Jewish Teens, Substance Abuse and The Value of Intervention

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Contents

Introduction

Tremendous work has been done in the latter part of the twentieth century to prove that substance abuse and addiction are in fact Jewish problems. After years of denial, the community has finally taken steps towards acceptance and finding ways of support. Yet we are still discovering how Jewish texts speak to this problem and how Judaism can be an active part of prevention, intervention, and recovery. When it comes to addressing teen substance abuse and addiction, the Jewish community is lacking in updated, effective resources.

In this investigation, I call upon Jewish texts spanning thousands of years to inform a modern problem. The rabbinic understanding of drugs, abuse and addiction lack modern science and psychology and rely heavily on common sense, experience and analogy. The rabbis spend considerable time discussing alcohol and alcohol abuse but seem to barely discuss other drugs. Regrettably, we have taken this to mean that the rabbis knew nothing of drug problems. In a 1989 responsum to the question "What kind of ethical responsibility do parents have toward their son now in his thirties who is married and on drugs?" the Central Conference of American Rabbis stated "There is surprisingly little information about the use of drugs in the vast responsa literature. Although hundreds of thousands of responsa exist and many of them from societies in which drugs were widely used this does not seem to have been a Jewish problem in earlier periods."[1] This myth is further stressed in Responsum #73[2] from 1985 where the committee states:

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[1] CCAR Responsum #149

> There is very little discussion in the traditional *halakhic* literature about the use of drugs. The codes, as well as earlier sources, and the responsa occasionally refer to *samim* (drugs) and their use; this category includes all drugs. Furthermore, the paucity of references indicate that this was not a serious problem until the latter part of the twentieth century. Even when Jews lived in societies which utilized addictive drugs widely among certain classes, we seem to have escaped that phenomenon.

Indeed, the rabbis did not use the language we use today, but as I will prove, they knew well of drug abuse and addiction, its dangers and its complexities. In order to do this, I will "translate" the text with modern research in mind. I am less interested in technical terms and more interested in the sense of the biblical and rabbinic texts. While the words are not the same, the concerns are. The rabbis distinguish between good drugs and bad drugs. They understand the negative impact of excessive drug use (regardless of classification). The concept of *tokhahah* (rebuke) more directly relates to modern ideas of intervention. In both the cases of drugs and rebuke, I will note where modern sensibilities disprove traditional understandings, but more importantly, I will show where traditional text has enduring meaning and thematically reflects life today.

Finally, I will evaluate modern resources that speak to teen drug abuse and addiction today. These resources range in focus from prevention to intervention to recovery. The Jewish community, organized in synagogue congregations particularly, is an ideal place for these materials. This takes a great deal of preparation and education, though. In this paper, I specifically evaluate current resources and suggest what needs to be produced next.

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[2] The question being "What is the Jewish attitude toward using addictive psychedelic (mind altering) drugs for pleasure in a manner akin to the use of alcohol, tobacco, coffee or tea?"

Chapter 1: Jewish Teens and Substance Abuse

Introduction

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 conceives of a young person who goes astray:

> If there will be a man with a son that is stubborn and rebellious, and will not listen to the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and they discipline him and he does not listen, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him, bring him out to the elders of the city, to the gates of his place, and they shall say to the elders of the city: "this son of ours is stubborn and rebellious and will not listen to our voices; he's a glutton and a drunkard." And all the men of the city shall stone him with stones until he dies. So shall your burn out evil from around you and all of Israel will hear and be afraid.

Rabbis and interpreters have wrestled with this haunting passage from the Torah. How far has the family come that the parents are no longer able to cope and they seek death as the only alternative? Most importantly, commentators ask: How old is this son? According to the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon[3], *ben* simply means son. Yet it has myriad connotations depending on context. No one age can be specified.

In his commentary on the Torah, Robert Alter adds that the drinking and eating habits of the individual are a "clear indication that the carousing rebellious son is an adult."[4] In this case the *ben* would be an adult child. In Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 68b, the rabbis also inquire about his age. The Mishnah seems simple enough: "A boy becomes subject to the law of *ben sorer u-moreh* upon becoming an adult. From when he produces two pubic hairs until his beard[5] grows around. A minor is exempt [from these laws] because he has not come into doing all of the commandments." He is therefore not

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[3] Francis Brown, ed., *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2005).
[4] Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 983.
[5] That being his "lower beard" or pubic hair.

legally responsible for his actions. Traditionally, the rabbis consider the transition from childhood to adulthood as occurring around puberty. In BT Niddah 46a the rabbis discuss vow breaking, reiterating that a boy becomes an adult when he grows two pubic hairs that are attributed to puberty (as opposed to hairs that may grow on a mole, for example). When this occurs, he is legally responsible for his own behavior.

A difficultly remains though. If a son has become an adult, liable for fulfilling the *mitzvot* and therefore subject to the death penalty outlined in Deuteronomy, why then do his parents feel the need to chastise him publicly? Logically, he would be left to suffer his own sin. The timing is strange and the adult status of the son is still unclear. Evidently, the rabbis of old perceive of a problem that we still face in our modern world: the awkward transition from childhood to adulthood that occurs physically, mentally and emotionally in most human beings. This strange time is associated with many issues, abuse of drugs and alcohol being two mentioned in Deuteronomy.

While the rabbis have no real word for this transitional stage, we do. Modern scientific research offers that adolescence occurs between the ages of 12/13 and 17, with young adulthood then occurring form 18-21.[6] As the rabbis noted with the discussion of pubic hairs, adolescence is a period of tremendous physical changes to the body. Outwardly, we are well aware of the development of secondary sex characteristics. Yet the brain also undergoes massive change. Adolescence marks a "second wave of overproduction of gray matter, the thinking part of the brain – neurons and their branch-

[6] Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick, eds., *The Expanded Family Life Cycle* (Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon, 1999).

like extensions – just prior to puberty."[7] By the teenaged years (another name for adolescence) sensory, auditory and language functions appear largely mature, yet the frontal lobe (cognitive processing and "executive" functions) undergoes major maturing.[8] This means that the adolescent brain is still developing higher processing functions that determine risk and identity.

It is clear from this research that the adolescent brain is a work in progress. This affects not only biological but social interactions as well. Normally, being a teenager in white, middle-class, mainstream America "symbolizes growth toward physical and emotional maturity, responsibility, and independence."[9] As they undergo this transition, adolescents demand their independence. Yet since the "executive thinking" parts of the brain are still developing, parents and other adults still need to be strong figures in a teen's life. Teens are heavily influenced by external factors in the mainstream media and their friendship circles. Nydia Garcia Preto provides a picture of the influences on today's teen:

> As the twenty-first century approaches, families in the United States are more than ever challenged by the risks of living in an increasingly endangered environment and in a society in which, largely for economic reasons, parents choose or are forced to work longer and longer hours, limiting the time they can spend at home with the children. Diminished connections to extended family and community have left parents struggling alone and more dependent on external systems for teaching children and for setting limits on them. At the same time, teenagers are turning more and more to their peers for emotional support and to

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[7] "Teenage Brain: A Work in Progress (Fact Sheet)," National Institute of Mental Health. http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/teenage-brain-a-work-in-progress-fact-sheet/index.shtml

[8] Ibid.

[9] Nydia Garcia Preto, "Transformation of the family system during adolescence" in *The Expanded Family Life Cycle.* eds. Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick (Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon, 1999), 275.

