would seem as if this definition of an orphan as one whose father had died may be the universal biblical definition because all of the other verses are non-specific.

Aside from the vague definition of the word יתום, I noticed another general observation from these verses. The term "orphan" is frequently

written in conjunction with the words אלמנה (widow) and גר (stranger). The implication of this combination, which will later be explicitly mentioned in the midrashim, is that these three different types of people all have a similar plight in life. Examples of the grouping of these three types of people can be found in Deuteronomy 10:17-19, 14:29, 24:17, 24:19-21, and 26:12-13; Jeremiah 7:6 and 22:3; Ezekial 22:7; Zechariah 7:10; Malachi 3:5; and Psalms 94:6 and 146:9. Another popular combination is יתום and אלמנה without the word גר. Examples of the combination of these two types of people can be found in Exodus 22:21-23; Isaiah 1:17, 1:23, 9:16 and 10:2; Jeremiah 49:11; Psalms 68:6 and 109:9; Job 22:9, 24:3, 29:11-13, and 31:16-22; and Lamentations 5:3. One also finds a few references in which the word עני (poor person) occurs with the word יתום. Examples of this combination are found in Isaiah 10:2; Zechariah 7:10; Psalms 82:3; and Job 24:9, 29:12, 31:16-22. More infrequently, references to different Hebrew words for the needy or the oppressed are also combined with these groupings.

The definition of the word יתום and its grouping with other types of disadvantaged people were two general observations that I noticed when I was analyzing these biblical verses. I also noticed that these verses were inundated with legal and emotional implications involving the orphan. First,

I will address the legal implications which are divided into four themes. The first theme is a general prohibition against oppressing the orphan. This commandment may be found in Zechariah 7:10 and Malachi 3:5. Zechariah 7:10 states "do not oppress the widow, or the fatherless, the stranger, or the poor." Malachi 3:5 states "I will be a swift witness against…those who oppress…the widow and fatherless and who turn aside the stranger from his right." These two verses do not contain a specific prohibition; rather, they mention that, in general, it is important for people not to harm orphans because they are already going through a difficult experience in their lives. The intention of this prohibition is that orphans should not have to undergo any more distress than they are already experiencing due to their loss.

The second theme with legal implications is that one should not pervert the judgement of the fatherless. Some of the examples of this commandment are Deuteronomy 24:17 and 27:19; Isaiah 1:17; and Psalm 82:3. Deuteronomy 24:17 states "Thou shalt not pervert the judgement of the stranger, or of the fatherless; nor take a widow's garment as a pledge." Deuteronomy 27:19 states that "Cursed be he that perverts the judgement of the stranger, fatherless, and widow." Isaiah 1:17 says "Learn to do well, seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Finally, Psalm 82:3 states "Judge the cause of the poor and fatherless." All

four of these verses indicate the importance of judging an orphan fairly. They must be treated justly as they are helpless and bereft. One must not take advantage of them.

The third theme deals with land and property rights. Two commandments which are dealt with in the following verses are to leave part of your produce in the fields so that orphans may take of it freely and, secondly, to give part of the tithe of your produce to orphans. Some examples of these laws can be found in Deuteronomy 24:19-21, 14:28-29, and 26:12-13. Deuteronomy 24:19-21 teaches:

> When thou reapest thy harvest in thy field and hast forgotten a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go back to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hands. When thou beatest thy olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterwards, it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

Deuteronomy 14:28-29 declares:

> At the end of three years, thou shalt bring forth in that year, all the tithe of thy produce, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite because he has no part or inheritance with thee and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, who are within thy gates,

shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hand which thou doest.

Deuteronomy 26:12-13 states:
When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thy produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be replete; then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have removed the hallowed things out of my house, and also have given them to the Levite, and to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them.

All three of these quotations teach the lesson that orphans need to be helped physically. They need food and money. When these commandments are followed, an orphan is able to receive the charity that he/she may need in order to survive.

The fourth theme is also related to land and property rights. One finds in Proverbs 23:10 that a person may "not enter the fields of the fatherless." In this case, the property that the orphan does own is specifically guarded against theft and other types of loss. The legal implications behind each of these four themes above are expounded in the Talmud.

In addition to having legal implications, the above mentioned verses also have emotional implications which provide a clear insight into the difficult lives of orphans. The reason that we must follow the legal principles of not perverting the judgement of the orphan and of giving part of one's tithing over to orphans is because they are alone and in need of both emotional and physical support. These and other biblical verses emphasize their neediness. One of the most important lessons, which is a response to the orphan's neediness, is the idea that God is the father of the orphan. God provides, protects, cares for and helps the orphan. God in this role is specifically mentioned in Psalm 68:6 which states "a father of the fatherless and a judge of widows is God in his Holy habitation." God's role as father of the fatherless is also alluded to in many verses. These verses do not specifically state that God becomes the father once the human father has died; rather, they explain that God takes over the fatherly responsibilities when the child becomes an orphan. Three examples of this may be found in Jeremiah 49:11, Exodus 22:21-23, and Deuteronomy 10:18. Jeremiah 49:11 states "leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive." In this verse, God promises to offer protection to the orphan. In the next reference, Exodus 22:21-23, it states:

> You shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If you at all afflict them, and they cry to me, I will surely hear their cry and my anger shall be inflamed, and I will kill you with a sword; then your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

These verses clearly state that one must not hurt any widows or orphans. The punishment for this horrible deed involves suffering the wrath of God. God will be furious and will retaliate by killing the sinner and making his wife a widow and his children orphans. The third example of God taking over the fatherly responsibilities is found in Deuteronomy 10:18 which states that "[God] executes the judgement of the fatherless and widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and raiment." According to this verse, God takes care of the physical needs of the orphan, widow and the stranger.

Based on the idea that God serves as the father of the orphan, one can expound that we should see God as a role model and therefore, we also should provide and protect the orphan by serving as a parental figure. This involves a concept called Imitatio Dei, imitating the divine in our own daily lives. This notion is derived from Sifra Parashat Kedoshim Parashah One--Chapter One Hundred and Ninety Five. This section is a discussion on Leviticus 19:2 which states "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord God, am holy." The analysis of this verse is that just as God is holy, so too, must we,

the people Israel, be holy. The discussion continues by comparing God and the people Israel to a King and his followers. The text teaches "The King has a retinue and what is the task thereof? It is to imitate the King."[2] This example teaches that just as the retinue must follow the actions of the King, likewise, the people Israel must imitate God's holy deeds, in this case, protecting the orphan.

Another set of biblical references also teaches a lesson about the emotional status of the orphan. This lesson is that one should not be mean nor act violently toward orphans. This is an important lesson towards all people, but, how much the more so is it an important lesson when dealing with orphans, since they are already weakened by their situation. This teaching is articulated in Jeremiah 22:3 which states "thus says the Lord: Execute judgement and righteousness, and deliver the robbed out of the hand of the oppressor and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless or the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place." This lesson is also taught not directly, but rather, by listing God's disgust with the deeds of the wicked. God is infuriated with the wicked who "drive away the ass of the fatherless" (Job 24:3), "pluck the fatherless from the breast" (Job 24:9), and "slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless" (Psalm 94:6).

The most touching biblical reference with emotional implications is Job 29:12. This verse states "when the ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, that had none to help him; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." This is a beautiful quotation because it gives emphasis to the plight of the orphan. The orphan is a child without the love and support of anyone in the world. The orphan is alone and afraid. The righteous person in these verses was apparently full of goodness as he took the orphan under his wing and cared for him.

MIDRASH

The references that have been mentioned thus far are the ones that are found in the Hebrew Bible. The general trends, along with the legal and emotional implications of various verses, were analyzed. Now, we turn to the midrashic literature of the Rabbis in order to understand these same issues from the perspective of a later period in history. First, it is imperative that the midrashic definition of the word יתום be understood. Just as was the case in the Bible, the definition of the word יתום in the midrashic literature also seems vague. There does not appear to be any specific reference to an

orphan bereft of his/her father or mother or both. Therefore, I would assume that it is using the same definition of יתום as is found in the Bible. Once again, based on the exception Lamentations 5:3, it seems as if the definition refers to a fatherless child. Also, since the word for orphan is often paired with the word for widow, it would appear as if the Bible were mentioning these two together because both are dealing with the loss of the male breadwinner and their beloved family member.

There are many references with legal implications found within the midrashim; however, there are even more texts with emotional implications. As we will see later, this is the opposite in the Talmud. The sources with legal implications can be divided into five themes. The first two themes were also seen in the Bible; however, the other three themes are new. The first theme is that one must be fair and just with orphans and not cheat them. The first example is from Sifre Piska 281 and is a midrash on Deuteronomy 24:17. The midrash states:

> 'Thou shalt not pervert the justice due to the proselyte, [or the fatherless] (Deuteronomy 24:17): What do I need this (reminder) for? Is it not stated elsewhere, 'Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons'(16:19)? Rather, we learn from there that he who perverts the judgement of a proselyte violates two negative commandments, and if the proselyte is also an orphan, he violates three such commandments.[3]

This midrash teaches that it is forbidden to pervert justice in general; however, if it should happen to be against a proselyte or an orphan, it is an even more serious offense. If one was to pervert justice, that would be the violation of one commandment. If they were also to do it against an orphan proselyte, that would be the violation of two more commandments.

Another midrash emphasizes the importance of justice being accorded to orphans. In Exodus Rabbah 30:13, there is an exposition of Proverbs 29:4 which states:

> 'But the man of separation overthroweth it'—this alludes to the generation of the flood who did not execute justice (they separated themselves from justice). See what it says of them: 'They drive away the ass of the fatherless…they turn the needy out of the way' (Job 24:3).[4]

The main point of this midrash is to explain why the generation of the flood deserved the punishment that they received. According to this source, they were unjust which can be exemplified by the fact that they drove away the ass of the orphan.

The sources that were just given emphasize the importance of being fair to orphans, but, the next example will qualify that lesson by stating that one must not, however, show the orphan any unfair favoritism. This text can be found in Midrash Tehillim Psalm 82:2-3:

> Do you really want to give right judgement? Then 'defend the poor and the fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy' (Psalm 82:3). Here, Scripture does not say 'have mercy on the afflicted and needy,' but 'do justice to the afflicted and needy,' that is make just your judgement of him. Say not, because the poor man is fatherless or afflicted, let what belongs to the rich man be given to him. For 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'(Psalm 24:1) and therefore, in giving judgement, if you unjustly take anything away from a rich man and give it to a poor man, you rob Me, for you give to the poor man what belongs to Me.[5]

A second theme found in the midrashim, which was also found in the biblical verses, involves land and property rights. An example from Sifre Piska 283 reemphasizes and expands upon the importance of leaving sheaves in the field for the orphan. It also adds a new element to the rule. The midrash states:

> Whence do we learn that if one loses a sela (coin) and a poor man finds it and maintains himself with it, Scripture accounts it to the loser as if he had performed a meritorious deed? From the verse, 'it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: (that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hands)' (Deuteronomy 24:19). Is this not a matter of inference from the minor to the major? If one who unintentionally performs a meritorious deed is spoken of by Scripture as having earned merit, how much more so one who performs it intentionally.[6]

In this example, it is stated that if an orphan finds a coin that a person lost by accident, it is as if the loser performed a meritorious deed. The point is then made that if the person lost the coin intentionally, how much the more so would his deed be meritorious. The main lesson taught in this midrash is that it is important to help orphans in any way that is possible. By helping an orphan, one is fulfilling a responsibility. This idea is focused on in the third theme found in the sources with legal implications. Here, unlike in the Bible, the helping of an orphan is understood to be an obligation or responsibility. In Exodus Rabbah 30:13, there is another interpretation of the words from Proverbs 29:4 "but the man of separation overthroweth thee." The midrash states that this verse refers to a "Sage who knows Halachah, Midrash and Haggadah, to whom widows and orphans go to plead their cause, but who excuses himself on the plea: 'I am engaged in my study and have no leisure.' To him God says: 'I regard thee as if thou hadst destroyed the world."[7] The interpretation of this midrash is that the Sage "separated himself from his responsibilities."[8] It was his duty to help the widow and the orphan; however, he shirked this responsibility.

The fourth theme found in the sources with legal implications is that the court pleads the case of an orphan who is unable to conduct his own

business. This lesson is taught in Numbers Rabbah 10:4 which expounds upon Proverbs 31:8. The text says:

> The biblical verse 'Open thy mouth for the dumb' is said in reference to orphans who are unable to conduct their case and who, moreover, have no knowledge of their father's affairs. In such a case, the court pleads their cause for them.[9]

It is clear from this example that the orphan has many needs which must be addressed. The orphan is alone and needs legal representation. In this midrash, the court acts as the legal guardian. In the talmudic references, there will be a plethora of examples of people appointed by the court or by the deceased father prior to his death who will serve as the orphan's guardian. The role of the guardian is also discussed at length in the Talmud.

The fifth theme found in the sources with legal implications addresses the issue of what the orphan has and what the orphan needs. Midrash Tehillim Psalm 136:1 states:

> 'O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever' (Ps. 136:1). R. Joshua ben Levi taught: Give thanks unto the Lord who makes a man pay for his sins out of his property—a rich man pays with his ox; a poor man with his lamb; an orphan, with his egg; a widow, with her hen.[10]

The contents of this midrash are similar to the idea of graduated income tax. God allows each person to pay for his sins according to what he

owns. It is as if each of these people must pay the same percentage of their property. In this way, the ox of the rich man and the egg of the orphan are in the same proportion to each of their property.

All of the above mentioned midrashic references with legal implications also contain emotional implications. These references not only state that people are required to help orphans but they also intimate the emotional reasons behind this duty. These sources suggest that it is essential that people treat orphans with care by feeding them and supporting them in various ways so that they can survive despite their difficult loss. In addition to these sources, many other ones are found in the midrashim which contain emotional implications. The first midrash that will be mentioned elaborates upon an idea which was found in the Bible. This reference, Midrash Tehillim 146:9, deals with the psychological understanding of the combination of גר, אלמנה, and יתום. The midrash teaches:

> 'He upholdeth the fatherless and the widow' (Psalm 146:9). Scripture pairs the stranger with the fatherless and with the widow. Why? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, said: The three of them are lowly and poor.[11]

This midrash states clearly the idea that was underlying the biblical combination of these three types of people. The stranger, the fatherless, and the widow all suffer a similar plight. Their life situation is difficult and they

are in need of some individual support. The stranger is unfamiliar with his surroundings and unsure of his way. The fatherless mourns alone without the physical and emotional support that his father used to provide him. The widow, also in mourning, has lost her spouse and her source of financial support. All three of these people need some special treatment.

Another theme, which was found in the Bible, is also elaborated upon in the midrashim. In the following references, God is described as the father and helper of the fatherless. The first midrash which emphasizes God's role as father of the fatherless is found in Exodus Rabbah 46:5. The text states:

> The orphan is Israel, as it says, 'We are become orphans and fatherless' (Lamentations 5:3). The good and faithful guardian is the Holy One, blessed be He, whom Israel began to call 'Our father,' as it says, 'But now, O Lord, Thou art our father' (Isaiah 64:7).[12]

Another midrash, Exodus Rabbah 30:8, also portrays God as the father of the fatherless. This source also presents a new idea that was not found in the Bible. The midrash states:

> 'Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child' (Exodus 22:21). R. Jose said: Why does God love orphans and widows? Because their eyes are raised to none but Him, as it says, 'A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows' (Psalm 68:6); hence he who robs them is like one who robs God, their father in heaven, who becomes incensed against him, as it says, 'My wrath shall wax hot and I will kill you' (Exodus 22:23).[13]

In this midrash, God is referred to as the father of the fatherless. In addition, it is clearly stated that any harm, in this case robbing, that is done to the orphan is as if it were done directly to God. This is a heavy burden for the sinner to carry. It also carries with it a steep punishment: one's life. On the other hand, God rewards people who fulfil the mitzvah of being kind to orphans. This new idea is found in Exodus Rabbah 45:6 where it is written:

> 'And He [God] said: I will make all My Goodness pass before thee (Psalm 33:19), that is, I will show thee both My attribute of dispensing goodness and My attribute of punishment. 'And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious' (ibid). Then it was that God showed him all the treasures in which the rewards of the righteous are stored away. Moses asked: To whom does all this treasure belong? And He replied: To those who fulfill My commandments. And to whom does this treasure belong? To those who bring up orphans. So it was with every treasure.[14]

In addition to being the father of the fatherless, God is also seen as the helper of the fatherless, which is an idea that is expounded from the Bible. There are two similar sources that portray God in this role. The earlier source is Esther Rabbah 3:5 which states:

> 'Thou [God] hast been the helper of the fatherless' (Psalm 10:14); two orphans were left to him [Esau], namely Remus and Romulus, and Thou [God] gavest permission to a she-wolf to suckle them, and afterwards they arose and built two great tents in Rome.[15]

The second midrash, Midrash Tehillim 10:6, is also very similar to the above mentioned source. The text says:

> When wicked Rome says to Israel: Bring in thy head-tax, and Israel answers: I have fatherless children to feed! The wicked kingdom replies: Hast ever heard it said of me that I would feed thy fatherless children? Go unto the God of Jacob, of whom your Scripture speaks as 'a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows'(Psalm 68:6), and let Him feed thy fatherless children, and let Him provide for you. On behalf of Remus and Romulus, at the death of their mother, God summoned a she-wolf to give suck to them, and it gave suck to them until they grew up and built two huts on the site of Rome. Hence it is said 'thou hast been the helper of the fatherless'(Psalm 10:14).[16]

In both of these examples, the main point is that God protected these two orphans in spite of who they would become in the future. In the case of Remus and Romulus, God summoned the she-wolf to help these distraught orphans, even though God knew that they would grow up and build the wicked kingdom of Rome. The lesson from these midrashim is that orphans are in need and we, like God should always help these poor defenseless children.