> the pop culture promoted by the media for values and ideas about life. As a result, the family's function as an emotional support system is threatened.[10]

Boundaries are blurred as culture and popular media exert more influence on the teen. Joanne Doades, writing as a concerned parent and Jewish educator, draws particular attention to television and the dysfunctional role-modeling that occurs in media programming. Authority figures are ridiculed, speech is disrespectful and sexual and violent images are pervasive[11]. She adds: "The bottom line is that if you are trying to raise emotionally healthy, responsible and respectful children and guide them safely through their teenage years, you may at times feel like David battling Goliath – and you are."[12] Teens need their parents yet they also need space. The balance can be difficult to achieve.

Aside from the awkward stage between childhood and adolescence, Deuteronomy 21 also rings true with issues regarding drug abuse and addiction. The Torah text lists two specific examples of the son's rebelliousness: he is a glutton and a drunkard. According to Jeffrey Tigay, "a glutton and a drunkard" is probably meant as literary type that repeats frequently in the Bible, specifically in the book of Proverbs.[13] According to Tigay, in Deuteronomy's case gluttony and drunkenness are symptoms of the real crime: insubordination to one's parents[14] and God. The specific offense is not criminal, but the dishonoring of one's father and mother is a capital crime.[15] Yet the significance of

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[10] Preto, "Transformation of the family system during adolescence," 274.
[11] Joanne Doades, *Parenting Jewish Teens: A guide for the perplexed.* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007), 7.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Jeffrey Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 197.
[14] Ibid.
[15] ibid.

including these behaviors specifically cannot be overlooked. As I will show in this paper, substance abuse and addiction are real problems that faced ancient young people and continue to impact adolescents today. I will discuss both substance abuse and addiction[16] in Jewish texts and Jewish life today, showing the high value Judaism places on intervening in the case of a problem.

Adolescence and Drugs

Adolescence is a period of trial and error, learning consequences and setting goals and limits for oneself. In her book *Young, Sober and Free*, Shelly Marshall addresses addicted teens from a 12-step perspective. She shares that "being young, it's more difficult to see unmanageability as anything significant. After all, don't we have the rest of our lives to get a grip on it?"[17] Experimentation is often regarded as a part of adolescence, but this open exploration can be dangerous.

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[16] There are various terms to describe abuse of drugs. Addiction to a substance or to a behavior is "a complex, progressive behavior pattern having biological, psychological, sociological and behavioral components…there is overwhelmingly pathological involvement in or attachment to it, subjective compulsion to continue, and reduced ability to exert personal control over it." This can be due to a genetic predisposition, a learned response to coping with stress or long-term use or experience. Substance dependence describes the toll it takes on the body and is "a maladaptive pattern of substance use, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress" manifest in things like tolerance, withdrawal, spending significant time trying to obtain the substance and continued use despite knowing the consequences. Substance abuse also describes a maladaptive pattern of substance use that leads to impairment and distress but is manifest in inability to fulfill major obligations at work, school or home, substance use in situations where it is physically hazardous and social/interpersonal problems caused by the effects of the substance. (Marcia Cohn Spiegel and Yaacov Kravitz, "Confronting Addiction," in *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook.* ed. Dayle A. Friedman [Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005], 306-308)

[17] Shelly Marshall, *Young, Sober, and Free* (Center City: Hazelden, 2003), 11.

When it comes to a child's ability to cope with increasing life challenges, some have more "resiliency" than others.[18] Not every teen that will try drugs will become addicted. Many will "experiment" with little consequence. Yet addiction is very much a disease – and determining whom it will affect is difficult. All drugs of abuse affect the brain's "reward circuit," part of the limbic system.[19] Simply put:

> All drugs of abuse—nicotine, cocaine, marijuana, and others—affect the brain's "reward" circuit...Normally, the reward circuit responds to pleasurable experiences by releasing the neurotransmitter dopamine, which creates feelings of pleasure, and tells the brain that this is something important—pay attention and remember it. Drugs hijack this system, causing unusually large amounts of dopamine to flood the system. Sometimes, this lasts for a long time compared to what happens when a natural reward stimulates dopamine. This flood of dopamine is what causes the "high" or euphoria associated with drug abuse.[20]

But with continued use comes significant changes to the brain:

> The first time someone uses a drug of abuse, he or she experiences unnaturally intense feelings of pleasure. The reward circuitry is activated—with dopamine carrying the message. Of course, drugs have other effects, too; a first-time smoker also may cough and feel nauseated from toxic chemicals in a tobacco or marijuana cigarette. But the brain starts changing as a result of the unnatural flood of neurotransmitters. Because they sense more than enough dopamine, neurons may begin to reduce the number of dopamine receptors or simply make less dopamine. The result is less dopamine signaling in the brain, what the scientists call "down regulation." Because some drugs are toxic, some neurons also may die. As a result, dopamine's ability to activate circuits to cause pleasure is severely weakened. The person feels flat, lifeless, and depressed. In fact, without drugs, life may seem joyless. Now the person needs drugs just to bring dopamine levels up to normal. Larger amounts of the drug are needed to create a dopamine flood, or "high"—an effect known as "tolerance." These brain changes drive a person to seek out and use drugs compulsively, despite negative consequences such as stealing, losing friends, family problems, or other physical or mental problems brought on by drug abuse—this is addiction.[21]

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[18] Edythe Held Mencher, *Resilience of the Soul* (New York: URJ Press, 2007), 17.
[19] National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens, "Facts on Drugs: Brain and Addiction," http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/facts_brain1.php
[20] Ibid.
[21] National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens, "Facts on Drugs: Brain and Addiction," http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/facts_brain2.php

Coupled with the growing, changing make-up of the teenage brain, drugs are particularly dangerous. The first time someone uses a drug is a conscious decision. Yet once they become addicted, they are dealing with a disease.[22]

Teens are overwhelmed with societal pressures to use drugs, alcohol, and to engage in gambling and sex for the first time. Beit T'Shuvah's[23] "Partners in Prevention" program stresses the many reasons teens begin to use: media pressure, peer pressure, perfectionism, family dysfunction, and over scheduling are just a few. The 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)[24] estimated that 19.9 million Americans aged 12 and older were current illicit drug[25] users. Almost half (49.1 percent) of youths aged 12 to 17 reported in 2007 that it would be "fairly easy" or "very easy" for them to obtain marijuana if they wanted some. Around one quarter reported it would be easy to get cocaine (24.5 percent). One in seven (14.1 percent) indicated that heroin would be "fairly" or "very" easily available, and 14.4 percent reported easy availability for LSD.

Given the brain's reward circuit, the immaturity of a teen's brain and the ease with which a teen can try drugs, abuse and/or addiction are not such an improbable scenarios. Yet diagnosing substance abuse problems in teens is more difficult than other

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[22] Considerable work has been done to establish addiction as a disease. It is listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV). More information can be found through the National Institute on Drug Abuse and through clinical sites like the Mayo Clinic (http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/drug-addiction/DS00183).

[23] Beit T'Shuvah is a nationally recognized residential treatment center and a full-service congregation that offers religious services, holiday celebrations and study. It provides outreach to the entire community including prevention programs, family and alumni counseling and support, court advocacy and professional training.

[24] An annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

[25] Illicit drugs include marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or prescription-type psychotherapeutics used non-medically. (NSDUH)

age groups[26] because of the developmental stage's transitional aspects. Denial is also a major factor in how adults view teen addiction. Marshall adds:

> Parents, professionals, and community leaders do know that something to do with drugs has gone wrong, but they don't know why. Parents want to blame the public schools and ill-begotten friends; professionals often try to blame bad parenting and poor communicating skills; aspects of the legal system may emphasize socioeconomic factors; while some religious folks might think we're lacking in morality. These well-meaning individuals tell us we're 'too nice, too smart, or too young' to be real addicts and alcoholics. And of course, until we young addicts embrace recovery, we're only too willing to agree. We also agree that our drug use and abuse isn't our fault…[27]

Denial and blame are impediments to helping a teen in crisis. Yet understanding the myriad factors at work can be a step in prevention, intervention and recovery. Addressing teen addiction must be multidisciplinary and issues related to drugs must be addressed in a variety of settings with different people. Religious institutions are one example.

Jewish Teens and Addiction

Biological and social pressures contribute to greatly to general teen drug use. Modern teens are responding dramatically to the pressures of an "achievement-driving society,"[28] one factor in causing teens to experiment with drugs. This pressure may be heightened in Jewish families specifically. In Jewish culture and Jewish families, focus is placed sharply on children. According to Hines, Preto, McGoldrick, et al., "children

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[26] Jacqueline Hudak, Jo Ann Krestan, and Claudia Bepko, "Alcohol problems and the family life cycle" in *The Expanded Family Life Cycle*. eds. Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick (Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon, 1999), 460.
[27] Marshall, *Young, Sober, and Free*, 1-2.
[28] Charles Kadushin, "Being a Teenager in America: Trying to Make it," (Waltham: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2000), 6.

are expected to be a source of pride and pleasure for parents and grandparents."[29] Their behavior and achievements contribute to this. Yet this may add to the teen's stress as they find it onerous to be the subject of so much attention and outside pressure. Jewish teens find it particularly difficult to separate from the opinions of the family.[30] Specifically, the family may place pressure on academic success, creating expectations of how much the teen must achieve. This may create "an emotional environment where feelings of failure, rather than self-worth, are increasingly the teen's reality."[31]

Jewish teens are an integrated part of upper-class, white America. They therefore value mainstream American views more than particularly Jewish ones. Studies show that in regards to drugs and sex, Jewish teens do not differ significantly from non-Jews.[32] In his study on Jewish teens, Charles Kadushin concludes that "Judaism is important to them, but only as it coheres or coexists with their aspirations for academic success, financial security, and social belonging."[33] He finds that it does not significantly impact their decisions regarding drugs and alcohol. According to Kadushin, Judaism's ethical imperatives "appear to exert little influence on the important decisions teenagers have to make regarding sexual activity and drug use. The likely interpretation is that teenagers see these less as moral decisions than as matters of personal fulfillment."[34] Judaism is not speaking to their everyday lives in a meaningful way. For Jews as a whole, Steven

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[29] Paulette Moore Hines, Nydia Garcia Preto, Monica McGoldrick, et al., "Culture and the Family Life Cycle," in *The Expanded Family Life Cycle*, Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick, eds. (Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon, 1999), 84.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Doades, *Parenting Jewish Teens: A guide for the perplexed*,125.
[32] Kadushin, "Being a Teenager in America: Trying to Make it," 38.
[33] Ibid., vii.
[34] Ibid., 69.

Cohen and Arnold Eisen's study *The Jew Within* (1998) shows that many Jews value their post-modern individualism and avoid group identification:

> [They] demonstrated enduring ambivalence towards the organizations, institutions, commitments and norms which constitute Jewish life, whether these be families of origin, synagogues, federations, or God. Not only is the freedom to choose retained, even after the recognition that one has been chosen and is obligated. Ambivalence, too, continues to be felt and expressed, even after one has decided to be or become a serious Jewish self, and is embarked on the path that such a self has determined that it must walk.[35]

This importance of "self" and aversion to affiliating with Jewish institutions provides a significant obstacle to Jewish values impacting Jewish youth.

Outside of the family, the single most influential place of identity-formation and authority for teens is school. Teens spend the majority of their waking hours in school, immersed with their peers.[36] Not only does the school exert academic pressures but extracurricular activities shape the teen's world. Schools are "mini-communities with their own norms, sub-cultures and status hierarchies."[37] Religion and spirituality seem un-integrated into the day-to-day activities and concerns of teens.[38]

So what place, then, do religious institutions have in helping addicted teens, let alone teens in general? While religious institutions are not well integrated into their everyday lives, studies have shown that religious beliefs and values can have a significant place in adolescents' lives. According to Kadushin's research, more than half (58%) of high-school seniors reported in a national survey that religion was important to them (Bachman et al., 1997). In another survey, 76% of 13 to 17-year-olds said that they

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[35] Steven Cohen and Arnold Eisen, *The Jew Within* (Boston: The Susan & David Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, 1998), 6.
[36] Kadushin, "Being a Teenager in America: Trying to Make it," 7.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 8.

believed in a personal God, 29% believed that they had experienced the presence of God, and 74% prayed at least occasionally (Gallup & Bezilla, 1992).[39] The 2007 NSDUH survey similarly showed that 76.1% of teens agree that religious beliefs are very important in their lives. It also showed that there seems to be a correlation to religious beliefs and drug use as only 7.4% of those who responded that religion is important in their lives used illicit drugs in the past month; as opposed to 16.3% having used from those whom religion was not important. Most importantly, a study by Donahue & Benson in 1995 showed that attendance at religious services and the belief that religion is important in one's life are correlated with altruistic behavior in teenagers.[40]

Perhaps these altruistic behaviors can be extended to themselves. Edythe Mencher offers that the synagogue is not to be part of the "clinical or therapeutic milieu, rather, it ought to serve as a sanctuary where members bring their deepest concerns and develop wholesome and spiritually sound ways of managing life."[41] The synagogue community (clergy, educational professionals, administration, leaders) can be important players in clinical intervention and can offer important referrals. These individuals can also provide validation and stress that emotional distress and destructive behaviors are not shameful.[42] This can be achieved through frank discussions of the topic. Clergy may do this from the *bimah* or in their teaching. They can also post compassionate words on websites, blogs and in newsletters. The community can also acknowledge the problem and provide support, guidance and understanding in synagogue newsletters, religious

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Edythe Held Mencher, *Resilience of the Soul*, 26.
[42] Ibid., 31.

school classrooms, youth group, and committee meetings.[43] This all helps to erase the shame and stigma associated with such issues.

Furthermore, God, or a Higher Power, is an essential part of the 12 Step recovery process. Marshall heads a section of her book, "The spiritual side to this disease is called 'self-centeredness.'"[44] She explains that "Self-centered is not spiritual. Any working connection with a loving, creative Higher Power or being of service to our fellow man is practically nonexistent in our using lives. Our reliance is on chemicals, not on God. Our energy is directed toward a drug, not our family and friends."[45] The Jewish community, working as a loving team, can play an essential role in this spiritual redirection.

Effects on the Family

In the case of Deuteronomy's rebellious son (the *ben sorer u-moreh*) the parents have intervened in regards to their son's behavior. He appears to be a repeat offender, as the text specifies: "even after they discipline him." One can imagine two parents, exasperated and worn out, bewildered as to how to reach their son. They have reached the point where they fear for the son's safety as well as their own. Their guilt consumes them and they do not know where to turn.

In the case of modern-day addiction, we know that it is a family disease. When one person suffers from the disease, all other members of the family are affected.[46] Family members frequently become enablers, people who "prevent the addict from

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[43] Edythe Held Mencher, "Compassion is the Best Medicine" in *Reform Judaism Magazine,* Fall 2007.
[44] Marshall, *Young, Sober, and Free,* 9.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Marcia Cohn Spiegel and Yaacov Kravitz, "Confronting Addiction," 308.

experiencing the full consequences of his or her behavior."[47] This includes making excuses for the individual, "covering" for them, and even providing the means with which to use. Friends, medical/psychosocial professionals and clergy can also become enablers by rationalizing the problem.[48] This is not for lack of caring, though. The alternative is risking anger and rejection and speaking up is a difficult choice to make.