Another theme in the midrashic sources with emotional implications is that bringing up an orphan, in this example a female one, is seen as the equivalent of giving birth to him/her. Exodus Rabbah 46:5 states:

> …An orphan was brought up with a guardian that was a good and trustworthy man [who] brought her up and looked after her most carefully. Later he wished to marry her, and when the scribe came to write the marriage document, he asked her: What is your name? To which she replied: So-and-so; but when he asked her: What is the name of your father? She was silent. Whereupon her guardian said to her: Why are you silent? And she replied: Because I know of no other father save you, for he that brings up a child is called a father, and not he that gives birth.[17]

From this source, it is clear that when people take orphans into their house to care for them and raise them, it is understood to be the same as if they were caring for and bringing up the children to whom their wives gave birth. This gives the orphan a sense of security and gives import to the role of the provider.

A final theme found in these midrashic sources is that bringing up orphans is a righteous and humble deed. In addition, harming an orphan is an evil deed. These lessons are seen in a variety of midrashim. In Esther Rabbah 6:1(also similarly in Midrash Tehillim 106:3), one finds:

> 'Happy are they that keep justice, that do righteousness at all times' (Psalm 106:3)….who is it then that does righteousness at all times? You must say that it is he who brings up an orphan in his house…Another explanation: Happy are they that keep justice: this is Mordecai. That do righteousness at all times: in bringing up an orphan in his house.[18]

The lesson that helping an orphan is a deed of humble men is taught in two similar references, Tanhuma Yelammedenu 4:2 and Tanhuma Buber 4:3. The Tanhuma Yelammedenu source teaches:

> Our sages stated in the name of R. Eleazar the son of Pedat: The Holy One, blessed be He, likens Himself to the humblest of men in seven places in the Torah. It is written [in one of these places]: 'For the Lord your God, He is God of Gods, and the Lord of Lords, the great God, the mighty and awful' (Deuteronomy 10:17) and this is followed by the verse: 'He doth execute justice of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger'(Deuteronomy 10:18).[19]

In Tanhuma Yelammedenu 2:18 and Tanhuma Buber 2:26, there are two very similar references which teach the lesson that the harming of orphans is an evil deed. The Tanhuma Yelammedenu source says:

> You find that the evil deeds of the generation of the flood were made explicit, but the evil deeds of the generation of the separation were not made explicit. Job said in reference to the generation of the flood: '...they drive away the ass of the fatherless' (Job 24:2-3)... which implies that whenever they saw an orphan's ass, they would take it from him.[20]

The biblical and midrashic references which deal with orphans that have legal and emotional implications have been analyzed in this chapter of the thesis. The next chapter will deal with the same type of references; however, they will be gathered from the Talmud and the Mishneh Torah. In

this body of literature, a new definition of the word יתום will be seen. Also, the biblical and midrashic themes, along with many new ones, will be discussed.

CHAPTER II

*****

SOURCES FOUND WITHIN THE TALMUD AND MISHNEH TORAH WHICH DEAL WITH ORPHANS

TALMUD

In the biblical and midrashic sources, the word יתום was vaguely defined as a person who had experienced the death of a father. In the Talmud, the definition is explicitly stated. It states that a יתום is primarily defined, for legal purposes, as a minor or child under the age of thirteen who has experienced the death of a father. In Yebamoth 67b, part of the definition is clearly stated:

> Where orphans wish to divide the property of their [deceased] father, Beth din appoints a guardian for [every one of] them, and [each guardian] chooses for his ward a suitable portion. As soon, however, as they reach their majority they are entitled to enter a protest.[1]

This source describes orphans as children whose fathers have died and who still have the status of minor. In the next source, it will be clear that the term "orphan" is also referring to children who have lost solely their father. This source is Ketuboth 52a which states:

> If she (the wife) was taken captive during the lifetime of her husband, and he died afterwards, and her husband was aware of her [captivity], it is the duty of his heirs [יתומין in the Hebrew-literally "orphans"] to ransom her, but if her husband was not aware of her captivity it is not the duty of his heirs [also יתומין] to ransom her.

The definition of an orphan as one who has lost solely a father is also seen in Ketuboth 43a and Pesachim 49a. Ketuboth 43a states that "a widow

is to be maintained out of the estate of [her deceased husband's] orphans." The Pesachim source gives an example of a man whose deeds lead him on the road to ruin and perhaps to death which will leave his wives widowed and his children orphaned. The text continues that "every scholar who feasts much in every place, eventually destroys his home, widows his wife, and orphans his young." These two sources serve as prooftexts for the understanding of the word יתום as meaning a child whose father has died.

The majority of the examples in the Talmud define יתום as a minor. However, a few examples, such as Gittin 50a, refer to an orphan as a person who has attained majority. This passage states:

> Payment from orphans can be recovered only from the poorest land. R. Ahadboi b. Ammi asked: Are the orphans spoken of here minors, or are grown-ups also included?...Abaye the elder stated that the orphans spoken of here mean grown-ups, and *a fortiori* the rule applies to minors.

The reason that יתום is most often defined as a minor who has lost a father is in order to present all of the legal ramifications of a father's death which effect a child. At the time that the Talmud was written, fathers were the sole breadwinners and guardians of the family. If a father with children died, the mother was not thought of as a suitable guardian since she would not be able to sustain the family financially. For this reason, a large body of

laws had to be enacted in order to protect orphans bereft of their fathers. When a mother died, however, few, if any, laws had to be enacted; therefore, the death of a mother is barely mentioned in the Talmud. The Talmud primarily discusses these crucial economic issues and only indirectly refers to the equally important emotional well-being of the child who is left to deal with the death of a father.

From the above examples, it is clear that the word יתום most often refers to a child who has lost a father; however, it has not been mentioned whether this child is a boy or a girl. The word יתום is a masculine word and it most often seems to be talking about the male child whose role after a father's death is different than the role of his sisters. He has different rights to his father's inheritance and he must take on different responsibilities. These differences will be specified in the talmudic sources with legal implications. An example, which refers to the orphans solely as the male children, can be found in Ketuboth 109b which states that "a [dying man] once instructed [those around him] that a palm tree shall be given to his daughter, but the orphans proceeded to divide the estate and gave her no palm tree." There are also instances when both a יתום and a יתומה are mentioned. In this instance, the יתום refers to the boy orphan and the יתומה refers to the girl orphan. An example of this can be found in Ketuboth 51a

where it states that a "boy orphan [יתום] and a girl orphan [יתומה] once came before Raba."

Now that the definition of the word יתום has been discussed, we turn to the talmudic references to orphans which contain legal implications. These sources provide an insight into the rabbis' understanding of the plight of the orphan. They saw it as a legal problem that needed to be addressed. There were children whose father had died and who needed to be supported financially. The orphans' need for emotional support was alluded to by the rabbis; however, it is not explicitly stated until in the Mishneh Torah, a much later work by Maimonides.

The Talmud, expounding upon the general themes in the Bible, presents numerous examples of laws that are stated in order to protect and promote the well being of the orphan. Among the first examples of laws that protect the orphan are ones that deal with the concepts of succession and maintenance. In addition to protecting the male orphan, the laws surrounding these concepts help protect the wives and daughters, the female orphans, of the deceased. The laws dealing with male orphans are extended to the wives and children as they are also in need of financial support. "Succession" is a term that refers to the "devolution of a deceased person's property on his legal heirs."[2] This means that in the case of a man's death, his property goes

to his heirs, first to his sons and if there are no male heirs, then to his daughters.[3] "Maintenance," in the case of a man's death, refers to the "supply of necessaries such as food, medical expenses, raiment, and lodging"[4] given by the male heirs (from their father's estate) to the man's wife and to his daughters. The wife must be taken care of out of the maintenance because she is not the heir of the man's estate. If there are male heirs, the daughters must also be financially taken care of due to the fact that they were not the legal heirs of their father's estate. Many different laws exist dealing with the minute details of these subjects.

The first example that will be presented will emphasize the concept of both succession and maintenance. Ketuboth 108b states:

> If a man dies and leaves sons and daughters, if the estate is large, the sons inherit it and the daughters are maintained [from it], and if the estate is small, the daughters are maintained from it and the sons can go begging.

In this example, it is quite clear that the sons are the legal heirs of the estate of their father; however, they have the responsibility to maintain their sisters. This source also tells us that this responsibility must be fulfilled before they use the estate for their own financial needs. The maintenance of a daughter is also emphasized in Ketuboth 68a which states that "the

daughters are to be maintained and provided for out of the estate of their father… A daughter who is maintained by her brothers…." The male heirs must also maintain the widow of their deceased father. Ketuboth 43a states that "a widow is to be maintained out of the estate of [her deceased husband's] orphans."

The talmudic references that have been mentioned above deal with the themes of maintenance and succession. These laws are mentioned in order to protect the financial status of the orphan. In addition, there are also laws providing advantages and exemptions that protect the property rights of orphans. These talmudic laws expound upon the general principle from Psalm 23:10 which states that one must not enter the fields of an orphan. A wonderful story is found in Berachot 18b, which emphasizes this important lesson of protecting the property of orphans. The story follows:

> Where is the money of the orphans? He replied: Go and you will find it in the case of the millstones. The money at the top and the bottom is mine, that in the middle is the orphans'. He said to him: Why did you do like that? He replied: So that if thieves came, they should take mine, and if the earth destroyed any, it should destroy mine.

Three examples of the advantages that an orphan receives in regards to property rights are found in Gittin 48b, Baba Bathra 32b-33a, and Baba Metzia 70a. The source from Gittin states that "payment from orphans can

be recovered only from lowest grade land." This protects the better property of the orphan from being confiscated. The pages in Baba Bathra also exemplify the advantages of an orphan:

> It was rumored of Raba b. Sharshom that he was using for himself land that belonged to orphans [holding it as a mortgage]. So Abaye sent for him and said to him: Tell me now the main facts of the case. He said: I took over this land from the father of the orphans as a mortgage [for money that he owed me], and he owed me other money besides. When I had had the use of the land for the number of years covered by the mortgage, I said to myself: If I restore the land to the orphans and then tell them that I have still a claim on their father for more money, [I shall have to comply with] the rule of the Rabbis that anyone who claims to recover from orphans must support his claim with an oath. I will therefore keep back the mortgage bond and continue to use the land to the extent of the money still owing to me, for since, if I were to say that I had bought the land, my plea would be accepted, I shall certainly be believed when I say that they owe me money. Said Abaye to him: You could not plead that you have bought the land, because common report says that it belongs to the orphans. Go therefore and restore it to them, and when they become of age claim your debt from them in court.

The third example, Baba Metzia 70a, presents yet another advantage of a minor orphan in regards to property rights. The text states that "money belonging to orphans may be lent on terms that are near to profit and far from loss." A note found on the same page explains this as "the orphans

taking a share of the profit, but none of the loss."[5] The note continues to say that "although this is forbidden to adults as indirect interest, the Rabbis permitted it in the case of orphans who, being unable to earn money themselves, might soon be reduced to penury if not permitted to put out their money on advantageous terms."[6]

An example of an exemption that is provided to orphans is found in Pesachim 31a. In this source, the orphan is not required to follow all of the laws that a person who is not an orphan must follow. The reason for this exemption is to give orphans a helping hand as they are already experiencing the set back of their father's death. The text says:

> If Reuben sold his estate to Simeon with security, and he [Simeon] set it [the money] up as a loan against himself, then Reuben died, and Reuben's creditors came and seized [the estate] from Simeon, whereupon Simeon went and satisfied him with money, it is by right that the children of Reuben can go and say to Simeon, As for us, we [maintain that] our father left [us] movables in your possession, and the movables of orphans are not under lien to a creditor....

Another way to ensure the protection of the property of the orphan was through the administration of an oath to guardians of orphans and people, such as widows, who sought financial payment from them. An oath is a "mode of judicial proof"[7] that is administered in order to protect the best interest of the orphans. An example of this type of oath is seen in Shebuoth

45a, which states that "from assigned property or orphans' property she [the widow] cannot exact payment except on oath."

Another legal way to protect the financial interests of orphans is to appoint guardians who will represent them. This talmudic law expounds upon the principle in Job 29:12 that one must help those with none to help them. The role of the guardian is quite detailed. First of all, according to Yebamoth 67b, "where orphans wish to divide the property of their [deceased] father, Beth Din appoints a guardian for [every one of] them, and [each guardian] chooses for his ward a suitable portion." In this case, and in many others, the Beth Din acts as parent or representative of the orphan as it states in Gittin 37a and Baba Kamma 37a. The Beth Din takes on this role as representatives of the community in order to provide financial support to the orphan.

The detailed job description of the guardian continues in Gittin 52a which teaches:

> It is the duty of the guardian to tithe the produce [of the orphan]...they can sell on their behalf cattle, slaves, male and female, houses, fields and vineyards in order to purchase food with the money...they can make for them a lulav and willow, a sukkah, and fringes...they can buy for them a scroll of the Law, phylacteries, and mezuzoth...they cannot undertake on their behalf to give charity or

redeem captives…the guardian must give an account of his guardianship at its close.

This source presents many aspects of the job description of the guardian. The guardian is the representative of the orphan who has none to represent him. The above text, Gittin 52a, continues that a guardian must not be a woman, slave, nor a minor unless they were chosen by the father of the orphans prior to his death. The reason for this is so that the orphans have the best possible chance of having appointed to them the most competent guardian who would be able to fulfill the above responsibilities. This idea is also stated in Pesachim 49b which says that an am-haaretz is also not permitted to serve as a guardian for an orphan since he would not be the best candidate.

Aside from all of the laws dealing with orphans who have experienced the death of a father, a body of laws also exists dealing with "orphans in their fathers' lifetime." This term is defined in Yebamoth 109a as " a minor given in marriage by her father and then divorced." The reason for this term is that "a father, in accordance with pentateuchal law, is entitled to give his minor daughter in marriage once; therefore, if she becomes divorced, the father has no more right to give her away in marriage."[8] It is as if the woman was an orphan while her father was still alive because she can not benefit from his blessing at a second marriage.

The above mentioned sources provide the main legal themes and laws dealing with orphans which are presented in the Talmud. Many of these laws had their thematic roots in the bibical verses. Some of these themes were also echoed in the midrashim. In addition to these references which have legal implications, the Talmud also contains a wide variety of sources which contain emotional principles. Some of these principles were seen in the Bible and the Midrashim; however, there are also many new themes that are presented in the Talmud.

The first theme that will be mentioned was found in the biblical and midrashic literature. God is a helper of orphans. Due to God's participation in this role, God's gentleness is revealed and available for all humanity to emulate. This reminds us of the importance of Imitatio Dei, the imitation of God, in our daily lives. One finds in Megillah 31a:

> Wherever you find [mentioned in Scripture] the power of the Holy One, blessed be He, you also find his gentleness mentioned. This fact is stated in the Torah, repeated in the Prophets, and stated a third time in the [Sacred] Writings. It is written in the Torah, 'For the Lord your God, he is the God of gods and Lord of lords, and it says immediately afterwards, 'He doth execute justice for the fatherless and widow...'[9]

Another theme found in the sources with emotional implications deals with the importance of bringing an orphan up in our home. This idea was

also presented in the midrashic material. In the first example, Ketuboth 50a expounds Psalm 106:3:

> 'Happy are they that keep justice, that do righteousness at all times.' Is it possible to do righteousness at all times?...R. Samuel b. Nahmani said: This refers to a man who brings up an orphan boy or an orphan girl in his house and enables them to marry.

That example is a clear statement that bringing up an orphan in one's home is a wonderful deed. In Pesachim 101a, although the lesson is not clearly stated, it is inferred that bringing up orphans in one's home was a common practice. In this example, Abaye is speaking and he says that "when he was at the Master's [Rabbah's] house, and he recited kiddush, he would say to us..." The note dealing with this section states that "Abaye was an orphan, and brought up in Rabbah's house."[10]

Another theme found in the Talmud that was also seen in the midrashim states that bringing up an orphan in one's home is equivalent to giving birth to the child. This idea is present in both Sanhedrin 19b and Megillah 13a. The discussion, according to the Sanhedrin text, is as follows:

> 'And the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul whom she bore to Adriel...'[11] Was it then Michal who bore them? Surely it was rather Merab who bore them! But Merab bore and Michal brought them up; therefore, they were called by her name. This teaches thee that

> whoever brings up an orphan in his home, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had begotten him.

This same point is mentioned once again in Sanhedrin 19b and also in Megillah 13a; however, a different text, I Chronicles 4:18, is used. The source, as found on Megillah 13a, is as follows:

> 'And his wife the Jewess bore Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah; and these are the sons of Bithya the daughter of Pharoah whom Mered took'...Bore, but she only brought him [Moses] up?—This tells us that if anyone brings up an orphan boy or girl in his house, the Scripture accounts it as if he had begotten him.

The importance of caring for an orphan is also emphasized in the Talmud by the prevalence of laws dealing with guardians. As was seen in the references with legal implications, the guardians were mandated to be a representative for the orphan. The entire job description was presented. In these examples, the emotional rationale behind some of the actions of the guardians is apparent. In the following examples, the main point, which is emphasized, is that the guardian must act in the best interest of the orphan and if he is not doing so, he must be removed from his position. An example of this lesson can be found in Ketuboth 109b in which a guardian fights for the rights of the orphan in the midst of a property dispute. The guardian and the orphan come out of the dispute victorious. The conclusion of the section

states that "Anyone who appoints a guardian should appoint one like this man who understands how to turn [the scales] in favour of the orphan." The guardian gave the orphan an opportunity to prevail in a situation in which he would have been defeated had he been alone.

In the next reference, Gittin 52b, there is a story that teaches that a guardian who does not work towards the welfare of the orphan must be removed from his job. The source states:

> Amram the dyer was the guardian of [some] orphans. The relatives came to R. Nahman and complained that he was [buying] clothes for himself from the property of the orphans. He said: [He dresses so] in order to command more respect. [But, they said] he eats and drinks out of their [money], as he is not a man of means. I would suggest, [he replied], that he had a valuable find. [But, they said,] he is spoiling [their property]. He said: Bring evidence that he is spoiling it and I will remove him. For R. Huna our colleague said in the name of Rab: If a guardian spoils the orphans' property we remove him. For it has been stated: If a guardian spoils the property, R. Huna says in the name of Rab that we remove him, while the School of Shilah says that we do not remove him. The law, however, is that we remove him.

Guardians and people who are able to bring an orphan into their home are not the only ones who are commanded to provide care and support for the bereft child. In addition, although they too are going through a difficult

time, widows are required to provide some care to the orphans. As it is written in Ketuboth 96a:

> R. Jose b. Hanina ruled: All manner of work which a wife must render to her husband a widow must render to the orphans with the exception of serving one's drinks, making ready one's bed and washing one's face, hands or feet. [According to note 12, these are intimate services to which only a husband is entitled.]

Another set of talmudic references with emotional implications teaches the lesson that the property of an orphan is equivalent to the property of the Sanctuary. The property of the orphan should be treated with the same respect and sanctity as the property of the Temple. An example of this teaching can be found in Gittin 52a which states:

> Certain orphans who boarded with an old woman had a cow which she took and sold. The relatives appealed to R. Nahman saying, What business had she to sell it? He said to them: We learnt: 'If orphans board with a householder.' [But they said, the cow] is now worth more [than she sold it for]. [He replied] it has become more valuable in the possession of the purchaser. But, they said, they have not yet received the money. If so, he replied, we can apply the rule of R. Hanilai b. Idi following Samuel. For R. Hanilai b. Idi said in the name of Samuel that the property of orphans is on the same footing as that of the Sanctuary, and is not transferred save on the payment of money.

Another theme found in the sources with emotional implications presents a new definition of the word תום. This new definition is seen in

Avodah Zarah 13b and Ketuboth 17b. Instead of meaning a child who has experienced the death of a parent, in the following example, Chullin 111b, תם is defined as ignorant.

> R. Huna and R. Hiyya b. Ashi were once sitting, one on the one side of the ferry of Sura and the other on the other side; one was served with fish on a [meat] plate which he ate with milk sauce; the other was served with figs and grapes in the course of the meal which he ate without reciting a benediction over them. One called out to the other [תם] Ignoramus, would your master do so? The other called back, Ignoramous, would your master do so?

The implication behind this rendering is that a תם lacks essential knowledge and experience which makes him unaware of many of the Jewish laws. In that example, it was a "term of gentle rebuke;"[12] however, by using the word תם, it gives the reader a larger picture of the status of the orphan in society. The orphan is regarded as one who is helpless and in need of guidance. This guidance, as was seen in the above examples, is provided for by the community.

A final theme found in the talmudic sources with emotional implications involves the communal obligations of the orphan. They are seen as not totally exempt nor totally helpless when it comes to providing for the well being of the whole community. They are required to provide some help

for the good of the whole; however, they do benefit from certain advantages in this area. These responsibilities and exemptions are seen in Baba Bathra 8a.

> R. Papa levied an impost for the digging of a new well on orphans. [Said] R. Shesheth the son of R. Idi to R. Papa: Perhaps no water will be found there? He replied: I will collect the money from them in any case. If water is found, well and good, and if not, I will refund them the money. Rab Judah said: All must contribute to the building of doors in the town gates [for protection], even orphans...All must contribute to the digging of a well [for a public fountain]...All are required to contribute to the repair of the town walls, including orphans...for the horse-guard and for the keeper of the armoury even orphans have to contribute...the general principle is that even orphans have to contribute for any public service from which they derive benefit.

The major themes dealing with orphans that are present in the Bible, midrashim and Talmud have now been mentioned. These sources are filled with both legal and emotional implications. The legal implications revolve around the concepts of justice and the protection of the property of the orphan. The emotional themes have presented the reasons behind the legal sources. Orphans no longer have the financial support of their father. They are left alone and need the support and care of the community.

MISHNEH TORAH

These themes which are found in the Talmud are also summarized in the Mishneh Torah, which is a work from the twelfth century by Maimonides. I have chosen to present the sources in the Mishneh Torah in order to see how the themes were both repeated and developed. I will begin by following the same format as above and sharing the sources with both legal and emotional implications. Most of the themes will be ones that have been repeated from the Talmud. Then, I will present the most elaborate reference to orphans which is found in the Mishneh Torah. This reference is the main reason why I wanted to research this text. From this reference, it will be clear that the plight of the orphan was seen differently by Maimonides and assumedly his contemporaries than by the writers of the Bible, Midrash, and Talmud. I believe that this change has survived until the present day. Once again, we will cover this topic at the end of the chapter.

All of the sources with legal implications that will be mentioned from the Mishneh Torah contain themes that were found in the Talmud. The first set of sources deals with the themes of maintenance and succession. These laws are mostly contained in the first treatise of the Book of Women. In chapter eighteen of this section of the book, the laws which govern the definition of maintenance of the widow by the heirs are presented. It states at

the beginning of the chapter that "a widow is entitled to her maintenance out of the property of the heirs throughout the time of her widowhood, until she collects her ketubah."[13] This general theme was drawn from the Talmud; however, in this chapter of the Mishneh Torah, it is further elaborated. For example, in chapter 18:2, it states "just as the widow is entitled to maintenance out of her husband's estate after his death, so is she entitled to garments, utensils, living quarters, …and services of the slaves and bondswomen."[14] The general theme of maintaining the widow out of her husband's estate after his death was seen in the Talmud; however, here, in the Mishneh Torah, the specifics of the maintenance is presented.

The maintenance of the daughters of the deceased is also discussed in the first treatise of the Book of Women. It states in chapter nineteen that "the daughter is entitled to fixed maintenance, garments, and dwelling out of her father's estate, in the same manner as the widow."[15] The laws dealing with the maintenance of daughters are also further elaborated in the Mishneh Torah.

The talmudic theme of succession is also found in this same chapter of the Book of Women where it states that "if a man dies leaving both sons and daughters, the sons inherit all of the property and must maintain their sisters until they come of age or are espoused."[16] The details of this division of the

estate, drawing from the general talmudic sources, are summarized in chapter nineteen and twenty.

The importance of the protection of an orphan's property is also discussed in the Mishneh Torah. In chapter twenty of the first treatise of the Book of Women, it presents the talmudic rule that "he who demands payment out of the estate of orphans is paid only out of land of inferior quality, and must swear an oath."[17] The property rights of the orphan are also addressed in the Book of Acquisition. One example found in the ninth chapter of the first treatise states:

> If orphans buy produce and draw it but have not yet paid the money and meanwhile the price of the produce goes up, then the vendor cannot retract...If, however, the price of the produce goes down the orphans cannot retract because that would be to their disadvantage, for when they need to buy produce they will not find anyone willing to sell to them.[18]

The role of vows and oaths in the lives of orphans is also discussed in the Mishneh Torah. It states in chapter eighteen of the first treatise of the Book of Women that "the rule is that whosoever comes to collect from the property of orphans may do so only upon swearing an oath."[19] Another example of the use of oaths in the lives of orphans is found in the fourth treatise of the Book of Acquisition. One finds in chapter nine:

> All guardians appointed by the court over orphans.... must take an oath...because whatever [he] takes from the property of the owner is rightfully due them, inasmuch as they carry on the business and do the work. The Sages have provided therefore that they should be compelled to submit an oath, even when the claim against them is based only on a possibility, in order that they perform all their work equitably and faithfully.[20]

The responsibilities of the guardian as mentioned in the above example are also discussed in other sections of the Mishneh Torah. The fourth chapter of the third treatise of the Book of Agriculture states that "guardians of orphans are empowered to set aside heave offering from the orphans' estate."[21] This aspect of the guardians' job was already presented in the Talmud.

The status of a daughter being an orphan in her father's lifetime was mentioned in the Talmud. This idea was also included in the Mishneh Torah. The eleventh chapter of the second treatise of the Book of Women says that "a minor female given in marriage by her father, who became a widow or was divorced while still a minor, is accounted the same as an orphan, even if her father is still living."[22]

There are also a variety of sources from the Mishneh Torah which contain emotional implications. Once again, many of these themes are derived or restated from the Talmud. The first theme was seen in the

Talmud: the property of an orphan is equal to the property of the Sanctuary. The ninth chapter of the first treatise of the Book of Acquisition states that "the estates of orphans are governed by the same law as property of the Temple."[23] This is a reminder that the property of the orphan must be continually cared for by others due to the fact that the orphan would be unable to care for it alone.

Another prevalent theme involves protecting the orphan from financial loss. An example of this principle can be found in the sixth chapter of the third treatise of the Book of Offerings which states:

> If tithe of cattle belonging to orphans was slaughtered when it was blemished, it is permissible to sell it in ordinary fashion: because of the duty to guard the orphan against loss, the Sages have made no decree against it.[24]

Two other ways to help orphans financially is to provide them with charity if they are in need and not to assess them for charity for others who are also experiencing a difficult time in their lives. Examples of giving charity to orphans can be seen before their weddings. The seventh chapter of the second treatise of the Book of Agriculture says that "if an orphan is about to be wed, one must first rent a house for him, spread a bed for him, and provide all his furnishings, and only then have him marry a wife."[25] The eighth chapter of the same treatise states that before her marriage " a woman

should be given not less than the weight of six and a quarter denar of pure silver. If the alms treasury has enough funds available, she should be given according to her dignity."[26] In regards to the second way to help an orphan financially, the seventh chapter of the same treatise teaches that "orphans may not be assessed for charity, not even for the ransom of captives, not even if they have much money."[27]

Another idea, which is rooted in the Talmud, is that the widow has a responsibility to help the orphan. The Mishneh Torah seems to state the same talmudic law in the eighteenth chapter of the first treatise of the Book of Women. This text states that "the same services that a wife is obliged to perform for her husband, a widow is obligated to perform for the orphans, except serving the cup, spreading the couch, and washing his face, hands, and feet."[28]

One finds some new ideas that were not previously mentioned in the Talmud. The first one can be found in the thirteenth chapter of the first treatise of the Book of Acquisition, which states that there is a "principle that the rights of ordinary people should not exceed the rights of orphans."[29] This alludes to the already difficult position of orphans and the necessity of the community to recognize their experience and provide them with some advantages.

The second new idea, which states that it is a mitzvah to help the orphan, does not seem to be present in the Talmud, however, it is seen in the midrashim. The tenth chapter of the second treatise of the Book of Agriculture says:

> The Sages have commanded that one should have poor men and orphans as members of the household rather than bondsmen, for it is better for him to employ the former, so that children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob might benefit from his possessions rather than children of Ham, seeing that he who multiplies bondmen multiplies sin and iniquity every day in the world, whereas if poor people are members of his household, he adds to merits and fulfillment of commandments every hour.[30]

A third new idea involves an emotional component that was not seen in the Talmud. The twelfth chapter of the third treatise of the Book of Acquisition teaches that "if one sells to orphans, the law of preemption, a 'right available to the owner of land over the abutting land of his neighbor, when the latter is sold'[31], does not apply because the *good and right*[32] that kindness to these [orphans] effects is greater than that which would redound to the adjacent owner."[33] This is the first time that it says that helping the orphan is a good and right thing to do. In this case, it is not the right thing to do legally, it is the right thing to do morally. This example alludes to a

change in how the orphan is seen in society. The orphan seems no longer to be seen as a financial responsibility, but rather, as a child with feelings. This viewpoint will now be confirmed as we read the most elaborate reference to orphans in the Mishneh Torah.

In the tenth section of the sixth chapter of the ethical laws in the Book of Knowledge, Maimonides presents his most, and the most to date, detailed reference to orphans. The source teaches:

> A man ought to be especially heedful of his behavior towards widows and orphans, for their souls are exceedingly depressed and their spirits low. Even if they are wealthy, even if they are the widow and orphan of a king, we are specifically enjoined concerning them, as it is said "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child" (Ex. 22:21). How are we to conduct ourselves towards them? One must not speak to them otherwise than tenderly. One must show them unvarying courtesy; not hurt them physically with hard toil, nor wound their feelings with harsh speech. One must take greater care of their property than of one's own. Whoever irritates them, provokes them to anger, pains them, tyrannizes over them, or causes them loss of money, is guilty of a transgression, and still more so, if one beats them or curses them. Though no stripes are inflicted for this transgression, its punishment is explicitly set forth in the Torah (in the following terms) "My wrath shall wax hot, and I will slay you with the sword" (Ex. 22:23). He who created the world by His word made a covenant with widows and orphans that when they will cry out because of

> violence, they will be answered; as it is said, "If thou afflict them in any wise—for if they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry" (Ex. 22:22). This only applies to cases where a person afflicts them for his own ends. But if a teacher punishes orphan children in order to teach them Torah or a trade, or lead them in the right way—this is permissible. And yet he should not treat them like others but make a distinction in their favor. He should guide them gently, with the utmost tenderness and courtesy, whether they are bereft of a father or a mother, as it is said "For the Lord will plead their cause" (Prov. 22:23). To what age are they to be regarded in these respects as orphans? Till they reach the age when they no longer need an adult on whom they depend to train them and care for them, and when each of them can provide for all his wants, like other grown-up persons.[34]

In this text, he emphasizes the underlying emotional and psychological issues that plague orphans as opposed to focusing on the mostly legal issues which are found in the Talmud. Maimonides explains that orphans have feelings. They are sad and upset that a parent has died. It is not merely an issue of financial well-being because it states that even wealthy orphans need emotional support. This support is provided by dealing with the orphan with care and tenderness. One must not hurt an orphan in any way and if they do, there is a serious punishment. In addition to outlining the proper way to care for an orphan, Rambam presents a new definition of a יתום. In this text, an orphan is a child who has lost either/both

a mother and a father. In addition, the age when a person is no longer considered an orphan is not set in stone; rather, it is based on when the individual orphans are able to take care of themselves.

Rambam's new understanding about orphans is based in earlier Jewish texts. The plight of the orphan so eloquently stated in Hilchot Deot lies under the surface meaning of the biblical, midrashic, and talmudic texts. The importance of helping the orphan has always been of utmost importance in Jewish literature; however, the definition of who are orphans and the best way to help them has changed over the course of time. Maimonides' change in focus and definition of an orphan focuses on the psychological and emotional needs of the orphan as opposed to the financial ones. Rambam's discussion represents a later understanding of the plight of orphans which is still present today.

Based on all of the texts and changes that have been seen, it is clear that we today have a responsibility to help any child who has had one or both parents die. Unfortunately, this is not a rare occurrence. In fact, "one child in twenty will have a parent die before the child's senior year of high school."[35] These children have more than simply financial needs; they have emotional ones as well. Both rabbis and other caring adults can help these grieving children. I will provide important information for all adults to

understand when dealing with orphans; however, in this thesis, I will be primarily focusing on the role of the rabbi in the life of the orphan. As rabbis, we can fulfill the mitzvah of helping orphans by giving pastoral care to these children. How can we do this? First of all, we must learn about children's views about death. We must also learn about the developmental stages of children and how these play a key role in their bereavement. We should discuss the purpose and role of the funeral in the life of a grieving child. We should analyze different types of post-death therapies. We should learn about death education within the schools. After we as rabbis better understand these issues, we can use and teach these ideas in order to help the members of our congregations.

CHAPTER III

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CHILDREN'S VIEWS ABOUT DEATH

In this chapter, an analysis of children's views about death and grief will be presented. This analysis will provide information that rabbis and other caring adults need to understand in order to help children who are mourning the loss of a parent or another significant loved one. Before children's specific views about death are discussed, it is essential that the role of death in modern American society be presented. This wider view has significant effects on children's views about death and the ways that they grieve. In addition, different theories of developmental psychology must also be presented in order to truly understand these issues. The chapter will continue with ways that adults can provide support to children immediately after the death, at the funeral and through their grief.