This decision to intervene can be particularly difficult for parents. Parenting an adolescent is tricky, as this life stage requires guidance and independence simultaneously. Preto urges that "parents must be ready to let go and yet stay connected to guide, and be protective when necessary."[49] This is a constant struggle. As an adolescent matures, the family system must adapt. Generational roles will change and unresolved system conflicts may re-emerge.[50] Confronting these challenges is particularly difficult for the modern day parent. By the time a child enters adolescence, a parent suddenly finds *himself or herself* in a new life stage, a fact they are negotiating personally.[51] Furthermore, The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) showed that parents are already overworked, overcommitted and tired. Due to these factors, they are also lacking outside support.[52] This can lead a parent to believe their family is dysfunctional and inadequate,[53] leading to feelings of shame. And while familial closeness may prevent drug abuse,[54] adolescents may behave in dismissive ways that

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Preto, "Transformation of the family system during adolescence," 281.
[50] Ibid., 280.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 282.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

cause a parent to feel like they are not succeeding at parenting.[55] No wonder, then, that the biblical parents have desperately come forward. They can no longer struggle, they recognize that they could not save their son but they can perhaps save themselves. Parents at some point must relinquish control and protect their own lives. Sometimes this causes the addict to start to take responsibility for his or her own life as well.

***Hineini*: Intervention**

Before a parent gives up on the teen, though, there are ways they can intervene. Intervention in a modern context has a variety of meanings. Formal intervention involves a group of people, guided by a trained facilitator, confronting the individual about his/her behavior with affirmation that they care deeply about them and are concerned. Intervention is a broader term, though, that describes any way an individual approaches a drug abuser or addict about their use. According to The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, "an intervention can be as simple as a conversation. The purpose? To approach [the] child directly about his drug or alcohol use."[56] While this conversation may be uncomfortable and may upset the teen, their health and livelihood are at stake.

The 2007 NSDUH survey showed that teens who believe that their parents would strongly disapprove of their using substances in certain amounts or frequencies were less likely to use that substance than were teens who believe their parents would *somewhat* disapprove or were ambivalent. A family member cannot control a loved one's substance abuse[57] but they can show that they care. The Partnership for a Drug-Free America

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[55] Edythe Held Mencher, *Resilience of the Soul*, 21.
[56] http://www.drugfree.org/intervene
[57] Marcia Cohn Spiegel and Yaacov Kravitz, "Confronting Addiction," 308.

advocates the importance of small gestures and simple conversations on their "Intervention eBook":

> The point of having an intervention with your teen is to address his drug or alcohol problem and lead him to help if he needs it. A simple intervention can take place between you and your child in your own home – and it can be very successful, even if it only tackles small goals at first. Just making it clear to your teen that you don't want him drinking or using drugs is an accomplishment. Confronting your child about his drug use will probably be uncomfortable for both of you, and you may even think it's unnecessary. But you can never be too safe or intervene too early.[58]

While it takes tremendous courage to speak up and one must exercise self-restraint (paradoxically at the same time), a parent must approach their child in order to say *hineini*: I am here for you. The challenge is considering how we will respond "*hineini.*"[59]

In his book *Hineini In Our Lives*, Norman Cohen outlines the way the Bible uses *hineini* as a phrase. He finds it connotes three main sentiments. First is the ability to be present for and receptive to the other. Second is readiness to act on behalf of the other and third is the willingness to sacrifice for someone or something higher.[60] All three of these things need to occur in order for a parent (or caring adult) to intervene. He/she must be able to see the truth of a teen's drug problem and be willing to explore its depths. Yet they must have the courage to act on their instincts and broach the subject despite the anger or opposition they may meet. The sacrifice may be the teen's freedom (i.e. sending them to a treatment facility or "scared straight" program against their will) or the sacrifice may be one's relationship with the teen. Cohen writes, "such is the risk of *hineini*. When we are willing to be vulnerable by being open and responsive, we can never be sure what

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[58] The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, "Intervention eBook," 1. http://www.drugfree.org/intervene

[59] Joanne Doades, *Parenting Jewish Teens: A guide for the perplexed*, 9.

[60] Norman Cohen, *Hineini in Our Lives* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003), xi.

kind of response we will receive in turn."[61] He demonstrates this in the encounter between Isaac and Jacob in Genesis 27:21-22, showing how dishonesty is an unfortunate consequence of a *hineini* interaction.

Cohen also uses the episode of Moses and the burning bush in order to illustrate a *hineini*, or for our purposes, an intervening encounter. Moses makes a real effort to see the burning bush, almost passing it by but turning again to take a second look. By doing this, "God knows that Moses is ready to hear and respond…Moses opens his heart and mind, and understands and internalizes what he has experienced – the awesome presence of God, which is beyond explanation."[62] A loved one must turn again to their teen to see the real truth of their "burning." Despite the difficulty, we must understand that in the moment we intervene, we find ourselves on holy ground (Exodus 3:5) because we have the potential to save a life.

This is difficult for a parent or caring individual to do alone. A caring community is essential in supporting not only the teen, but also the individual who intervenes. This includes adults and the teen's peers. Investigating Deuteronomy's account of the rebellious child, Tigay analyzes the public nature of the son's rebuke: "The present law respects the parents' right to discipline their son, but it prevents them from having him executed on their own authority. This may only be done by the community at large on the authority of the elders."[63] The parents come forward out of desperation, yet they also acknowledge their own connection to the matter. In order for intervention and rebuke to occur, the intervener must first check their own soul and seek outside help.

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[61] Ibid., 38.
[62] Norman Cohen, *Hineini in Our Lives*, 73.
[63] Jeffrey Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy*, 196.

Chapter Two: Jewish Texts on Substance Abuse

Introduction

In our modern American context, drugs are mind and body-altering substances, legal and illegal, which come in a variety of forms. A trip to a drug store provides a sufficient example of the plethora of easily available drugs. In the "over the counter" section, one can find elixirs, syrups, pills, rubs and mists that attend to any physical ailment. In the pharmacy, one needs a prescription to obtain heavier doses and controlled varieties. Drugs are so pervasive in our society that we will take them for any physical ailment from small aches to uncontrollable pain. The same spectrum exists for mental illness. Tacitly we believe we know the line between permissible drugs and "bad" drugs - the designation typically being legal and illegal. But even within that seemingly simple categorization, cultural, regional and local attitudes create more of a range. Marijuana, for example, is illegal…except in some states where medical use is allowed. Adderall, a prevalent prescription drug used to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, is easily prescribed and obtained yet is also becoming widely abused. Even Advil Cold and Sinus, an over-the-counter pain and cold reliever, is a well-known ingredient in homemade methamphetamine.

While the rabbis devoted significant time to discussing alcohol and less towards drugs explicitly, they certainly knew of mind and body altering substances. The great history of participation in the medical field among rabbis (the best known being Moses Maimonides) attests to this. We find that the rabbinic approach to drugs in general resonates loudly today in regards to ambiguities, consequences, and concerns. The

rabbis pay particular attention to potential harm and the need for self-restraint. Yet in the rabbinic past and the modern world, adolescence proves a particular challenge. Who is responsible for regulating a young person's behavior? Is it the parent or the emerging adult? Who has the power to control their drug use and at what stage in their life? In this chapter, I will draw the voices out of rabbinic literature that speak to the challenges and difficulties in regards to drug use and addiction and how this relates to adolescents.