HISTORY

During the past one hundred years, the role of death in the greater American society has changed dramatically. These "American values about death have even come to predominate in Jewish society at the expense of traditional Jewish values."[1] These new views about death and dying have had a profound effect on the mourning process of both adults and children. In the early 1900s, death was very familiar to people of all ages; however, over the course of the twentieth century, it has become somewhat of a taboo subject. Now, Americans are often distant and remote from death. This is

evidenced by many different phenomena. First of all, there has been a change in location of deaths from the home to institutional settings. At the beginning of the century, "eighty percent of deaths in America took place in the home."[2] Today, the same percentage, "eighty percent of deaths occur in institutional settings such as hospitals and nursing homes."[3] When death took place in the home, "the whole family, including the children, sat vigil by the person's bedside."[4] Now, due to the institutionalization of the dying person and the geographical distance of many of the relatives, the family is more often not present at the moment of the person's death.[5]

Another phenomena involves the preparations for the funeral. In the early 1900s, after a death, "the family would wash and prepare the body for burial. Friends and family would build a coffin and set it up in the parlor of the home. A death bell would toll the age of the deceased notifying people so they could participate in final rites. There would be wakes with open coffins. Children would keep vigil with the parents, often sleeping in the same room as the corpse."[6] Today, there are professionals at funeral homes that take care of all of these details.[7] Death, therefore, is no longer in the "realm of the family."[8] The family members "are no longer participants, rather, they become observers."[9] Death is "no longer an ordinary aspect of life."[10]

Another issue is the attempt by the funeral home to "tastefully conceal death."[11] There has been a switch from "simple coffins to elaborate caskets."[12] The casket, which used to remain open, is now often closed.[13] When the casket is open, observers will notice that the funeral home has "cosmetically restored the corpse."[14] A final element of the funeral that seems to deny the feelings of a sense of finality about the death is that the "casket is unburied when the mourners leave. The burial will be completed after the funeral by the cemetery crew."[15]

Another example of the changing role of death in American society can be seen in the statistics about death. Over the past one hundred years, there has been an increase in the average age of death from forty-seven to seventy-six.[16] In the early 1900s, there had been many cases of stillborn births and mothers dying in childbirth. At that time, "over half of the reported deaths were of children under the age of fourteen."[17] Also, there was a higher death rate in the beginning of the century. In 1900, seventeen out of one thousand people died in a year as opposed to nine out of one thousand today.[18] These statistics teach that in the early part of the century, "there were more frequent encounters with the death of loved ones, both young and old, which emphasized that death was natural and inevitable."[19]

During the past one hundred years, although death seemingly has become a taboo subject, a new trend, which began in the 1960s, is attempting to discuss and understand death based on research. This new trend has "broken some of the silence"[20] imposed upon the society. In 1959, Herman Feifel's book, The Meaning of Death, became the first work to discuss death openly.[21] In 1969, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross wrote Death and Dying, which added to the general discussion. These pioneers in death studies opened up a new dialogue and paved the way for many more research opportunities. These pioneering efforts have made it possible to study children's reactions to death. New studies and therapies are regularly being presented. The popularization of this information has begun to make death less of a taboo subject.

DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES

The majority of the research primarily discusses the integral role of the developmental level of children in their understanding of death. Researchers believe that children do not have the mature understanding of concepts that adults possess. With regard to the concept of death, children "initially conceive of it as partial, reversible, and avoidable. As their understanding matures, they eventually arrive at the concept of death as final and inevitable."[22] In order to understand how children come to develop this

mature comprehension of death, adults must understand "two theories of development—namely, those devised by psychologists Erik Erikson and Jean Piaget."[23] These two psychologists each presented a stage-based theoretical framework of child development. Erikson devised stages of psychosocial development and Piaget focused on cognitive development.[24] At each of their respective stages, children appear to have distinctive attitudes and behaviors.[25] The works of these two men do not specifically address children's conceptions about death; however, their works serve as guidelines for later researchers to understand what children are struggling with at each stage of development. In addition, more specifically, these later researchers "found that comprehension of death develops in stages related to the levels of cognitive development identified by Piaget."[26]

Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development present later researchers with a framework for understanding the evolution of the concept of death in children. According to Erikson's model, "there are five[27] stages of Preadult Psychosocial Development that occur successively through the child's life."[28] Each of these five stages of development "involves a turning point, or crisis, that requires a response from the individual."[29] There are two possible "alternative orientations or attitudes towards life" that could be adopted,[30] however, only one of them is the desired outcome containing the

corresponding desired virtue.[31] Once the issue is resolved, the child progresses to the next stage.

Erikson's five stages of preadult psychosocial development are basic trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, and identity vs. role confusion. When developmental psychologists provide ages for these stages, they are to serve as general guidelines because "not all children develop at the same pace or in the same ways."[32] The first stage, basic trust vs. mistrust, occurs approximately until age two.[33] In this first stage, infants "establish a general attitude towards the self and the world based on the quality of care"[34] they receive from their parents or guardians. The desired outcome for the infant at this stage is a sense of hope or a "belief that their primal wishes will be attained."[35] The second stage, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, occurs between the ages of two and four.[36] During this stage, the toddler begins a battle for autonomy with the desired result being free will and the opposing and undesired result being shame, self-doubt and loss of self-esteem.[37] The third stage, initiative vs. guilt, generally occurs between the ages of five and eight.[38] In this psychosocial stage, children attempt to initiate actions without the fear of punishment or guilt. The desired outcome is a sense of purpose.[39] The fourth stage, industry vs. inferiority, occurs approximately between the ages of

eight and twelve.[40] During this stage of development, school age children attempt to master skills. The desired outcome is competence as opposed to feelings of inferiority.[41] The fifth and final stage of preadult psychosocial development according to Erikson is identity vs. role confusion, which generally occurs between the ages of twelve and eighteen.[42] During this stage, adolescents must decide who they are and will be.[43] Adolescents must create their own identity, taking into account the identities of those around them.[44] They may either emulate or attempt to be different than the other people with whom they interact. The desired outcome of this stage is fidelity or the "ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of the inevitable contradictions and confusions of value systems."[45]

Applying Erikson's model, later researchers explain that "depending on a child's psychosocial stage, certain aspects of death are likely to be more important than others."[46] For example, if an infant were to lose a parent while he/she were in the first stage of development, "it would be a major blow to the child's development of trust in the environment."[47] Children in the second stage, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, are attempting to gain a sense of free will. They are in constant conflict with adults.[48] When a parent dies, toddlers at this stage may not be able to resolve it with the desired outcome. They may doubt themselves and their ability to be autonomous.

Preschool children in stage three, initiative vs. guilt, "desire to find their own purpose and direction, yet they are also concerned about how parents perceive their tentative efforts to express initiative and individuality."[49] Children at this stage are struggling to convert their "egocentric orientation into one of a socially integrated self. This transition may involve situations that induce feelings of guilt."[50] For example, "a child who has fantasies of doing away with a parent—expressed perhaps by the frustrated scream, "I wish you were dead!"—may feel guilt about having such thoughts."[51] Children struggling with the fourth stage, industry vs. inferiority, are striving to attain success and not failure. Children need encouragement and support when working to master new skills. The death of a parent at this stage effects the child's sense of accomplishment and pride. Adolescents attempting to form an identity in the fifth stage are strongly affected by the death of a parent or a close friend. It disrupts their journey towards the formation of an identity. They question who they are and what their future holds for them. Adolescents are trying to "establish a bridge between their years of childhood and dependency and their years of adulthood and independence."[52] The death of a parent during this time confuses their journey from integration to separation.[53] When adolescents' friends die, it threatens all of their hopes and dreams for the future.[54]

As seen above, the psychosocial developmental theory of Erik Erikson sheds some light on the development of the death concept in children. The majority of the research on this topic, however, is based on Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Piaget focused on "the cognitive transformations that occur during childhood. In his view, an individual's mode of understanding the world changes, in sequential stages, from infancy to adulthood. Accordingly, four different periods of cognitive, or intellectual, development can be distinguished. These developmental stages, sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational,"[55] are based on the characteristic ways in which individuals organize their experience of the world. The approximate age range of the first developmental period, sensorimotor, is from birth to age two (infant/toddler).[56] This stage is "characterized by the development of the coordination of the senses and the understanding of object constancy."[57] Object Constancy is the "acknowledgement of the existence of an object as relatively enduring."[58] This is needed in order for the child to understand the concept of disappearance, destruction, or death of the object.[59] The preoperational stage "covers the period roughly from two-to-seven years of age."[60] This stage is also subdivided into ages two to four (toddler/preschool) and four to seven (preschool/elementary).[61] During this

stage, "symbolic thinking and language with which to understand the world are developed."[62] The concrete operational period occurs approximately between the ages of seven and twelve (older school age).[63] Children at this stage can "understand notions of classification, think in terms of specifics, and consider two aspects of a situation simultaneously."[64] They can "apply logical abilities to understand concrete ideas and think both forward and backward."[65] The formal operational stage, "which begins at about age twelve (adolescence), involves the attainment of skills in abstract reasoning and hypothesis generation."[66]

As mentioned above, Piaget did not address the topic of children's concepts of death in his work; however, later researchers used developmental theory as a framework for their own understanding of this subject. In 1948, Maria Nagy identified her own three major developmental stages among children ages three to ten years.[67] According to her research, children at each of these respective stages had similar views about death. This study emphasized the importance of the ongoing development of children and their concepts about death; however, it did not use Piaget's model. In 1973, Gerald Koocher conducted a study in which he tested child participants to determine which of Piaget's stages they fit into and then asked each child four questions about death. He concluded that the

"Piagetian stages predicted a child's concept level."[68] In 1979, these "findings received corroboration in a study done by Helen Swain."[69] Other studies were also conducted based on Piaget's theory by White, Elsom, and Prawat in 1978 and Kane in 1979.

Each of these clinical studies, while only a few of the ones present in this still emerging and developing field, provide new information about the development of children's concept of death from an immature understanding to a mature one in relation to Piaget's stages. Later developmental psychologists and clergy expanded upon this body of information by combining Piaget's theoretical framework and the above clinical research with their own observations and collected data. The outcome of this combined effort is a set of general guidelines explaining children's views about death at each stage of their development: infant/toddler, preschool, elementary, older school age, and adolescence. Although we will now solely take into account the chronological age and developmental stage of the child, we must also realize that other external factors such as the details of the death, the child's relationship to the deceased, and the availability of outside sources of comfort also affect the child's view of death.[70]

Infants do not have an understanding of the abstract concept of death; however, they have a pre-idea of death.[71] This primitive idea of death

involves the concepts of being, nonbeing, awake and asleep.[72] These are concepts that infants are struggling with at this stage in their development. One of their tasks is to differentiate themselves from the environment.[73] In addition, they are striving to understand the concepts of "disappear" and "return" in relation to both people and things.[74] Infants are anxious when a parent temporarily disappears and is unavailable to them.[75] Infants can not differentiate between this type of separation or unavailability and death.[76]

Toddlers and preschool children do not understand the abstract concept of death; however, they know that it is something negative.[77] They believe that death is reversible[78] and temporary.[79] This idea is introduced and supported by cartoons in which the characters die and immediately return to life.[80] Children at this developmental stage do not understand the term "forever"[81] as they have little sense of time.[82] These children understand death to be like sleeping.[83] They envision the deceased as having the same physical needs as those of the living such as the need for food and warmth.[84]

Preschool and elementary school children have a better understanding of time[85] and they begin to see death as a real threat but only for other people.[86] They do not believe that death will happen to them.[87] At this stage in their development, children see "death as a taker or something violent that comes and gets you."[88] They personify death as a "bogeyman, skeleton, or

ghost."[89] Another characteristic of children at this stage is their belief in magical thinking. Children engaging in magical thinking connect events, either thoughts or actions, which have no real connection.[90] For example, "a girl was bouncing a ball and her grandmother said, "You'll be the death of me." Soon afterwards, the grandmother died. The girl then believed that her grandmother's death was her fault."[91] Magical thinking gives children the false impression that if they are careful with their thoughts and actions, they can avoid death. Magical thinking also may make the child feel guilty if a death does occur.[92]

Older school age children, by about the age of nine,[93] grasp larger ideas; therefore, they understand the concepts of "universality, irreversibility, nonfunctionality and causality in regards to death."[94] They understand that death happens to everyone including themselves.[95] Death is final.[96] Death is an end to bodily life.[97] They also understand that there are both natural and accidental causes of death.[98] Children at this developmental stage no longer view death as a person;[99] however, they still possess some remnants of magical thinking.[100] Older school age children have a particularly difficult time with the death of a parent because it makes them different from their peers at a time in their life when they are desperately working to be accepted.[101]

Adolescents are in the process of forming their adult identities.[102] When a death occurs, they are often expected to handle it as adults; however, they are still adolescents.[103] They are still learning how to be an adult. Now, they have the added burden of learning how to mourn like one. This is a difficult position for adolescents because they are trying to move away from adults and gain independence;[104] however, in grief, they must turn towards adults as models for the proper way of mourning.[105] At this stage in their life, adolescents are also experiencing physical changes during puberty; therefore, they realize that they are aging and their own death is possible.[106] This realization causes teenagers to fear that their goals and dreams will be unfulfilled[107] and causes them to lose faith in the future.[108] They philosophize about the meaning of life[109] and they wrestle with their now overturned belief system.[110] Some adolescents, "not fully in touch with the reality of death, become fascinated by it."[111] They even "challenge death by taking risks such as doing drugs or driving fast."[112] Finally, as in the case with the older school age children, grieving adolescents feel different than their peers and fear rejection from them.[113]

DISCUSSING DEATH WITH CHILDREN

Now that the background history and developmental information have been presented, the second section of this chapter will discuss ways to support children immediately after the death, during the funeral and in their grief. Immediately after a death occurs, adults must inform the children about the situation; however, despite all of the new research about children's views about death, there is still the sense that death is a taboo subject with children within the family unit. Parents often attempt to avoid the subject with their children in order to protect them from the reality of death.[114] Avoiding the issue of death with children can be seen in the following example of a dialogue between a funeral director and a young boy:

> I was sitting in the office of my family funeral home in Brooklyn when a nine year old boy walked in. "My uncle out there," he said, pointing to the viewing room, "Why did he die?" I was really taken aback. "I think you'd better talk to your parents about that," I said. But as I sat there watching him walk out, I was filled with sympathy for the child. No one had told him what happened. I realized that his parents probably didn't know what to say, and I thought—how alone that boy must feel![115]

Parents may even lie to their children or use euphemistic language in order to deny the reality of the situation.[116] For example:

> Every day, on the way to day care, when four year old Rebecca and her mother drove past the church, Rebecca became frightened and began to cry. She was unable to verbalize her fear. In a session with a counselor, it was discovered that her father's funeral had been held in that church. Having not attended the funeral or graveside service, Rebecca believed what she had been told: her father was still "asleep" in that church. She was angry at God for keeping her daddy there and for not letting him wake up and come home.[117]

In addition to wanting to protect their children from the reality of the death, parents are often so involved with their own grief that they neglect to guide their children through this difficult time.[118] One other reason that parents avoid the subject is because they do not know "how to acknowledge the child's grief."[119]

Despite parents' efforts to hide the reality of a death from their children, they are fully "aware that something is wrong even if they do not understand."[120] There are strangers and visitors in the home.[121] The deceased is no longer present.[122] People are crying. The child overhears people talking about the death.[123] This confusion causes the child's imagination to run wild.[124] An example of a child knowing that there is a problem can be seen in the following dialogue between a funeral director and a new widow:

> Jimmy's mother sat in my office making arrangements for her husband's funeral. "What have you said to your children?" I asked

her. "The two oldest know that their father died. I don't think I'll tell the little guy." "Is he at home right now?" "Yes." "Are the bigger kids all upset?" "Of course." "What do you think little Jimmy thinks is going on?" "He keeps asking about his daddy." "What do you say?" "I tell him he's still very sick." "Is everyone acting the same way they did when he was sick?" "No, the older ones are really upset....do you think the little guy knows?"[125]

When children know that something is wrong and the family is avoiding the issue, "it robs the child of the ability to express grief and heal. It also causes the issue to go underground and surface in destructive ways."[126] In addition, the child experiences high levels of anxiety and confusion.[127] In order to avoid these reactions and provide a chance for healthy grieving, it is essential that a parent or another adult talk to the child about what has happened. It is important for this adult to know when, what and how to tell the child about the death. With regard to determining the time to tell children about the death, it is crucial that they be told immediately[128] by a loving adult before they hear it from another source.[129] In the case of a person who is ill, it is important to inform children of the person's condition so the death will not be a surprise. A quote from the book How do we tell the children? elucidates this point:

> For an adult who watched grandpa slowly deteriorate, the experience had continuity—sick, sicker, sickest and the death was not unexpected. But for the child who did not know how sick grandpa was, the death had the shocking effect of a sudden tragedy. If the child had been given straightforward reports---grandpa is getting worse, he's not getting any better, he may die---he or she will be a bit more prepared when the crisis comes.[130]

The parent must also know what to tell the child about the death. First of all, they should tell the truth. Parents must be open and honest with their children.[131] Many times, parents "keep secrets because they think that it will be too difficult for the children to handle the truth."[132] However, if the children learn the truth from another source, "it will hurt their relationship with their parents."[133] Although the parent should be honest and tell the truth, it is believed that they should only provide basic,[134] not too detailed,[135] age-appropriate[136] facts. In addition to being honest about these facts surrounding the death, parents should also "be honest about their feelings so that the child can be part of the emotional life of the family."[137]

Parents should also explain the opposite terms "life" and "death" to children.[138] "Dancing and singing is life. When that is all gone, that is what dead is."[139] Death is when "the body has stopped working and it will not do any of the things that it used to do."[140] When people are dead, "they can't

feel anything."[141] It is also important that parents explain that death is not as it appears on television when they see that the "Coyote chasing the Road Runner gets mashed, maimed, and flattened only to pop up and start racing around again."[142] Death, rather, is final.[143] It is preferable that children be taught these lessons about loss and death prior to personally experiencing the death of a loved one;[144] however, if this education has not been offered to the child, it is essential that it be presented soon after the death has occurred.