Lo Tisa Sama: Drugs and Their Dangers

The word for drug in the rabbinic corpus is *sam*, which literally means drug, or elixir[64]. Rav provides the most direct injunction against consuming drugs in BT Pesahim 113a. The injunction arrives in the context of Rav sharing useful life advice, particularly in regards to the consequences of seeking shortcuts and other inadvisable behaviors. The sugya begins with Rav expressing that a scholar should not live in a city in which "a horse does not neigh and a dog does not bark." The scholar should also not live in a city where the mayor is a doctor. The advice continues: a scholar should not marry two wives but if he does marry two wives, he should marry a third. While the list appears strange, the underlying theme is a concern for safety. In the case of the wives, Rashi explains, it is sound advice because if the two will conspire against you, the third can expose the plot. This marriage advice acts as practical protection for the man.

Rav's next piece of advice links safety to honesty and humility. He reports to Rav Kahana: better to turn over (*hafukh*) an animal carcass than to turn over words. One should skin a carcass in public and get paid rather than say "I'm Kahana, I'm so great,

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[64] Jastrow, Marcus. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, The Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature.* Jerusalem: Hotzet Chorev.

such things are unbecoming for me." Rav stresses that making an honest living doing menial work is better than preaching greatness and acting superior to others. Furthermore, honesty is promoted in the location of the marketplace. Rav's advice cautions an individual to only do something he would be comfortable with announcing publicly. By skinning a carcass in the open, the individual's methods and craftsmanship are on display for all to see. He cannot take shortcuts or shortchange his clients. By exposing his hard work, he will not need to swindle and persuade his client regarding the products' quality. Therefore, in commenting on BT Pesahim 113a, the Meiri adds that if one is honest, he will not need to be so wordy and manipulative in their sales.

This advice on how to remain physically safe, personally humble and morally honest lead into Rav's advice to his son Hiyya: do not drink drugs/elixir, do not leap that which should be stepped, do not extract a tooth, do not provoke a snake, do not provoke an Aramean. This list is concerned with taking shortcuts or engaging in risky behaviors when one does not need to. For example, someone who consciously provokes a snake seeks no benefit. Rather, he risks the snake's anger and a possible poisonous bite. In the case of extracting a tooth, Rashbam comments that if the tooth aches, eventually it will heal on its own. He implies that by extracting a tooth, one makes a bigger deal of something than he needs to. In short, Rav's list preaches abstinence from things that are known to be dangerous in order to avoid conflict and further pain altogether.

But what makes the *sam* so dangerous? Rashi elaborates that it may cause a person to desire it and to consume it regularly. Using it habitually, he'll squander all his money. The money squandering that Rashi fears presumably results from the person's obsession with the substance and the desire to obtain it at any cost. Rashi also shares

Rav's concern for the physical consequences of engaging in drug use. Rashi references his own comment to BT Pesahim 42b: "What is good for one part of the body is not good for another." Not only will one see damage to his livelihood as he squanders his money, but he may also cause unintentional damage to other parts of his physical self. Rashbam echoes this concern, saying that one should not take drugs even if it is for healing. He says: "Do not consume [a drug] if it is possible to heal another way." He too is concerned about the known and unknown consequences of shortcuts and artificial remedies.

Therefore Rashi and Rashbam clearly add a new dimension to Rav's concerns: there is not necessarily an instant cause and effect between drug use and negative consequences. In the case of provoking a snake, for example, a person will be instantly injured. In regards to the *sam*, however, there are deeper, more lasting threats. While there does not seem to be a particular word for "addicted" in the rabbinic canon, Rashi expresses it in two ways: *ragil* (one will drink it regularly) and more poetically: "Your heart will ask for it." This comment goes beyond the concern about immediate consequences of a shortcut or risky behavior and returns to Rav's concern regarding a person's character. The *sam* is strong enough to pull an individual away from themselves; to alter the desires of their heart and negatively impact their behavior.

The rabbis seem to agree that a person whose heart craves a *sam* cannot be humble, honest or physically safe. Not only will he squander his money, he will give that money to the drug, attaching his heart to it, becoming enslaved to a substance. This is the picture of an addict, an individual who does not love himself or God but cleaves to a foreign substance. Writing in the second half of the thirteenth century and commenting

on BT Pesahim 113a, the Meiri uses the word *taanugim* (pleasures/diversions) in order to emphasize the superfluous nature of drugs, as well as their seductive nature. Pleasures are easy for a person to accustom himself to and are harder to give up. The Meiri adds in his *Beit ha-Behirah*: "thus they say 'eat onions and dwell in protection and do not eat geese and fowl lest your heart pursue you and reduce your food and your drink and increase in your house.'" Using example of food, the Meiri shows that these "pleasures" have negative long-term consequences. While they may feel lavish and satisfying in the short-term, in the long term they contribute to greater strain on one's funds and becoming accustomed to an unsustainable lifestyle. It is better to live off of modest substances (such as onions) in order to ensure future adequacy.

In BT Pesahim 113a, the Meiri reads a concern for provoking a "dormant danger." Addiction can lie in waiting, like a snake or a sleeping Aramean. In responding to this issue of susceptibility, he comments that not all humans will give into the same temptations. He continues in the *Beit ha-Behirah*: "and even if all men are forbidden from sinning and [are obligated] to do commandments, there are some that are more praiseworthy than others because they act in the way of clarity/purity. God rewards the conquest of three desires: the bachelor who resists promiscuity, the poor person who returns lost money and the wealthy person that tithes secretly." Humans have different biological and social tendencies that will impact how they react to things like drugs and risky behavior. One who knows their pre-dispositions and acts against them is particularly praiseworthy. Self-awareness and therefore self-regulation are essential to commendable living.

In regards to the "bachelor who resists promiscuity," we must think about the condition of a young person. It takes an immense amount of self-awareness and life-experience to make such educated decisions. Throughout BT Pesahim 113a's discussion, there is an implied inquiry of how these behaviors and a predisposition to risky desires manifest in young people. This is clear in the sugya's structural progression. For the advice about drugs, Rav explicitly directs it to *his son*, Hiyya. Immediately following this advice, the Talmud shares a *baraita*. "Three things one should not provoke: a young gentile, a young snake and a young student. Why? Because their sovereignty stands behind their ears."

The "sovereignty behind their ears" implies youthful impressionability and acknowledging long-term consequences. Rashbam offers that these things (the young gentile, the young snake and the young student) will eventually grow up and their hatred will grow along with them. This will cause them to one-day take revenge on the provoker. Similarly, we can relate the injunction to not do drugs to this *baraita*. One should not provoke a young person with drugs. A young person is even *more* apt to have his/her heart commanded by the drugs given the impressionability of his/her age and the ability for their dependency on it to grow with time. Just as hatred within a young person grows with them, the attachment to a substance can grow with them as well. One day the drug will exact revenge on the body, causing physical and mental damage. In our modern day, we talk so often of how teens go through phases and eventually grow out of them, but the Talmud forces us to ask: what if they do not?

***Sam Hayyim* and *Sam Hamavet*: the Thin Line**

As previously mentioned, Rashi references BT Pesahim 42b: "Anything good for this is bad for that." Rashi explains: "something good for the heart might be bad for the eyes or for another part of the body." The general understanding is that food or any substance can have different effects on different parts of the body. When taking drugs of any sort, a human being is gambling to see if the drug will actually heal the body, be ineffective, or if it will be detrimental. According to the rabbis, predicting the results is difficult and distinguishing between drugs is tricky. As I have shown, Rashbam cautions that it is better to take nothing at all if the ailment can possibly heal on its own. The moral is that the natural body is better than an enhanced/manipulated body.

Perhaps, then, the natural remedy is better than the enhanced/manipulated remedy. The distinction is not so clear. Genesis Rabbah 10:6 shares: "Ben Sira[65] said that God produced drugs from the earth. In them, the doctor heals a wound. And in them, an apothecary prepares poison[66]." The rabbis acknowledge that drugs are able to both sustain life and to take it way. The effects are determined by how it is used, in what context, and how the individual's body responds to it. One drug may work in a myriad of ways. Nothing is inherently beneficial or harmful.

BT Eruvin 65a speaks to this difficulty in discussing wine and how it affects prayer. R. Hanina begins with a seemingly pro-drug statement: "anyone who is appeased by wine possesses one of the attributes of his Creator. As it says in Genesis 8:21: God

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[65] A book of apocryphal wisdom written in 190 BCE in Jerusalem.
[66] Here, *sam* is specifically translated as "poison." (Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, The Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* [Jerusalem: Hotzet Chorev], 998).

smelled the pleasant aroma…" R. Hanina highlights an interesting moment in Genesis 8 where God smells the pleasant aroma of Noah's sacrifice and emotionally moved by the smell, resolves not to doom the earth to a catastrophe like the flood again. R. Hanina's comment assumes that the aroma intoxicated God, exhibiting control over God's temperament and influencing God's decisions.

This comment is problematic. How can God not be in full control of God's decisions? Is it possible that God's enduring covenant with humanity is based on just an inebriated declaration? Genesis Rabbah addresses this troubling idea by pointing out an oddity in the Torah text. In Gen 8:21, God speaks the resolution *to* God's heart, not *in* God's heart. Genesis Rabbah teaches that "the wicked act at the whim of their heart," meaning that their heart speaks and they do not. Examples include: Psalm 14:1,[67] Genesis 27:41,[68] 1 Kings 12:25,[69] and Esther 6:6[70] in which wicked characters' plots originate in their hearts. "Yet," the midrash reads, "the righteous maintain their heart subject to their own control," meaning that the upright speak *to* their heart and tell it what to do rather than be ordered by it. Examples include: 1 Samuel 1:13,[71] 1 Samuel 27:1,[72] and Daniel 1:8.[73] Again the rabbis stress "self-regulation" as a theme regarding drugs. While the aroma of the sacrifice may have intoxicated God, God still had the righteousness and therefore the self-control to exert command over God's thoughts rather

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[67] "the fool has said *in* his heart"
[68] "Esau said *in* his heart"
[69] "Jeroboam said *in* his heart"
[70] "Haman said *in* his heart"
[71] "Hannah spoke unto her heart"
[72] "David said to his heart"
[73] "Daniel placed upon his heart"

than have the drug change the course of God's thought process. A human must also exert self-control in order to command the drug rather than the drug commanding them.

Intention is also important. In addition to being able to self-regulate, the Meiri (commenting on BT Eruvin 65a) explores other ways one can be like God while inebriated. He says that if wine helps one to focus his attention, he acts like God. God simply needed to calm down after the flood and used the aroma as a relaxation tool to help God focus. On the other hand, according to the Meiri, if your intent while drinking is gluttonous and for pleasure, then it is the wrong reason.

As the Meiri expressed in Pesahim 113a, self-control cannot always be exerted. In some cases, a person's addiction is too compelling. The line between positive and negative use is easily blurred. In Eruvin 65a, R. Hiyya investigates the number 70, the gematria of the word for wine, *yayin.* He shares: "Anyone whose mind is settled in his wine contains the wisdom of the 70 judges." Yet he continues that the numerical value of *sod*, secret, is also 70. Therefore "when wine enters, secrets exit." As calming as wine can be, its effects are unpredictable and discretion is compromised. R. Hiyya displays that one substance is both capable of great aid and greater disaster.

This thin line implies constant danger. Therefore, R. Hanina continues by quoting Proverbs 31:6: "Wine was created only to comfort the bereaved and grant reward to the wicked." What sort of reward does the wicked receive? According to Rashi, they get to have their fun in this life but they will suffer in the next. Following this, the Talmud offers a case study (also mentioned in Sanhedrin 43a) in which drugs were provided to a convict in order to ease his suffering in this life. He is about to be executed by stoning: "Rav Hiyya bar Rav Ashi said in the name of Rav Hisda: Make him a drink with a grain

of frankincense in a cup of wine for it is stated: Wine was created only to comfort the bereaved and grant reward to the wicked." Rashi says that this inclusion of frankincense is in order to lessen the convict's anguish. In this case, the intoxication is seen as a merciful measure to someone who is going to suffer physically during the execution in this world as well as in his punishment in the world to come. Is the fact that the convict is going to die and be judged negatively for his sins an indicator of permissibility? One can reason that the convict has already ruined his life, so the concerns of BT Pesahim 113a are no longer relevant.

In *The Book of Proverbs: a Commentary*, W. Gunther Plaut says: "This is no approbation of habit-drinking, but a realistic understanding of the psychological need which prompts it. The meaning therefore is: drink is not for you – let someone else drink, but one who wants to kill his pain or his misery."[74] This statement expresses compassion for the addict, understanding that their substance abuse does not come out of laziness, rather, it comes out of a real (albeit destructive) need. Plaut continues: "Drink of course, solves nothing; its anesthetic effects merely deepen the drinker's inability to face his problems."[75] In this case, we may recognize the healing/calming effect wine or a drug can have, but it merely masks the deeper problems underneath.

Therefore, in one Talmudic passage we see that one who becomes intoxicated is like God, yet the drug user is also like the most tormented of the wicked on the earth. We find, therefore, that the substance and its effects are morally ambiguous. Therefore, as the Meiri expressed, the way human beings use it determines its permissibility. This is

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[74] W. Gunther Plaut, *Book of Proverbs: A Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961), 311.
[75] Ibid.

clear even outside of the realm of drugs and alcohol as the rabbis extend the principle to sex and food. Much of their discussion of consumption centers on food and the positive and negative affects that even certain foods can have. BT Eruvin 55b deals mostly with city boundaries and acceptable living quarters. Within these parameters, Rav Huna says that a Torah scholar should not live in a city that does not have vegetables in it. Naturally, the Talmud asks: does this mean all vegetables are good? A *baraita* shares that some vegetables have negative consequences (i.e. increasing excrement, causing one to hunch, taking away 1/500th of the person's eyesight). Further on in Eruvin 56a it shares: where a radish appears, a drug of life (*sam hayyim*) has appeared. Yet there is a contradiction, because there is another *baraita* that says: where a radish appears, a drug of death (*sam hamavet*) has appeared. The text resolves this contradiction by saying that the first *baraita* refers to the root of the radish and the second *baraita* it is referring to the leaves.

Regardless of how the rabbis distinguish radish parts, the text has exposed a key concern in regards to food (that may be extended to drugs and alcohol): it is difficult distinguishing between healthful and harmful elements of any substance, including natural substances. The rabbis express this by qualifying *sam* as either *sam hayyim* or *sam hamavet* (drug of life and a drug of death, respectively). Even with their early knowledge of science, the rabbis understood that one cannot just break the radish into parts but one must also be mindful of how it is manipulated. The radish has an effect on the body, but depending on situation and manipulation, it can be used for good effect or for bad effect.

BT Yoma 72b also exhibits how the real distinguishing factor between a drug of lie and a drug of death lies not just in the substance itself but in the way the human manipulates it and with what intention. In a clever letter interchange, R. Yehoshua ben Levi asks what is meant by the Biblical phrase "this is the Torah which Moses placed…" (Deut 4:44). R. Yehoshua answers that if one merits the Torah, it is like a drug of life for him. If one does not merit Torah, it becomes a drug of death. R. Yehoshua has cleverly exchanged the *sin* of the verb *sam* (to place) with the *sameh* of the noun *sam* (drug/elixir). Torah, like a drug, contains great power based on how one uses it. By including the concept of "merit," R Yehoshua speaks to the character or perhaps the biological predisposition of the human being interacting with it. He implicitly asks: What sort of person are you? Are you prone to abuse such a powerful tool? Are there other areas of your life in such distress that Torah, or a drug, would become a destructive force?