In addition to explaining these terms to children, it is important to use them as opposed to using euphemistic language in an attempt to hide the reality of the death. Many times, instead of telling a child that the person died, parents will say that the deceased "went on a trip, is in a deep sleep,"[145] "passed away, has gone away, or has left us."[146] These terms are confusing and don't provide the child with the opportunity to accept the finality of the death.[147]

Religious terms used to explain the death also confuse children. For example, children ask, "how can my loved one be in both heaven and in the ground?"[148] In order to avoid this type of confusion, it is essential that children "understand the concept of death from a biological point of view before they attempt to understand death from the viewpoint of religion."[149] Once children understand the facts surrounding death, a parent's sincere

religious convictions shared with the child may provide that child with some much needed comfort.[150]

In addition to knowing "when" and "what" to tell children about the death, parents must know "how" to tell them that their loved one has died. The manner in which the news of the death is presented to the child can be even more important than that which is said about it.[151] The child should be told in a gentle loving manner and environment.[152] Prior to telling children that a death has occurred, it is important that parents "give a preliminary remark in order for the children to brace themselves."[153] For example, one could say "I have something very sad to tell you."[154] Children must also be told about the death in language they can understand.[155] If not, the child's mind will be full of misconceptions and confusion. An example of such a misunderstanding follows:

> One little boy was given a detailed explanation of how Grandpa's body would be brought from the hospital to the funeral home. Then he was asked, "Do you want to go to the funeral home to see Grandpa? "No," the child replied. "How come?" "I don't want to see Grandpa without arms, legs and a head." "Where did you ever get such an idea?" "Well, when Mommy gives me a bath, she tells me to wash my arms, legs and head, and then wash my body, and Daddy said they were bringing Grandpa's body to the funeral home.[156]

A funeral director, accustomed to working with children once wrote, "you don't speak in German if you're talking to a Frenchman. When talking to children, you have to stoop down or put them on your lap, look into their eyes, and talk to them in their language."[157]

After telling children that a loved one has died, parents should "reassure them that the family will remain together and that their needs will be fulfilled."[158] Parents can provide their children with hugs and kisses in order to reinforce these points.[159] It is also important that the parent and child promise to maintain open communication between them.[160] The parent must constantly provide the child with the opportunity to ask questions and clear up their misconceptions.[161]

THE FUNERAL

After the parent tells the child about the death, the next situation that the parent faces is whether or not to allow the child to attend the funeral. There are many factors that must be taken into account when making this decision. A parent should begin by analyzing the reasons why the child should or should not attend. Then, if after careful consideration, the parent decides to allow the child to attend the funeral, the parent should prepare him/her in order to make the experience somewhat easier.

The most important factor that must be taken into account when making the decision as to whether or not the child should attend the funeral is the age and developmental stage of the child. Rabbi Earl Grollman, an expert in the field, states that children over the age of seven years old should be encouraged to attend the funeral.[162] These older children, who are not given the opportunity to attend the funeral, will "feel excluded and will be deprived of the chance to share their feelings and understand what happened to the body."[163] Younger children, on the other hand, with certain individual exceptions, should stay at home.[164]

There have been numerous studies dealing with the after effects of funeral attendance on children. A study by Worden states that "participation in funerals by children did not lead to later behavioral or emotional difficulties; on the contrary, most of the children felt positive about their involvement."[165] Other studies have concluded that children who were not given the opportunity to attend the funeral, later resented it.[166] They were upset that they were unable to say goodbye and they felt excluded.[167] Other works stated that by not allowing children to attend a funeral, it may "interfere with their acceptance of reality and their integration of grief."[168] Based on all of this research, it appears as if it is more beneficial for children to attend a funeral than for them to stay home. If, however, the funeral is

expected to be a frightening scene[169] with hysterical outbursts,[170] it is better that the child refrain from attending the funeral.

The reasons that it is beneficial for older child to attend the funeral are many of the same reasons why adults find merit in the funeral ceremony. Funerals provide the mourner with the chance to deal with the reality of the loss, say goodbye and honor the deceased, seek solace and comfort from other family members, have a purpose defined by the rituals, and fulfill one's familial responsibilities.

Funerals help a child "accept the reality of death as separation."[171] Children need this "confirmation of the reality of death more than adults."[172] They need the memory of the body or the casket at the funeral.[173] If they do not have this memory, they may have "trouble believing that their loved one has died."[174]

Funerals give children a chance to say goodbye to their loved ones. It is important for children to be given the chance to say what they need to say to the deceased[175] in order to attain some sense of closure.[176] Saying these words to the body of the deceased has more meaning than saying it alone.[177] In addition to verbalizing one's good-byes, the child could make a good-bye gift such as a drawing or special letter and place it in the casket of the

deceased.[178] Funerals also provide the child with an opportunity to bring honor to the life of the deceased[179] and pay them respect.[180]

Funerals also provide an atmosphere in which grieving children can be comforted by their friends and other family members. Socially, funerals are for the living, not the deceased.[181] They provide an "opportunity to connect with family and friends and offer love and support to one another."[182] Children need to feel a sense of belonging at this most difficult time.[183] The funeral gives mourners a chance to "express sadness with tears and crying in an often repressive society."[184]

At this time of confusion and chaos, mourners need a sense of order and structure. The rituals of the funeral provide this stability to both grieving adults and children. Rituals give the mourners a purpose. They have certain things that they need to accomplish during this chaotic time.[185] In addition, "preparation for a funeral is an outlet for the mourner's grief and anxiety."[186] Rituals and the meanings behind them also give people an opportunity to begin to "resolve their feelings about the death."[187]

Another way to find a sense of stability in such a chaotic time is to continue to fulfil one's familial responsibilities. This reinforces the feelings of belonging within the family. It is important to let the child "participate actively within the family. Parents should explain that they need the

children's help and should ask them what they want to do. They could answer the doorbell or do errands."[188] This opportunity makes the children feel included in what is going on in the life of the family. It also shows the children that "they can handle difficult emotions and help others."[189]

These different factors and reasons seem to point to the fact that in many situations it is beneficial for the child to attend the funeral. However, prior to the funeral, it is essential that the child receive much needed preparation. The sights at a funeral home and cemetery and the format of the funeral ceremony itself must be explained and described to the child prior to the event in order to ease the child's fears and anxieties.[190] If this discussion can be done prior to the crisis of the death of a loved one, this is extremely helpful. In addition to this discussion, children could attend the funeral of a person with whom they were not emotionally involved. This would serve as an educational experience.[191] Whether it is before or during a crisis situation, children must understand what they will see at the funeral home and in the cemetery. Adults must explain to the children about "the size of the room at the funeral home, who will be attending, how they will be dressed, how long the children will have to stay there, when they must leave and why,"[192] the role and appearance of the casket, the procession to the cemetery, and the grave.

Children must also understand what will occur during the funeral ceremony. It is important that children understand that "the funeral is a special service just for the deceased and that it has been arranged for that person's friends and family members to say good-bye to him or her."[193] It is also important that the children understand the specific customs and traditions of a Jewish funeral. Adults must explain that a Jewish funeral service "consists of short prayers (sometimes sung by a Cantor), followed by the eulogy (a speech telling about the deceased), usually delivered by the Rabbi, followed by closing prayers."[194] Other Jewish customs surrounding a funeral, such as *keriah* and *shiva*, should also be explained to the children. *Keriah* is a ritual in which "family members rend their clothes as a symbol of their grief for the tear which has been made in their life."[195] *Shiva* is the "observance of the seven days of intensive mourning"[196] including and following the day of burial. Friends and family spend these days with the mourners within their home sharing meals, moments of prayer, and memories of the deceased.

Once children are informed about the funeral home, cemetery, and funeral service, children should be able to process the information and decide whether or not they want to go. Children should never be forced to attend a funeral against their will.[197] In addition, parents who ask if their

children want to attend the funeral should not "sway their children's decisions with their words and tone of voice."[198] If given the choice, "few children will totally refuse to attend. If they do, it is essential that an adult talk to them in order to get to the root of their fears."[199] If children do decide to attend the funeral, they may become upset or afraid once they are there; therefore, it is important that an emotionally stable familiar adult stays with the children at the funeral and holds their hands.[200]

GRIEF, BEREAVEMENT, AND MOURNING

After the funeral, children must be given a chance to grieve the loss of their loved one. In order to understand children's reactions, it is essential that we understand the basic terms "grief," "bereavement" and "mourning." It is also important to realize that these terms are understood differently when referring to an adult in comparison to a child.

There are a number of different definitions of the terms "grief," "bereavement" and "mourning." Some of the primary ones will be presented. According to J. William Worden, grief is an individual's "personal experience, thoughts, and feelings associated with the death."[201] Another similar definition of grief is "the psychological and physiological reactions one experiences."[202] Bereavement is understood to be the "status of an individual who has suffered a loss and who may be experiencing

psychological stress."[203] Bereavement involves "negotiating and renegotiating the meaning of the loss over time."[204] It focuses upon adapting to the loss.[205] Mourning, according to Worden, is the "process that people go through on their way to adaptation."[206] Sigmund Freud's definition of mourning, is an "adaptive process whereby there is a withdrawal of feelings by the survivor from the mental image of the lost loved one."[207] The psychoanalytic definition is "the mental work following the loss of a love object through death."[208] The goals of the mourning process are to "complete the emotional relationship with the deceased and refocus life energies toward the future."[209]

Now that some basic definitions have been provided, we turn to the question of whether or not children have the ability to mourn the death of a loved one. The answer to this question depends on the definition of the word mourning. Does the process of mourning solely necessitate feelings of separation and loss or does it also include an understanding of the finality of death? One side of the controversy believes that "there are feelings of grief and mourning even in very young children when they are separated from their mothers."[210] For example:

> If a child (i.e. two years old) is taken from his mother's care, when he is so possessively and passionately attached to her, it is indeed as if his world has been shattered. His intense need of her is unsatisfied,

> and the frustration and longing may send him frantic with grief. He is as overwhelmed as any adult who has lost a beloved person by death. To this child, with his lack of understanding and complete inability to tolerate frustration, it is really as if his mother had died. He does not know death, but only absence, and if the only person who can satisfy his imperative need is absent, she might as well be dead.[211]

The other side of the controversy is that "mourning requires a mature awareness regarding the finality of death;"[212] therefore, a person can not mourn until later in life. If people must first understand the finality of death before they have the ability to mourn, a question arises: "At what age does the child truly comprehend this issue of finality?" thereby giving him the opportunity to mourn the loss. This question will now be addressed based on the previously mentioned developmental theories and the following studies which present "lengthy and often contradictory debates as to when children acquire this capacity."[213]

Much of the literature dealing with children's ability to mourn has been based on psychoanalysis, drawing heavily upon the works of Sigmund Freud.[214] In the early twentieth century, he explained his concept of the work of mourning in psychoanalytic terms in his book Mourning and Melancholia.[215] He proposed:

> The mourner attempts to deny the death of a loved one as long as possible. When reality necessitates acceptance, there is some anxiety

> regarding the individual's own mortality, and this anxiety facilitates adjustment to the loss. Freud termed this gradual withdrawal of affective energy 'decathexes of the internal representation of the lost love object.[216]

Freud believed that children are not able to mourn according to the above definition because they are unable to truly comprehend death.[217] Freud believed that young children can not distinguish between temporary absence and permanent loss.[218] Also, infants and toddlers have not yet grasped the concept of object constancy. Therefore, they do not understand that a person or an object still exists even if they are unable to see it.[219] The reason for this phenomenon is that young children "lack a mental representation of the person or thing that can be evoked in its absence."[220] Another reason that young children are unable to truly comprehend death is because they are trying to arrive at a separate identity independent of their parents.[221] If they are unable to realize that they are separate, they will be unable to decathect from the deceased.

About older children, Freud, in his work On Narcissism, stated that they also "do not have the ability to comprehend death and therefore mourn in an appropriate and useful manner."[222] He wrote

> Such cardinal characteristics of children as the belief in the omnipotence of wishes, the sense of helplessness and dread of abandonment, the preoccupation with causality, and egocentrism

prevent children from completing the work of mourning, causing them instead to turn to magical thinking that death can be defied.[223]

In the 1930s and 1940s, separate research projects done by Maria Nagy, Sylvia Anthony and Gregory Rochlin all supported the belief that "children have clear perceptions of death related phenomenon early in their lives; however, they do not have a mature framework in which to interpret them."[224]

In the 1960s, Bowlby's research concluded that "infants as young as six months old experience grief reactions resembling those seen in adults."[225] Years later, Bowlby "retreated and stated that the mourning of children was different than the mourning of adults due to children's immaturity and inability to grasp realistically the meaning of death."[226] Three other prominent views were espoused in the 1960s based on the research of Anna Freud, Furman and Wolfenstein. Anna Freud disagreed with the research of Bowlby from the 1960s. She did not believe that "very young children have the psychological apparatus necessary for true mourning."[227] Rather, she believed that "reactions in the first years are simpler, based on the pleasure-pain principle, and are due to the children's realization that they were separated from their usual caretaker."[228] Furman believed:

> The presence of the following skills and characteristics are necessary before mourning can take place: understanding concept of death, object constancy, a healthy availability of feeling not being excessively defended against, flexible personality structure, knowledge that one's physical and emotional survival needs will be met and acceptance of expressions of feeling by others in the environment. These characteristics can occur by the age of four.[229]

Wolfenstein believed that if "mourning involves the task of detaching from the attachment object and recognizing oneself as a separate entity, then young children can't mourn because of their limitations in terms of reality testing, object constancy, and the fact that they use regressive coping mechanisms to deal with loss and readily find substitute objects."[230] Wolfenstein concluded that "children can't mourn until there is a complete identity formation, which occurs at the end of adolescence when the person is fully differentiated."[231] Nagerea, a researcher in the early 1970s, agreed with Wolfenstein's conclusions.

There are many different views about mourning in childhood supplied by the above mentioned research. The consensus seems to be that children do feel the negative affects of the death of a loved one and they do experience some type of age-appropriate mourning. However, this mourning, although painful, does not appear to be equivalent to the

mourning of adults who truly understand the finality of death. Webb, in her book Helping Bereaved Children, states that "instead of experiencing mourning, children experience grief reactions after a loss but without the mature understanding of the finality or meaning of the loss."[232] Therefore, instead of asking "Can children mourn?" perhaps, we should ask "Can children grieve?" The answer to that question is "Yes," however the grief of children is not identical to that of adults. As an aside, among children, there is some research that the grief of male children may be somewhat different than the grief of female children. However, these possible gender differences will not be discussed because, at this present time, within the literature, the topic is infrequently mentioned, seemingly unsubstantive and relatively inconclusive.

Instead of experiencing the immediate intense distress that adults feel after the death of a loved one, children "are likely at first to deny the death, then grieve intermittently for many years."[233] Whereas "adults feel grief more intensely and compactly, children grieve more sporadically and without the intensity of the early grief."[234] There are times when children's grief is not visible because they can not sustain strong emotions for such long periods of time; therefore, they focus on happier things.[235] As it states in Therese Rando's book, Grief, Dying, and Death:

> The child may initially respond as if nothing of importance has happened. At another time, he may show periods of intense upset and indicate that he is missing the deceased. At other times he may carry on happily playing as if nothing has happened.[236]

As children enter each new developmental stage, they will have a better cognitive understanding of the death and begin to view it differently. They "will revisit their earlier losses and re-grieve them because as they age, dimensions of their loss will become more clearly understood."[237] This is especially true for children who have had a parent die.