The BT Yoma 72b passage continues: "Rava said for one who uses the Torah skillfully it is a drug of life and one who uses it without skill it is a drug of death." We must ask: how does one acquire those skills? What if biologically the skills cannot be attained as easily as others attain them? According to BT Yoma 72b's subsequent *baraita* on Rav Banaa'ah, the skill comes with proper practice. He used to say: "who ever studies Torah *lishmah,* his torah is made a *sam hayyim* for him. As it is said – it is tree of life to those that grab hold of it….but whoever deals in Torah that is not *lishmah* it is made for him a *sam hamavet* – as it is said – my teaching shall drip (*arifah*) down like rain. We don't read it "*arifah*" rather we read it "*harigah*" (murder) as it is said [in Deuteronomy 21:4]: they shall break the neck (*arfu*) of the calf there in the riverbend."

The ritual outlined in Deuteronomy 21:1-9 has to do with a situation in which a murdered body is found in a field between two towns, therefore connecting *arifah* and *harigah*. The ritual is meant to absolve the closest town of the bloodguilt (for it is assumed that the perpetrator resides there, but no one knows for sure). If no one steps forward, the guilt is applied to all of them. The ritual stresses that someone or a group of people must take responsibility for the murder. When related to using Torah as a *sam hamavet*, the lesson is that if someone uses a powerful drug (like Torah) irresponsibly, the consequences will be dire. Furthermore, if someone has sinned and the person's identity cannot be determined, their community is responsible for absolving the guilt.

Disciplining the *Yezer Ha-ra*

BT Yoma 72b is ultimately concerned with a person's character and how it determines their life and lifestyle. According to the Talmud, R. Shmuel bar Nachmani said that R. Yonatan contrasted these verses: Psalms 19:9 (The precepts of God are upright, gladdening the heart) and Psalms 18:31 (the words of God smelts). The lesson in this contrast is that if one is deserving, Torah gladdens him, if he is not deserving it smelts[76] him. The idea that Torah smelts a man through trials, refining and disciplining him, offers an image of the agony something as powerful as Torah can bestow on someone unable to use it properly. Yet it also offers the possibility that the individual may come through the ordeal a better person. Rashi adds that inappropriate use of Torah smelts/agonizes the person through *yesurim* (sufferings, presumably in this life) and *gehinnom* (suffering in death). Offering a more optimistic view, Reish Lakish said: If a

[76] Jastrow also offers: purifies, tries.

man is deserving, it smelts him for life (in the world to come), if not deserving it smelts him for death. While Rashi sees the one for whom Torah is a *sam hamavet* suffering in both this life and the world to come, Reish Lakish offers that there may still be good in the person and that after suffering in this life, the unmerited person may then see peace in the world to come. There is opportunity for growth and ultimately for redemption.

Despite this opportunity, it is clear that self-discipline and diligence are important in developing a person of merit. This theme continues in Rambam's Hilchot Deot 4:9 in a discussion of certain foods. Rambam rules that "Some foods are very harmful: large fish, cheese, mushrooms, meat that have been aged and salted, wine from the press and any cooked food that has been left out and smells. These are all *like* a *sam hamavet*." We must ask how are they *like* a poison? In the case of the aged and salted meats, there has been a clear manipulation to the chemistry of the substance. In the case of the wine straight from the press, one is consuming it too soon after fermentation. Again, the new chemistry may be harmful for the body. As before, the concern is not necessarily the substance itself, but how, when and why it is consumed. Rambam continues to concede that some foods are harmful but not as harmful. In this case, one must practice moderation.

Overindulging in sex is also like a *sam hamavet*. In Hilkhot Deot 4:19, Rambam's caution regarding too much sex sounds similar to the consequences of the effects of drugs: "too many seminal emissions causes the strength of the body, the life and the light of the eyes to leave and do damage." Preserving vitality is his greatest concern and moderation is the best method. Yet in Halacha 10, Rambam admits how difficult practicing moderation can be: "A man who is wise overcomes his desires, is not

drawn by his appetites and eats nothing of these unless he needs them for a medical reason – this is a *gibor*[77]!" Rambam acknowledges that the appetite still exists. The man's power comes from abstaining. Desire, being a part of the *yezer ha-ra,* will never go away, but choosing to act against this desire is a mark of strength.

This control of the *yezer ha-ra* directly relates to Pesahim 113a and God's reward for the bachelor who resists promiscuity, the poor person who returns lost money and the wealthy person that tithes secretly. In the *Shut Mishneh Halakhot,* Rabbi Menashe Klein[78] explicitly connects Rambam's Hilkhot Deot, Pesahim 113a, Pesahim 42b and the comments of Rashi and Rashbam on these *dapim*. The issue of vitality is central: these overindulging behaviors all affect the strength of the body, a man's life, and the brightness of his eyes. Without proper care and discipline, vigor will leave the body and a man's life will be lost (i.e. his days depleted and early death).

Rambam therefore offers these suggestions towards a healthy lifestyle sexually: only engage in sex when the body is healthy and when involuntary erections are happening and the body is essentially calling out for sex. This principle may also be applied to drugs. As we have already seen, there are instances where drugs can benefit the body. In some cases, the body may be calling out for a remedy. Rambam stresses discipline and self-awareness. One needs to know when to engage in a behavior so that the "side-effects" will be minimal and the healing will be optimal.

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[77] In rabbinic literature, a *gibor* is a man of emotional strength. BT Tamid 32a reads: "who is called a *gibor?* One who subdues his *yezer ha-ra* (his evil inclination)."

[78] Also known as the Ungvarer Rov, a Hasidic rabbi who began publishing *The Shut Mishneh,* a collection of responsa, in 1958. This responsum comes from the *Shut Mishneh,* chapter 97.

The *Nefesh Hol*

Many of the Talmudic and medieval voices have acknowledged that some individuals are predisposed to certain behaviors and that one who overcomes their temptations is particularly praiseworthy. They have all preached mind over body. Many assume that as long as one knows the consequences of certain substances and works towards self-awareness, they should be able to moderate and self-discipline, overcoming their urges. They stress the importance of the struggle and coming out a stronger person for it (i.e. Rambam's *gibor* and the wicked person being smelted into a better individual). But what about those individuals who are mentally unable to achieve this control of their *yezer ha-ra?*

In Hilkhot Deot Chapter Two, Rambam addresses those who may be determined unable to discipline themselves in the ways discussed earlier. This person has a *nefesh hol* – a sick soul. Rambam defines this individual as one with these deficiencies of character: desiring and loving bad traits, hating the good path, and lazy about to following it. "Depending on how sick they are," he says, "it is very burdensome on them." Rambam's sense of *hol* is not profane, rather, it is *holeh*, sick.

Rambam quotes Isaiah 5:20 which speaks of such people who live in such an inverted world of loving that which is bad and hating that which is good: "Woe to those who say that bad is good, and good is bad, darkness is light and light is darkness, bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter." Rambam describes a person whose world has been inverted so severely that their whole soul is sick. This is not a mere rebellious young person or a stubborn adult.

Rambam asks: “How do we fix those with sick souls? They should go to the wise ones, for they are the healers of souls. They will heal the sick by teaching them traits, until they return them to the good path.” This is a clear call for outside help and seeking a professional on the matter. To this end, Rabbi Menashe Klein upholds Rambam’s concept of the *nefesh hol* and the need to intervene. According to the Shut Mishneh, such mental distress requires another person to “announce it to the world.” This means that the person might not seek the counsel of the wise person, but the loved ones and/or community must be alerted to the severity of the person’s need.