> They will be in touch with their grief especially when big events occur in their lives such as gaining the honor roll, earning a merit badge, winning a swimming competition, going to camp, and having a first date. This process will continue even as they advance into adulthood, reminding them of what they have lost as they approach graduation from high school and college, marriage, the birth of babies, new promotions---all moments they would have wanted to share with the person who died when they were young.[238]

In what other ways does the grief of a child mourning the loss of a parent differ from the grief of a child mourning the loss of another loved one? The child's relationship with the deceased parent becomes frozen in time. As time passes, children begin to feel as if they do not know their parent anymore. They begin to wonder what it would be like if the parent

were alive.[239] This is also the case for children who were very young and didn't know their parent when they died. Children in this position constantly ask questions like: "What was my parent like?" and "Would he have liked me?"[240]

Children mourning the loss of a parent also feel abandoned.[241] The death of a parent is "one of the greatest crises for the child. The child's world is no longer secure."[242] This is a time in a child's life when extra love and attention are needed; however, there is now only one parent to provide those essential things.[243] The surviving parent must attempt to provide for the child and mourn the loss of a spouse simultaneously.[244] The situation becomes more difficult when, instead of turning to the surviving parent for a sense of security, the child often views the remaining parent as the next in line to die.[245]

The general characteristics of the grief of adults, children, and children who have experienced the death of a parent have been presented. Now, in order to understand "how" children grieve the death of a loved one, it is essential that the stages and tasks of grief be presented. Two pioneers in this field, Lindemann and Kubler-Ross, have each proposed a set of stages that a person journeys through during their grief. In the 1940s, Lindemann stated that there are three stages of grief: "shock and disbelief, acute

mourning, and resolution of the grief process."[246] In 1969, Kubler-Ross presented "five stages that an individual undergoes when coping with imminent death. These have also been used to identify the grief of individuals after a loss."[247] Her five stages are: "denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance."[248] According to modern research, many of these stages are now understood to be reactions to as opposed to stages of grief. In addition, instead of stages, the modern focus is upon the tasks of grief, the work that individuals must complete in order to "successfully resolve their loss."[249] In 1944, Lindemann "offered his conceptualization of the basic tasks of grief, and it is still valid, as shown by its incorporation into contemporary researchers' definitions of the grief process."[250] He believed that grief work consisted of three tasks:

1. Emancipation for the bondage of the deceased
2. Readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing
3. Formation of new relationships.[251]

In 1982, Worden presented his own version of the tasks of mourning based upon Lindemann's conceptualization. Worden stated that there are four tasks:

1. To accept the reality of the loss
2. To experience the pain of grief
3. To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing

4. To withdraw emotional energy and reinvest it in another relationship.[252]

Worden believed that the "bereaved must grapple with and bring some degree of resolution to each of these tasks as part of their overall adaptation to the loss. The tasks do not have to be accomplished in any specific order and they can be revisited and reworked by the grieving person over time."[253]

Worden stated that "these same tasks of grieving that apply to the adult obviously apply to the child; however, these tasks must be understood and modified in terms of the child's cognitive, personal, social, and emotional development."[254] Worden believed that the first task, accepting the reality of the loss, would be difficult for children because they do not have a full "understanding of the finality and irreversibility of death."[255] He explains that children will, however, be able to complete this task as they develop cognitively.[256] In the second task, "mourners must work through a variety of emotions associated with the loss. Children need to approach this task gradually and in ways that do not overwhelm their coping capacity, which is generally less well developed than that of adults."[257] For children, the third task, that of "adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing, goes on over time."[258] Children must adapt to the loss of a family member and the major disruptions that it causes within the life of the

family.[259] As children grow older, "they also realize in new ways what has been lost; therefore their mourning becomes revived at important life events."[260] The fourth task "facing the bereaved is not to give up the relationship with the deceased, but to find a new and appropriate place for the dead in their emotional lives---one that enables them to go on living effectively in the world."[261] Children "seek not only an understanding of the meaning of the death but also a sense of who this now-dead parent is in their lives. While the loss of a parent is permanent and unchanging, the process is not; it is part of the child's ongoing experience."[262] The child must learn how to "place the relationship in a new perspective rather than to separate from the deceased."[263]

Later researchers, Fox, Woltfelt, and Baker et al., each "applied Worden's 'task of mourning' concept to children and suggested various numbers of mourning tasks. Sandra Fox "stated that for grieving children to make their grief "good grief," they must accomplish the following tasks:"[264]

1. Understanding that the deceased is no longer alive and will never again be part of the child's daily life
2. Grieving by working through the various feelings that are part of mourning
3. Commemorating the deceased in order to honor or keep alive their memory[265]
4. Going on with a basic understanding of death and having worked

through many of the feelings.[266]

Woltfelt identified six tasks of grieving children:

1. To experience and express outside of oneself the reality of the death
2. To move toward pain of the loss while being nurtured physically, emotionally, and spiritually
3. To learn to convert the relationship with one who has died from one of interactive presence to one of appropriate memory
4. To develop a new self identity based on a life without the person who has died
5. To relate the experience of the death to a context of meaning
6. To experience a continued supportive and stabilizing adult presence in future years.[267]

Baker et al. "conceptualized the grief process in bereaved children as a series of psychological tasks that must be accomplished over time."[268] These tasks were divided into "early, middle and late phases."[269] In the early phase, tasks include "gaining an understanding of what has happened, while employing self protective mechanisms to guard against the full emotional impact of the loss."[270] The tasks of the middle phase include "accepting and reworking the loss and bearing the intense psychological pain involved."[271] The late tasks "include the consolidation of the child's identity and a

resumption of developmental progress on age appropriate developmental issues."[272]

Worden believes that "although the conceptualizations of Fox, Woltfelt and Baker et al. are interesting, he does not believe that these additional tasks need to be included. He believes that the issues concerning bereaved children can be subsumed under his four tasks of adult mourning; however, as seen in the above discussion about his tasks, he modified them in order to take into account the age and developmental level of the child."[273]

In this chapter, we have learned about the concept of death and the experience of grief from the eyes of a child. Children understand the meaning of death and encounter feelings of grief based on their developmental level. Parents and other caring adults must realize what emotional and cognitive factors children are dealing with at each level of their development. Thus adults will be able to communicate effectively with children about the subject of death when it arises. Parents must also be able to support their children during the grief that ensues after the death of their loved one. We now turn to the next chapter in which children's reactions to grief will be analyzed. Different types of therapy, counseling and educational opportunities, which adults could use in order to help bereaved children, will be presented there as well.

CHAPTER IV

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CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO DEATH AND GRIEF ALONG WITH THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

During the grief process, both adults and children experience many different emotional responses. These reactions are powerful and varied. Experts in the field of psychology generally regard these reactions as healthy unless they are exhibited to the extreme. In order to assess the healthiness of the reaction to the death, it is necessary to look at the intensity of the symptoms rather than the symptoms themselves.[1] Once adults realize that these moderate reactions are normal, it is of utmost importance that they help grieving children find a way to identify and express these emotions and feelings.[2] This chapter will analyze children's various reactions to grief and provide many therapies to assist with the expression of their feelings after the death of a loved one. This chapter will also, however, include a proactive educational model entitled "death education," which can be offered to children in order to give them some advance preparation for a death.

GRIEF REACTIONS

Denial, anger, guilt, regret, depression, fear, regression, somatic reactions, hyperactivity, dependency, withdrawal, preoccupation and identification with the deceased, replacement, substitution, and idealization of the deceased are all possible grief reactions that a child could exhibit after the death of a loved one. The following descriptions of these reactions are a synthesis of the writings of several different authors. Each of these reactions

will be defined along with the ways in which an adult can deal with these responses.

Denial, along with anger, guilt, depression, and fear, is one of the most common feelings by children reacting to a death.[3] The death of a loved one is "too difficult for children to comprehend or accept;"[4] therefore, they often pretend that it did not happen and continue on as if the person were still alive.[5] Denial "provides children with periods of reprieve from the overwhelming sense of loss and abandonment"[6] resulting from the death. An example of denial would be when a child repetitively leaves the room when the deceased's name is mentioned. In this instance, the child is trying to "block out the memory of the deceased."[7] "Forced with more than they can handle, children often step out of the real world into one they find more acceptable."[8] These outlets include their imagination, television, and books. Adults can help prevent children from denying the actuality of the death by "bringing them back to reality and not letting them delude themselves into believing things that are not true."[9] This can be done by talking to children honestly, sharing one's own feelings and being open and flexible during the discussions.[10]

Anger is also a common emotional response to the death of a loved one. Children "feel out of control, impotent, and helpless."[11] They do not

know how to deal with these powerful and confusing emotions because, unlike most adults, children are unable to "identify, articulate, and understand these feelings."[12] Children become "overwhelmed and their anger creates energy which must be released."[13] It is essential that adults help children find safe and acceptable outlets for this healthy response such as talking or using a variety of therapies (i.e. hitting a punching bag) which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. If the anger is not released, there is the potential for "depression, internalized anger and explosive acts."[14] This will be both harmful to the child and to other people who become targets of their anger.

Anger is an emotion that is directed outward. Guilt is a similar feeling; however, it differs in that it is directed inward.[15] Children often feel guilty when they have acted out as a result of not maintaining control over their own anger.[16] Children also experience feelings of guilt when they believe that their own actions led to the death of their loved one. As mentioned in the third chapter, this is called magical thinking. Children feel somehow responsible for the death due to their actions or thoughts. They are "used to bad things happening because they were naughty; therefore, they look for their bad deed which must have led to the death."[17]

Another response that is related to guilt is regret. Regret is felt over "something that you wish you had done to prevent the death."[18] Regret is "often linked with guilt making guilt last longer and making it more powerful than it deserves to be."[19] When children inwardly are struggling with feelings of regret and guilt about the death, they may exhibit such outward behaviors as "aggressiveness, unsociability, despondence, lack of interest and attention in class and forgetfulness of ordinary concerns."[20] In other instances, due to children's feelings of responsibility for the death, they will seem "depressed and act unusually good. Also, their guilt and regret may lead them to blame others for the death."[21] In order to relieve these feelings in children, adults must "give them time to vent their anxieties, tell them that they did not cause the death, explain that wishing/magical thinking does not make things happen, and confirm that death is not linked with sin and punishment."[22]

Another reaction to the death of a loved one is depression. The signs of depression are "poor concentration, withdrawal, not eating/too much eating, poor sleep habits, less interest in looks, constant sadness, more crying, hiding angry feelings, listening to sad music, less interest in what is happening to others, and lower grades in school."[23] Both depression following the loss of a loved one and clinical depression have these

symptoms; however, in depression resulting from grief, "there is not the loss of self-esteem commonly found in most clinical depressions."[24] As with the above mentioned responses to grief, depression following the loss of a loved one is a normal reaction and crying is a normal response.[25] However, an adult should begin to show concern if the child is depressed for more than two weeks or the responses are extreme.[26] In addition, it is essential that adults consider depressed bereaved children potentially at risk for suicide.[27] Children whose loved one has died wish to be with the deceased again; therefore, they often consider suicide as an opportunity for this reunification.

Fear is another common response of children to the death of a person close to them. The "death of a loved one tends to shatter children's perception that the world is safe and secure."[28] Their "life and routine have become disrupted."[29] They fear that other members of their family, including themselves, will die.[30] This often leads to panic regarding their future well-being.[31] Children often begin to have nightmares and fear the bogeyman.[32] These fears can lead to regressive behaviors such as thumb sucking, crawling and using baby talk.[33] Preteens may "slide back into the magical thinking of a preschooler or a six year old might start wetting the bed again."[34] There are "attempts to retreat to a time when the child felt protected and safe."[35] In order to help with these fears, adults should "talk

with the grieving children, identify and address their specific fears, and maintain the children's daily routines."[36]

In addition to emotional responses, there are physical reactions to grief. Death is a "high stressor and stress can create physical problems."[37] These include stomachaches, headaches, sleep difficulties, and bodily aches and pains. Also, children may experience exhaustion and lethargy[38] or "pick up symptoms of the deceased's illness or disease."[39] Adults are able to help children overcome these somatic reactions by being honest about the cause of the death and explaining that they do not also have the illness. Adults must explain to the children that these symptoms are a result of their feelings of grief. If the symptoms persist, it is important to provide the children with the opportunity to see the doctor.[40] These approaches to the presence of somatic reactions will provide them with relief.

Hyperactivity is another response to the death of a loved one. "Hyperactivity in young children is manifested by gross motor activity such as excessive running or climbing. The child is often described as being on the go, 'running like a motor,' and having difficulty sitting still. Older children and adolescents may be extremely restless and fidgety."[41] Children who become hyperactive as a result of their grief are full of energy and they "hop from thing to thing aimlessly, searching for something to do."[42] Adults

are able to help hyperactive children by "giving them structured activities that will help them become more focused."[43]

Two other opposite reactions to grief are dependency and withdrawal. A grieving child, "oversensitized to loss,"[44] becomes dependent on others because they fear being alone. They become helpless and unable to make decisions.[45] They cling to others and need constant reassurance.[46] Withdrawal, on the other hand, involves children dismissing themselves from relationships with other people because they are "afraid that those people will also die."[47]

This constant focusing on the deceased, another reaction to grief, is called preoccupation. It is important that children remember the memories of the deceased, however, "spending all of one's time remembering the deceased is unhealthy."[48] Children exhibit this response by continually trying to locate, experience, remember and connect with the deceased.[49] In a related response, called identification, children will often try to imitate the deceased person.[50] They will "assume the mannerisms of the deceased, carrying on their characteristic traits and trying to take on their role in the family."[51]

Replacement or substitution is another response that is especially observed when a child has experienced the death of a parent. By finding

adults to "help fill the lost parental role,"[52] the child will be "assured both care and empathy."[53] Parent substitutes give children a chance to "reinvest their love in another person."[54] Aside from the surviving parent, this love can be found in other family members, babysitters, teachers, and team leaders. It is important to remember, however, that the parent substitute cannot simply replace the deceased. The child must specifically and uniquely mourn the parent who has died. The parent substitute can, however, provide the "care and support needed to help the child bear the pain of mourning."[55]

A final reaction to grief involves the idealization of the deceased. After a person has died, due to the survivors' feelings of guilt and regret, it is a normal response to only think and speak kind words about the person. The mourners tend to believe that the deceased was perfect.[56] After some time, however, "other memories should emerge and the mourners will look at the whole person and the whole relationship to successfully integrate the loss into their own lives."[57]

THERAPEUTIC OPTIONS

Now that the grief reactions of children have been discussed, we turn to the therapeutic options available to help children cope with these responses and other aspects of their grief. There are many reasons why

children often need professional help with the grieving process. Adults who want to protect their children often do not talk about death honestly with them. Many times, however, even when adults do want to talk with their children about the death, the adults may not be physically and emotionally available as they too are grieving. Another reason that children who have experienced the death of a parent or loved one need professional help is that they feel and appear different from their peers. They do not want to emphasize this difference; therefore, they do not seek nor are they offered the support of their friends and classmates.[58] Also, due to limited vocabularies and experiences, children have difficulty expressing themselves verbally.[59] They need to find other outlets for their grief. For all of these reasons, children's reactions to their grief may become extreme "indicating that their grief work may not be proceeding smoothly."[60] If this is the case, it is important to seek out professional therapeutic help for the child.

When assessing the bereaved child, it is important to focus on three groups of factors. These are: 1) individual factors 2) factors related to the death and 3) factors based upon familial, social, religious and cultural issues.[61] Assessment of these factors and the child's responses to them enables the professional to select the proper combination of counseling and therapies.[62] Within the field of psychology, the words *counseling* and

therapy are very often used interchangeably. I will be using these words as synonyms. However, I would like to mention that, according to Worden, these terms are not identical. In his book Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, he writes that "counseling involves helping people facilitate uncomplicated, or normal, grief to a healthy completion of the tasks of grieving within a reasonable time frame."[63] He continues, "grief therapy involves the use of specialized techniques, which are used to help people with abnormal or complicated grief reactions."[64] As we have seen in the previous chapter, children do not experience normal grief because, due to their developmental level, they are unable to verbalize all of the aspects of their grief. Rather, in comparison to adults, they have abnormal and complicated grief reactions. They must address these reactions through both verbal and non-verbal therapeutic opportunities. Each of these methods serves a different purpose, therefore, the utilization of a combination of these techniques will address the different needs of the child.[65]

The most common option available to the child is individual counseling. This type of therapy is recommended for "suicide or traumatic bereavement and complicated bereavement."[66] A therapist can help a child one-on-one "cope with the intrusive memories and fears about the trauma."[67] The advantages to individual therapy are that it "permits maximum attention

to the needs of the child and the therapist is able to move at the pace of the child."[68]

Family counseling is another option available to the child. Experts who advocate this option believe that it is "important to understand the family context in order to help the child."[69] By comprehending the whole family system, the therapist and the other family members will be able to see how the child is being affected. In addition, this type of therapy allows the family to together "share acknowledgement of the reality of the death along with the experience of the loss and reorganize the family system."[70]

A third option for bereaved children is peer pairing therapy. This type of therapy involves "matching individual children who have certain characteristics in common and offering therapy to them conjointly."[71] This option is good for when "individual or group therapy is too overwhelming or threatening."[72] The child learns to "trust others and share feelings in an accepting environment."[73] In peer pairing therapy, mutual sharing will lead the child to have fewer feelings of isolation. An excellent example of children who could benefit from this type of therapy are suicide bereaved children. These children feel different than the other children in a bereavement group who have lost a loved one to a disease. By being paired

with another child who has also had a loved one commit suicide, the child feels as if someone else understands his or her experience.

Bereavement groups, the fourth option, are support groups for children in which they work with a facilitator and other youngsters who have experienced a death, in order to find outlets for their grief. Bereavement groups "allow children to share their stories and struggles, offer and receive support from other bereaved peers and develop new coping strategies."[74] The children in these groups are able to "give each other support based on the commonality of their shared experience."[75] In addition, "by sharing a stigma, they are able to relieve their burden and establish a bond with their peers."[76] This peer connection teaches children that they are not alone. In addition, they learn that "others have had the same experiences and prevailed."[77] They also become each other's role models.[78] In addition to "providing peer support and breaking the sense of isolation, bereavement groups facilitate normalization and create a safe place to share taboo issues."[79] Bereavement groups will be the focus of the next large section of this chapter because I believe that this type of therapy is rarely offered within the congregational setting; however, it would be a welcome addition.

The following topics will be discussed: the 1) participants 2)frequency of their visits 3) setting of the group 3) rules to be followed 4) role of the

facilitator and 5) activities in which the children participate, in order to better understand the dynamics of these groups. First of all, the participants are usually divided up into different age groups. At Fernside: The Center for Grieving Children in Cincinnati, the groups are divided into ages 4-6, 7-9, 10-12, 13-14, and 15-18.[80] As previously discussed, these groupings coincide with the similar developmental stages of the participating children. The person who is assembling these groups also takes into account the gender of the child, type of death, and recentness of the death.[81] It is important that there be a balance of genders and some similarity of experience within the group in order for the children to feel comfortable and connected with their fellow group members. At Fernside, each of these groups has a ratio of three or four adults for every twelve to fourteen children.[82] It is important that there be enough adults in the groups so that not only the needs of the group, but also, the individual needs of each child are addressed. Fernside holds each of these support groups twice a month, usually in the evening.

The setting of the peer group is extremely important. The children must feel safe in their physical space in order for them to feel comfortable enough to share their fears and feelings about the death of their beloved. At Fernside, children often sit in a circle on the floor on big soft pillows.[83]

Sitting in a circle emphasizes the importance of "expressing feelings, listening and responding."[84] The circle also prevents the children from becoming distracted.[85] Rooms for the younger children should be full of "art supplies, games, puppets, costumes, books, and dolls" which will be used during art and play therapy which will be discussed later in this chapter.[86] In addition, a rumpus room is important as it provides children with the opportunity for noisy and active play, which is also therapeutic.[87]

Rules that have been jointly compiled by the facilitator and the participants are essential within the bereavement group. They emphasize the importance of safety and acceptance.[88] Grieving children are not always able to attain these things in the outside world. Some of the rules that are of utmost importance include: maintaining confidentiality within the group,[89] passing if one does not want to speak,[90] being yourself,[91] not teasing others,[92] and validating each other's feelings.[93]

Bereavement support groups must be led by competent facilitators. Facilitators at Fernside must first possess the necessary training that the organization has to offer. This involves several class sessions over the course of a semester. These people must also be "nonjudgmental, loving, good listeners, versatile, and creative."[94] They should be both "capable of making spontaneous responses and capable of being silent."[95] They should

"follow the child's lead"[96] and move at the child's pace. In order to have a successful group in which the children are each able to find ways of expressing their grief, the facilitator must "encourage talking and playing."[97] Facilitators must also be able to "decode the imaginative play and analyze the children's behaviors."[98] The role of the facilitator is both extremely challenging and extremely rewarding. It is challenging because the facilitators must be constantly aware of the feelings of each of the children in the group and be able to address them. It is also rewarding because the facilitators have the privilege of sharing these strong feelings with the grieving children and providing a loving atmosphere for the release of these emotions.

Each session is divided up into introductory exercises, a main activity based on the discussion of the day, and closing time. The opening exercises of the day often begin with a reintroduction. The children take turns saying their name and which person close to them had died. The object of this exercise, aside from refocusing the children, is to give each of them a chance to state the reality that their loved one has died. The next part of the introduction tends to "build on what happened in the group the time before."[99] The closing time is a chance for "review, preview and closure."[100] It is a time to "elicit unanswered questions, share what was learned in the

session and expectations for the next session."[101] This "decompression time allows participants to pull back from the often painful and intense feelings dealt with in the group, and to regain the safety of a more intellectual and general group-focused activity before going back to the everyday world."[102]

This next section of the chapter will focus on the different types of therapies and main activities used in the bereavement support groups. These include: 1) play therapy 2) art therapy 3) writing therapy 4) music therapy and 5) therapy directed at specific grief reactions. These exercises can also be used in individual, family and peer pairing counseling and therapies.

One of the most common therapies used when working with grieving children is play therapy. As was mentioned earlier, children are not able to truly express their feelings verbally. However, they are experts when it comes to playing. Through play, grieving children are able to express the feelings inside of them, which may be "painful, frightening and confusing."[103] An example of this type of expression through play can be seen in the following example:

> Bill, John and Mary Ellen were very close to Grandpa…During the first summer after Grandpa died, the children seldom talked about him, but he was still a part of their lives…Finally, one afternoon, they locked themselves in their room, and taking all the clothes out of the dresser drawer, they lined it with a blanket. Next, they put candles on

> top of the bureau and opened a prayerbook to prayers for the dead. Bill and John then dressed up in sheets so they'd look like priests and they put Mary Ellen in the dresser drawer, their make-believe coffin. She lay there quietly while Bill and John sang their funeral songs. All three children participated in their make-believe funeral, saying goodbye to Grandpa. Years later, the three of them still talk about that afternoon with fondness. Theirs was a family where the children felt free to grieve in the way they chose.[104]

The goal of play therapy is to provide a chance for children to play freely and express their thoughts and feelings through such play in a supervised atmosphere. The previous story was an example of the children's need to express themselves; however, they did so in a private setting without the support of a skilled facilitator who is able to "observe, listen, and respond"[105] to the grieving child. In a controlled atmosphere, play therapy gives children "power over their fears and lets them be separate from the event but reaffirm what they believe is reality."[106]

An important aspect of play therapy involves role playing activities. Role playing "gives children a chance to play out life situations"[107] and to talk indirectly to the deceased and other family members. The drama that is played out in this type of therapy "gives the facilitator insight into the child's worries or thoughts."[108] Examples of role playing activities through which thoughts of death and the deceased are expressed are play acting, charades,

puppet shows, dress-up time, conversations on toy telephones, and dialogue with dolls and stuffed animals. When children are able to release their pent-up inner feelings through such role playing activities, they are able to regain control over their lives and find the strength to start again.[109]

In the Fernside Idea Book: A Guide for Group Facilitators at Fernside: A Center for Grieving Children, there are a wide variety of lesson plans that may be used in bereavement groups. Many of these lesson plans include role playing activities. Two examples of these types of lesson plans are entitled Mock Funeral and Sand Play (See appendix). Mock Funeral is a lesson plan which is very similar to the above mentioned story of the children who reenacted their Grandpa's funeral; however, in this case, the children's dramatic rendition of a mock funeral is supervised by a facilitator who encourages discussion after the play time. The second example of a lesson plan involving role playing is called Sand Play. This activity will also allow the children to express their thoughts by playing with sand and various objects in a sand tray. The facilitator will be able to discuss the children's feelings based on the cues that they give during this play time.

Art therapy and writing therapy are also used by facilitators to help children work out their grief. According to Webb, in her book, Helping Bereaved Children:

> Art and written exercises help elicit feelings, identify issues, and assist in resolving confused feelings and perceptions. Creating a piece of art expressing intangible and unformed feelings externalizes and helps to give form to those feelings. The process helps to reduce the negative power of emotions, and allows the individual to gain mastery over those feelings. Sharing personal creations in the group gives validity to the feelings underlying the art, while also providing support to the individual.[110]

Artistic expression is not limited to the typical crayon drawing but can be as diverse as, but certainly not limited to, sculpting with clay, painting with watercolors, creating a collage, and building a model. Expression through the medium of writing, as mentioned above, is also therapeutic, especially for older children. They, unlike younger children, are more often able to express their thoughts and emotions verbally. Writing and possibly sharing journal entries, letters to the deceased, letters to other family members, letters to God, and even letters to oneself are all examples of therapeutic writing exercises.[111]

The Fernside Idea Book also provides many lesson plans involving art therapy and writing therapy. Two lesson plans involving art therapy are called Masks and Giant Paper Dolls (See appendix). The Masks lesson plan gives children the opportunity to explore and express how they feel by creating a paper plate mask reflecting their feelings. The Giant Paper Dolls

lesson plan is an exercise which gives children the opportunity to share the physical symptoms of their grief by drawing symbolic representations of their ailments on a life size paper doll of themselves.

Two lesson plans involving writing therapy are called Journaling and Letters to other Teens (See appendix). Journaling gives older children the opportunity to express themselves in a private and confidential manner. They are able to self analyze their feelings and their fears. Writing letters to other teenagers gives them an outlet to share these inner thoughts with their peers.

In addition to writing therapy, older children and teenagers also find music to be extremely therapeutic. Listening to music is a favorite hobby of many older children. Children will listen to sounds and lyrics that fit their mood. By listening to and analyzing music within the context of the group, the children's choice of music can be discussed with their fellow teens and the facilitator (See appendix for a lesson plan entitled "Music Lyrics").

The above mentioned therapies may be used to help with children's grief in general. However, there are also therapies that deal with the specific reactions to grief that were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. We will now analyze appropriate therapies for four of these reactions: anger, guilt/regret, normal depression, and fear.

In order to alleviate the children's feelings of anger, it is essential that they find a way to release the energy within them. One way to do this is through physical activities such as running, biking, punching (punching bag), screaming, swimming, and bowling.[112] Another way to release the energy is through the medium of clay. Children can "work to soften the clay, construct what makes them angry, talk about it and decide what to do with it such as pounding it or throwing it."[113] Tape recorders can also be used to "say anything the child wants to and then have the opportunity to erase it."[114] In the Fernside Idea Book, there are many lesson plans that are presented in order to alleviate children's angry feelings. One of these lessons is called Anger Scrambled Eggs (See appendix). During this lesson, children throw eggs at a bed sheet hanging on a wall. As they throw the eggs, they attempt to verbalize what has made them angry. This opportunity gives children the chance to release some of their pent-up anger.

Children's guilt and regrets can also be alleviated with the assistance of certain therapies. These therapies give children the opportunity to share their deepest secrets and apologize for anything that they think they may have caused to happen. A tape recorder is one way to achieve these goals. Children can "share their secrets and erase them. They can also hear themselves apologize which eases their burden."[115] Puppets can also be used

to "talk of the child's regrets and to apologize to the deceased."[116] Another therapeutic activity involves children writing their secrets on pieces of paper, putting them into helium balloons, and releasing them into the air.[117]

When children are dealing with normal depression resulting from grief, the goal of the facilitator is to help the child evoke memories of the loved one which are, at first, painful but then become treasures.[118] Showing and discussing keepsakes and photographs of the deceased can assist with this transition. Scrapbooks can also be made to preserve the memory of the deceased.[119] After a longer period of time, it is, although at first emotionally difficult, often comforting to watch videos and home movies of the loved one who died.[120] These different therapies are useful when dealing with children experiencing depression as a reaction to grief. They allow children to see the things that at first made them sad as things that potentially can make them happy.

Children who react to grief with fear need special therapies to help them alleviate their anxieties. Children can draw pictures entitled, "I worry about" and "I'm afraid of." The facilitator can ask questions about the pictures, provide reassurance and find solutions to help them eliminate their fears.[121] Another activity, writing one's fears on helium balloons and releasing them, symbolically allows children to eliminate their fears.

Some children express their fears through their dreams. One way that adults can help children ease their anxiety is by giving them the opportunity to "draw the upsetting dream and also draw an acceptable ending for it."[122] Children can also find relief from many of the activities in the Fernside Idea Book. One of the lesson plans that deals with dreams is called Scary Dreams (See appendix). During this lesson plan, the other children role play the bad dream around the dreamer. The dreamer, who is pretending to sleep, awakes and scares the bad dream (all the children) away.

In addition to therapies that address reactions to grief, there are also therapies that deal with the problem of unfinished business. Unfinished business is a term that is used when the child was unable to say "good-bye," "I am sorry" or "I love you" to the deceased before they died. Children can never return to a moment before the loved one died; however, they do need to have the opportunity to achieve some closure. This can be done through many methods, one of which is called the Empty Chair Technique. In this exercise, two chairs are set up. One contains the child and the other contains a picture of the deceased. Then a discussion takes place in which the child would say what they would want to say if they had one more chance to speak to their loved one. They can express their "concerns, happy things in their lives and good-byes."[123] Puppets and letter writing can also be used for

this "one last conversation."[124] Another idea to take care of unfinished business is a Good-bye ceremony. This is an "opportunity for closure and celebration of love and life."[125] Some examples of these good-bye ceremonies can be "planting a tree, lighting a candle next to a photograph, drawing a picture for placement in the casket or grave, releasing a helium balloon with a message attached for the person who died, writing a poem on the anniversary of the death, or creating a plaque in honor of a loved one."[126]

All of these types of therapies assist children in dealing with their feelings and their grief. These therapies provide children with the opportunity to work through the issues that arise when a loved one has died. Without these types of therapy, there is a danger that children's thoughts and feelings will remain pent-up inside of them which is dangerous. As children express their feelings through their words, their play and their artwork, they will be ready to begin to adjust to a new life. They will observe and get used to the role changes in their family.[127] They will take on new responsibilities in the household.[128] They will once again become involved in school life.[129] They will always mourn their loss; however, they will now have the tools for healthy mourning.

DEATH EDUCATION

As we have seen from the above therapies, it is crucial that these grieving children understand what death is and how people react to it. Up until this point, we have seen children learn these "facts of life and death" after the death of their loved one. There is another type of learning that is advocated for children; however, instead of responding to a death, it is a proactive type of education. While children will never be emotionally prepared for the death, at least, they can be given some information that will prepare them cognitively for the death. This prevention model of death education was created in order to "educate and prepare children before they have to deal with the pain of a loss."[130] Death education is a type of "formal education that deals with dying, death, grief, loss, and the impact on the individual and humankind. It helps students by giving facts (biological, psychosocial, and coping) on death. It includes courses, curricula, counseling and support."[131] The goal of death education is "to devise methods and opportunities through which children can gradually be exposed to the different aspects of death, while simultaneously learning about themselves and acquiring ways of coping with stressful situations, especially those which entail loss and separation."[132] Death education curricula are "on-going programs of age appropriate training."[133] The benefits of death

education are the "lessening of fear and anxiety regarding death and the improvement of communication by students."[134] Death becomes somewhat less threatening to the children because they have knowledge to empower them.[135] In addition, children become more able to talk openly about the subject of death with their families.[136]

As an aside, there is also another type of death education that gives students the opportunity to learn and share their feelings. This type of death education is not preventative, rather, it involves "direct intervention when death claims a member of the community."[137] These programs and curricula are used in response to a crisis in the school community. This type of education was especially important with the surviving students of such school shootings as in Paducah, Kentucky and Jonesboro, Arkansas.

There is some controversy surrounding the preventative model of death education. There is a question among parents as to whether or not death education should be available to students who have not yet experienced the death of a loved one. The concern arises from the issue of avoidance that was mentioned in the third chapter. Adults avoid the issue of death with their children in order to protect them, even though, as we have seen throughout the literature, it is essential that adults realize that children also mourn the loss of a loved one. Death is "intrinsic to human experience

but many people try to cram it into a dark closet and shut the door."[138] For this reason, there have been numerous attempts by adults to prevent death education in the schools. Children, therefore, when confronted with death, are unprepared, as they have not "acquired the necessary coping abilities."[139]

These attitudes and concerns have prevented the rapid spread of death education curricula. However, in the last thirty years, since the first death education programs, there has been more attention placed on its importance due to a "growing awareness about the value and role of bereavement counseling and therapy."[140] Also, there has been a "rise of formal death education and death awareness movements due to a number of historical and social factors."[141] These factors include: (1) more aged people in society (2) the extension of the dying interval due to medical technology and modern health care (3) desire to find meaning in death and (4) the psychology of entitlement in which the rights of the dying are asserted.[142] In addition to these factors, the importance of death education has begun to become more evident due to the new understanding by society that children do mourn and need help with their grief. The most recent thinking about death education is that children will inevitably be confronted in the future with the death of loved ones; therefore, they should have some preparation. Death education curricula are important because they introduce children to the "concept of

death in an objective and non-threatening manner before a crisis occurs."[143] Once the family is in crisis, the adults will be too "emotionally involved and will most often be unable to adequately explain what happened."[144]

People who want to "implement death education programs in schools must first have addressed the death-related issues in their own lives. They must learn the effects of grief and the special ways in which young people react to the death.[145] The leader of a death education program should be a "learning facilitator who is at ease in an area where no final answers exist."[146] In addition to researching the topic and undertaking one's own personal inventory about death, a person can receive formal education on how to be a facilitator from the Association for Death Education and Counseling which has "developed a certification program for death educators and grief counselors."[147]

There are four different aspects of most death education curricula: cognitive, anthropological, emotional, and social.[148] The cognitive aspect of a curriculum teaches children about the biological facts about death. This reduces the ambiguity surrounding death and gives the child more control over the situation.[149] The "importance of asking questions and the limitations of our knowledge of death are emphasized."[150] The anthropological aspect involves the "discussion of different rituals of death, mourning and

burial."[151] It also teaches the "importance of tolerance and acceptance."[152] The emotional aspect of a curriculum "helps the child recognize the varied expressions of emotion and their use and value for communication."[153] It also focuses on the "normal reactions to death."[154] The fourth area, the social aspect, turns the class into a support group for each other.[155] It creates the "improvement of social skills which gives the child the ability to receive support without feeling humiliated and to give support without becoming over protective."[156]

The contents of a death education curriculum differ depending on the age and developmental stage of the children in the group. When teaching death education to young children, it is important to focus on "three basic concepts. (1) Death is universal (2) Death is permanent and irreversible and (3) Dead people can no longer feel anything."[157] These concepts can be addressed through such mediums as books and film.[158] Older children and adolescents are more able than younger children to deal with these abstract concepts.[159] Topics in their curricula can include "death, dying, grief, loss, suicide, HIV/AIDS, funerals, and mourning rituals."[160] These topics can be addressed through lectures, reading assignments, discussions, journal writing, and films.[161] There are many different death education curricula that can begin to prepare children for the eventual death of a loved one.

At this point in the thesis, we have a strong understanding of the psychological and developmental issues surrounding bereaved children. In addition, a variety of different therapies and educational programs dealing with these issues have been presented. In the fifth and final chapter of this thesis, I will present a guideline for rabbis who want to use this information and these different therapies in order to help Jewish children who are mourning the loss of a parent or another significant individual in their lives.

CHAPTER V

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HELPING GRIEVING CHILDREN WITHIN THE CONGREGATIONAL SETTING

As seen in the early chapters of this thesis, it is evident that, within the body of Jewish literature, the predicament of the orphan is understood as serious. The fields of developmental psychology, thanatology, bereavement studies, and death education also all support this reality. Within each of these disciplines, experts have offered much information on ways that children bereft of a parent can be helped. Now, in this final chapter, I would like to present a variety of methods with which, I believe, a rabbi, within the congregational setting, can help orphans cope with the difficulty of their situation.

In a congregation, all too often, a rabbi will confront the dilemma of the death of an adult who has left behind a spouse and young children. The surviving parent and these children look to Judaism and the rabbi for answers and support. At such a time, the rabbi, may well be at a loss for answers. The rabbi can, however, offer support to the bereaved family through the medium of counseling, ritual, and education.

COUNSELING OPPORTUNITITES WITHIN THE SYNAGOGUE

Within the synagogue, the rabbi can serve as a counselor and provide many different therapeutic opportunities to members of a family mourning

the loss of a loved one. I would like to present four of these possibilities: family counseling, individual counseling, bereavement groups, and support groups. These four options offer congregants the chance to explore their grief and find some semblance of healing amongst their fellow Jews. These services may not, however, be sufficient for the grieving individual. The rabbi must also assess the emotional state of each of the participants and recommend additional professional psychological care when needed.

In the first option, family counseling, the members of the family would work together to deal with their grief. The family could discuss their feelings surrounding the death of their loved one and together search for healing. They would consider their new roles and responsibilities within the family. They have the opportunity to discuss with the rabbi such religious issues as the meaning of specific Jewish mourning rituals, the existence of God and "why bad things happen to good people." Within this setting, in addition to being a source of religious information, the rabbi could also serve as a facilitator who would listen to the fears and feelings of each individual member. The rabbi would then be able to explain that the reactions of each of the individuals affect the whole family. After the family understands this information, they must work together to create a stronger family system in

which each individual is working for both the health of him/herself and that of the entire family.

Individual counseling offers many of the same benefits as family counseling. Individuals have the opportunity to explore with a rabbi the personal and religious issues that they are dealing with in their mourning. However, the difference between family and individual counseling is that the latter provides the person with the advantage of more focused individual attention and the chance to share confidential information with a clergy person.

A synagogue could establish a bereavement group for the congregation. A rabbi, along with the help of a professional therapist, could initiate a group for its children who are mourning the loss of a loved one. This group might follow the Fernside: A Center for Grieving Children model. Children involved in this type of group would benefit by releasing some of their grief and realizing that they are not alone. A bereavement group within the congregational setting would also offer certain advantages that a community group may not be able to render. Children in a bereavement group in a synagogue would be able to discuss their feelings surrounding such Jewish rituals as *kriah*, the funeral, *shiva*, *sheloshim*, the *yahrzeit*, and the unveiling. They would also be able to talk about religious

issues including God, suffering, and Judaism's views of death and the afterlife. The children could also analyze various, perhaps even contradictory, religious beliefs regarding death that were shared with them by their family, friends, and acquaintances. In such a bereavement group, the different types of therapies could involve Jewish themes. For example, children could participate in a play therapy activity in which they would act out a Jewish funeral. Therapeutic activities could also include the reading of Jewish books and the watching of Jewish movies. All of these opportunities will reinforce the message that these children are not alone, rather, they are accepted and included members of the Jewish community. If there is not sufficient need for a bereavement group within the synagogue, a rabbi could volunteer to help at a community bereavement group and take that opportunity to present the children with Judaism's views about grief.

A widow/widower support group would also be welcomed within the congregational setting. The rabbi could invite the widows and widowers, who have young children, to join together once a month in order to talk about their loss. This type of group would provide surviving parents with a place to gain strength from other people, to realize that they are not alone, to ask questions concerning themselves and their children, and to gain a new social network.

RITUAL OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE SYNAGOGUE

In addition to counseling, a rabbi can also offer bereaved family members many ritual opportunities through which they would be able to both simultaneously express their feelings of grief and reaffirm their connections to life. First of all, the rabbi could initiate and write the liturgy for a biannual Healing Service within the synagogue. Unlike Healing Services that focus on the physical healing of the sick, during this service, members of the congregation would join together in search of the emotional healing needed during times of grief. They would take this ritual opportunity to recognize both congregational and individual losses. Congregants who participate in such a Healing Service would gain strength from the support of the community and from the Jewish songs, texts and prayers.

A more specific type of healing service could take place prior to or during Jewish holidays. This program would be similar to "Blue Christmas services" offered at local churches during their holiday season. Many Christian worshippers do not enjoy a happy "white Christmas," rather, they are sad and "blue" because they are in mourning during this usually festive time of year. They may be unable to share the holidays with their special loved one because the individual has recently died. Therefore, their congregations have begun to hold religious services with accompanying

support groups to give these bereaved individuals a social network and a listening ear during this most difficult time of the year. Such an idea could be initiated in the synagogue during the High Holidays, Chanukah, and Passover. During these holiday celebrations, which are usually spent with loved ones, the absence of the deceased is most strongly felt.

Another ritual opportunity that could be offered within the synagogue is a Good-bye Ceremony for children. A rabbi would prepare the liturgy for and officiate at such a ritual. This ceremony would give children the chance to say good-bye to the deceased because they did not get a chance to do so when their loved one was still alive. This opportunity would give children the sense of closure needed to mourn the loss successfully. A Good-bye Ceremony could include personal accounts of the story of the death and play therapy activities such as the "Empty Chair." It could also include poems, drawings and songs that focus on the theme of separation from all but the memory of the deceased.

A rabbi could assist grieving children in planning ceremonies honoring the memory of the deceased. They could plant trees, make plaques, beautify the synagogue and donate money all in memory of their loved one. Ceremonies surrounding the *yahrzeit* could also occur. A rabbi could write a liturgy for the lighting of the *yahrzeit* candle and share it with fellow Jews.

A special role or responsibility could be given to the children during the unveiling ceremony. They could take the covering off the headstone; however, adults must allow children to see what is beneath the covering prior to the ceremony to allay any of their fears about what lies below.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE SYNAGOGUE

Another way that a rabbi can help bereaved families and children is through education. A variety of adult education classes could be offered in the congregational setting. Using the information in this thesis, I would someday like to offer a class entitled "How Parents And Other Caring Adults Can Help Bereaved Children." An adult death education class could also be offered in which death, loss, and Jewish mourning customs could be discussed in an open environment. As adults become more able to talk about the subject of death with each other, it will be easier for them to broach this subject with their children. Another adult education class, "Jewish Views About Orphans," could also be offered. In this course, adults would not only learn about the difficult life of orphans, but they would also learn about the vast body and composition of Jewish literature. Finally, an adult Torah study

class could analyze the biblical verses supporting the proper treatment of orphans, widows, and strangers.

Education about death can also be offered to children in the congregational setting. The rabbi could teach a death education curriculum to the confirmation class. Students could talk openly about their feelings surrounding this often taboo subject. They could discuss Judaism's views about death. The class could also visit the local Jewish funeral home and cemetery. This educational opportunity would provide the confirmation age students with some of the essential preparation needed in order to handle the deaths that they will encounter in the future.

Younger children, along with their parents, could be educated about death through family education programs. During a session of religious school, the parents could be invited to share in a day of learning with their children. The session could be divided into two periods: one spent with the adults separated from the children and one spent together. When the children and adults are separate, they can learn how to talk about death with each other. In the other period, the children and adults can put those skills into practice by actually talking with each other about the subject. This educational opportunity will hopefully lead to more open communication about death between parent and child in the future.

Another important educational opportunity can occur during a crisis such as the death of a teacher or student. The rabbi should have a Crisis Intervention Plan for the religious school in the case of such an emergency. This plan would map out how the rabbi, principal, and teachers should handle a crisis situation with the students. The children would receive age appropriate information and ample opportunities to seek counseling within the school. The parents must also be informed and involved when such an incident occurs in order to provide their children with the necessary amount of extra love and support.

A rabbi can also offer assistance by organizing a retreat for adults entitled "Grief in Children" which would combine the mediums of counseling, ritual, and education. The event could begin with services in which readings written by children searching for God or for answers to why their loved one died could be read. There could be a text study entitled "Orphans in Jewish Literature." A keynote speaker such as a psychologist or a representative from a place such as Fernside could present the psychological aspects underlying children's grief. The retreat could continue with small discussion groups in which people share their personal experiences and seek assistance with their difficult issues. The topic of "How Adults Grieve While They Are Helping Their Children" could also be

discussed. In closing, a ceremony or service asking for "healing for ourselves and our children" could be held.

CONCLUSION

All of these ideas are only introductory suggestions that could be used by rabbis within the congregational setting. Whether or not these specific ideas will be implemented in synagogues around the world, the difficult situation of the orphan must not be ignored. The death of a parent is an intensely difficult experience. As evidenced in the Talmud and Midrash, the Rabbis understood the difficult life of the orphan. A later rabbi, Maimonides, even more clearly understood the emotional burden of the orphan. As rabbis of the people of Israel, we also have the responsibility to our tradition and the bereaved children within our congregations to provide love, support, and care to these children who are hurting. Their lives have just begun. We must not let their encounters with death prevent them from enjoying the wonderful opportunity of life.

APPENDIX

1. ACTIVITY TITLE: Mock Funeral

   SUGGESTED AGES: 4-7

   PURPOSE: To express feelings, wishes, regrets about the funeral.

   MATERIALS NEEDED: Dress-ups, chairs, any props from the Pre-school room.

   ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: At the prior meeting, mention that this will be the next activity. Start the meeting by sharing—pretend that this is the day of the funeral. Allow the children to create this day. Start in a circle, sharing how they would prepare for the day. Move to dress-up, then to the car procession (you can use chairs to simulate sitting in cars), then to the graveside, etc.----Discuss.[1]

2. ACTIVITY TITLE: Sand Play

   SUGGESTED AGES: 4-7

   PURPOSE: Implicit method of exploring and expressing feelings associated with the death and loss of a loved one.

   MATERIALS NEEDED: Sand tray or table filled with 2 inches of sand, a number of human figurines, small replicas of common objects (i.e. houses, cars, furniture, etc.), small replicas of animals.

   ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Volunteer and child initially explore the sand tray together, pointing out contents of the tray, methods of playing with the sand, sensations and feelings. Child is then encouraged to play with the sand. After a period of time, the volunteer should have the child explain what he/she has created. Note: It is important that the child assist with clean-up but do not insist that buried figurines be removed from the sand.[2]

3. ACTIVITY TITLE: Masks

   SUGGESTED AGES: 4-7

   PURPOSE: to explore feelings.

   MATERIALS NEEDED: Paper plates (at least 9" diameter), crayons and markers, string or yarn, stapler and staples.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Ask each person to make a face (mask) reflecting how they feel, and/or how they would like to feel, and/or how they would like to look. Wear the mask and tell the group what they show.[3]

4. ACTIVITY TITLE: Giant Paper Dolls
SUGGESTED AGES: 4-8

PURPOSE: To illustrate where body hurts… to show that grief can be felt in physical pain.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Rolls of wallpaper or paper that are sturdy enough not to tear when children lie and kneel on it, and markers or crayons.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Have children lie down on the paper while someone else traces around their body. Ask child to draw his heart, stomach and maybe other parts. Facilitator asks each child, individually where they feel bad. Ask the child to draw what each hurting place or place that feels different now feels like…maybe with scribbles or stars or whatever.

SUGGESTIONS: When do they feel the worst? What helps? Yes, it is normal for people who are grieving to have physical aches and pains, but if it lasts, it is a good idea to get it checked by a doctor. Also talk about how when we are upset, we might be more accident prone and more apt to catch colds. How can we take good care of ourselves?[4]

5. ACTIVITY TITLE: Journaling

SUGGESTED AGES: 7-14

PURPOSE: to begin and encourage keeping of journals as a method of expressing self and getting understanding of self.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Notebooks, pens or pencils, stickers to decorate covers if desired, yarn.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Each person takes 5-10 minutes of each meeting to write in their own journal. Explain that each will be kept completely confidential. Each journal can be tied with a ribbon or yarn. Suggest topics that go along with the subject of the meeting, and also allow for individual ideas.

FOLLOW-UP: Invite reading journal entries aloud to group, but be very careful not to pressure. Each child takes journal home. Explain to parents that these should be allowed to be kept private.[5]

6. ACTIVITY TITLE: Letters to Other Teens

SUGGESTED AGES: Teenagers

PURPOSE: To allow the grieving teen to reach out to another grieving teen by identifying own feelings and sharing what helped them and what might help someone else.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Pens, paper, possibly a clip board with large paper if the whole group wants to write one letter together.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Talk about a specific teen or just talk about teens in general who have had someone in their family die. Discuss how to write a letter to a grieving teen to offer support and help. How could we let this teen know what was helpful to do when you were grieving and what wasn't helpful? Let them write the letter together as a group or discuss ideas of things to say in a letter and then each teen goes off and write their own letter to this person. Send the letter.[6]

7. ACTIVITY TITLE: Music Lyrics

SUGGESTED AGES: 7-18

PURPOSE: To encourage expression of feelings.

MATERIALS NEEDED: a tape or CD player and a recording of one of the pieces listed, a copy of the typed lyrics for each person.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Introduce activity by asking how many in the group like to listen to music? What is their favorite type of music? Have they heard any music that expressed their thoughts or feelings? Ask them to listen to one of the following songs and to pay close attention to the lyrics, choosing one or more lines that they think are meaningful or true. Discuss the song, and ask what they think of the words. How does the song make them feel?

SUGGESTIONS: The Change (Garth Brooks), I am Free (Mariah Carey), It's So Hard to Say Good-bye (Boys II Men), The Living Years (Mike and the

Mechanics), One Sweet Day (Mariah Carey or Boys II Men), The Sound of Silence (Paul Simon), Tears in Heaven (Eric Clapton), and Wind Beneath My Wings (Bette Midler).[7]

8. ACTIVITY TITLE: Anger Scrambled Eggs
SUGGESTED AGES: 7-18

PURPOSE: to elicit safe expression of anger.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Markers, large old sheet, several dozen eggs.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: The group members write what and who they are angry with on the sheet. The sheet is attached to a wall outside. Each person takes turns throwing eggs at the sheet and trying to say something out loud about their anger. The group talks about how it feels to "get their anger out" and brainstorms other safe outlets for anger.

SUGGESTIONS: Be sure not to minimize or rationalize a person's anger.[8]

9. ACTIVITY TITLE: Scary Dreams
SUGGESTED AGES: 4-7

PURPOSE: to gain control of bad dreams.

MATERIALS NEEDED: pillows to make a pretend bed.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Start out circle time by discussing bad dreams. Has anyone here had a bad dream? Ask them to tell you about it and ask what they do if they have a bad dream. Have a pretend dreamer pretend to sleep in the pillows. The rest of the children can act out the bad dream—going around the sleeper/dreamer child while making noises. The sleeper/dreamer suddenly wakes up and surprises and scares the bad dream away. The bad dream (all the children) must run away and hide.

SUGGESTIONS: Another example—the dreamer wakes up and grabs a "Good Dream Bear" and the bad dream guys all run away and hide (like the bad dream is gone.[9]

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

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[2] *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Portland House, 1989) p. 1016.

CHAPTER ONE

[1] Harold Fisch, ed. *The Jerusalem Bible* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 1989) All biblical quotes will be from this source unless otherwise noted. In addition, as a point of information, this source translates the nonspecific word יתום, "orphan" with the understood universal biblical definition of "fatherless."
[2] Jacob Neusner, *Sifra: The Components of the Rabbinic Document, Part Three* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) p. 1.
[3] Jacob Neusner, *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) p. 272.
[4] All *Midrash Rabbah* sources are from H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds. *Midrash* Rabbah (London: The Soncino Press) *Exodus Rabbah*, p. 361.
[5] William Braude, *The Midrash on Psalms*, Volume 2, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) p. 59.
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[9] *Numbers Rabbah*. Volume 1, p. 354.
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[11] Ibid., p. 369.
[12] *Exodus Rabbah*, p. 534-535.
[13] Ibid., p. 354.
[14] Ibid., p. 524.
[15] *Esther Rabbah*, p. 48.
[16] *The Midrash on Psalms*, p. 155.
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[18] *Esther Rabbah*, p. 72.
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[3] Ibid.
[4] *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Volume II. Article on "Maintenance," p. 783.
[5] *Baba Mezia* 70a, note four.
[6] Ibid.
[7] *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Volume XII. Article on "Oaths," p. 1298.
[8] Note 12 on Yebamoth 109a.
[9] Deuteronomy 10:17.
[10] Pesachim 101a. Note 5.
[11] II Samuel 21:8.
[12] Chullin 111b. Note 7.
[13] All *Mishneh Torah* sources will be from Isaac Klein, ed., *The Code of Maimonides* (New Haven: Yale University Press) volumes unless otherwise noted. *Book of Women*.
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[15] p. 124.
[16] p. 125.
[17] p. 128.
[18] p. 34.

[19] p. 119.
[20] p. 237.
[21] p. 119.
[22] p. 239.
[23] p. 33.
[24] p. 84.
[25] p. 77.
[26] p. 84.
[27] p. 79.
[28] p. 116.
[29] p. 48.
[30] p. 92.
[31] Elon, p. 230.
[32] The law of preemption is based on Deuteronomy 6:18, which states "do that which is right and good in the eyes of the Lord." Elon, Ibid.
[33] p. 200.
[34] Moses Hyamson, ed, *Mishneh Torah—The Book of Knowledge* (Boys Town: Jerusalem Publishers, 1965) p. 55b-56a.
[35] Rabbi Earl Grollman, *Bereaved Children and Teens* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) p. 185.

CHAPTER THREE

[1] Rabbi Arnold Goodman, *A Plain Pine Box* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1981) p. xiv.
[2] Lynne Ann Despelder and Albert Lee Strickland, *Encountering Death and Dying* (California : Mayfield Publishing Company, 1996) p. 12.
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[5] Ibid., p. 8.
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[8] Ibid.
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[18] Ibid.
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CHAPTER FOUR

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