Ad Ha-yom: These Texts Today

While only some of these texts specifically mention young people, they teach important concepts for dealing with adolescent addiction. As shown in Pesahim 113a, young people are impressionable. Behaviors they develop early in life may have long term, serious consequences. Furthermore, self-discipline is difficult for teens. Their sense of identity and personal values are still forming and mature decision-making functions of the brain are still developing.

The blurry line between benign and problematic behaviors is therefore even more obscure among teens. The inability to distinguish harmful substances (whether by amount and/or form) is even more dangerous. There is no such thing as harmless experimentation. It is hard to determine a teen’s predisposition to addiction, just as an adults’.

Therefore, it is a parental and communal responsibility to provide an open, understanding community for teens. In creating this community, adults can be better

equipped to intervene when they assume a problem of drug abuse or mental illness. The vitality and future of the young person is at stake.

Chapter Three: Jewish Texts on Intervention

Introduction

Pesahim 113a is a significant text for exploring the rabbis' cautious view of drugs and drug use. As I have shown, there is an emphasis on transmitting this concern to the younger generation. There is general concern for the impressionability of young people and the rash decisions they make. It is fitting, then, that Rav continues by rebuking his son Avyu: "I have struggled in making you listen and my words did not aid you. Come, I will finish you with words of the world." The Talmud fathoms a situation in which a parent has laboriously attempted to teach a young person but the child does not listen to the parent's wisdom. The son has not become the type of person the father hoped him to be. Therefore the sugya continues with practical business advice: sell merchandise quickly, take the money first then give the goods, better to earn little at home that a lot abroad, make something of your produce before it goes bad, etc. This practical business advice imagines a new direction in the young person's life. After rebuking his son, Rav changes his expectations and adapts to who his son really is.

Read this way, the Talmud presents a parental intervention. The issue of intervening through rebuke is manifest throughout Jewish literature. We revisit Deuteronomy 21:18-21:

> If there will be a man with a son that is stubborn and rebellious, and will not listen to the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and they discipline him and he does not listen, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him, bring him out to the elders of the city, to the gates of his place, and they shall say to the elders of the city: "this son of ours is stubborn and rebellious and will not listen to our voices; he's a glutton and a drunkard." And all the men of the city shall stone him with stones until he dies. So shall your burn out evil from around you and all of Israel will hear and be afraid.

This passage strikes readers with its harshness. The modern understanding of a loving, committed parent is one who gives life to and sustains life within their offspring. Parents will go to great lengths to preserve the safety of their children. Yet here in Deuteronomy, the biblical writer perceives a situation that has gone beyond parental abilities. The child is a glutton and a drunkard. He is a son that consumes life with wild abandon. It asks the question that parents are most scared to ask: What happens when there is nothing more they can do? Where can a parent turn when they have tried everything to save an at-risk youth? What happens when parental modeling and counseling yield no results?

Deuteronomy can actually imagine a son that is so beyond saving that he must be put to death. Such an action is just as inconceivable today as it was to the rabbis who struggled and commented on the biblical text. Today we desperately seek another option. The rabbis were also loath to apply the rules of *ben sorer u-moreh*, declaring in BT Sanhedrin 71a: there has never been a *ben sorer u-moreh* and there never will be! Both then and now, the anxiety is the same: is any soul so beyond saving?

Despite the capital punishment Deuteronomy commands, the biblical text makes a more general value clear: something must be done in the case of this troubled youth. The individual cannot carry on with their self-destructive ways. Underlying the text is the clear reminder that one person's uncontrollable behavior is not limited to that person alone. It affects their family and their friends. It also affects their community.

Deuteronomy desires to blot out evil from within the community through some sort of rebuke and intercession. The biblical writer is willing to intercede as far as putting the boy to death. In our modern world, or even the world of the rabbis, this is not

a viable option. Yet the theme of the passage is clear: one must intercede in order to save others from the evil son and to save the evil son from himself. Evidently, a parent is responsible to come forth. Not only is the wayward child's soul saved by rebuke, but it also preserves the lives of the parents and the community that addiction inevitably binds up in its web.

Crossing the line: who is a rebellious son?

There are specific criteria one must possess to qualify as a "rebellious son." The biblical text only teaches three things about him: he will not listen to the council of his mother and father, he is a glutton and he is a drunkard. We also know the punishment for his behavior is death. Like the modern reader, the rabbis are unhappy with this resolution. The Talmud therefore limits the Deuteronomic injunction severely so no one actually qualifies as a rebellious son. Without one existing, there will be no need to commit filicide. Yet even the rabbis' limitations teach important lessons about excessive consumption, self-control, and the emotional impacts of the two.

Therefore, on the subject of the rebellious son being a "glutton and a drunkard," BT Sanhedrin 70a explains: "Rav Hanan bar Moladah said in the name of Rav Huna: [one is not considered a glutton and drunkard] until the boy buys meat cheaply and eats it and buys wine cheaply and drinks it. Because it is written that a rebellious son is a 'glutton and a guzzler.'" Sanhedrin 70a's explanation works in two ways. First, Rav Hanan recognizes the similarity of *zolel* (glutton) and *zol* (cheap). Yet, what does the cheapness have to do with his eating and drinking habits? The sense is that the boy will eat or drink anything to feed the craving. This definition resonates with experience and

truth. While the quality of certain substances might be important to an addict, the real craving is for the high. One will get high at any cost, regardless of the quality of the substance they can obtain.

To further reduce those that qualify as rebellious sons, the rabbis continue that the boy is not liable for death until he eats raw meat and drinks undiluted wine. This insinuates added urgency and the consumer's animal-like nature. Normally undiluted wine and raw meat are things that cannot be stomached, but for someone who is beyond self-control, they are just as appealing. Ravina adds that perhaps this is diluted but not fully diluted wine and cooked but not fully cooked meat. Or rather, this is the meat that thieves eat. This sort of meat is practically raw, scorched quickly on the outside but raw on the inside, as the thief is always on the run. Not only is this an example of how meat is eaten raw, yet it implies a fear for the boy's future and a life of crime. It is difficult for him to maintain a life of integrity. Obtaining drugs requires money, time, and energy. Any means will be employed to obtain the drug. Appeal remains an important factor, though, and BT Sanhedrin 70a continues that a boy does not become a rebellious son if he eats salted meat and drinks wine from the press. Rashi explains that it is because these things are not appealing to consume, so the individual will not continue ingesting them. Unfortunately, Rashi has already shown in BT Pesahim 113a that quality is not the reason a person loves drugs. Drugs are like an idol with an evil pull on the hearts of human beings. Quality does not impede consumption when one's heart craves it.

In the midst of this conversation, the rabbis elaborate on the dangers of drinking. R. Yitzhak asks: "What is the meaning of 'Do not look upon wine that is made red' (Proverbs 23:31)." He answers: "Do not [do so] because it reddens the faces of the

wicked in this world and whitens their faces in the World to Come." Essentially, while alcohol causes one to flush and enjoy himself now, when the wine has gone and the individual stands to face their punishment in the World to Come, their face will blanch in fear. One must think of the consequences of their drinking and drug use. To a more disastrous end, Rava offers: "Do look at red wine for its end is blood." Rashi explains what we assume: in the end the substance abuse will kill him. While Rashi may mean physical death, we may also assume mental and spiritual destruction as well.

The rabbis do identify how difficult it is to recognize substance abuse. Drinking, in particular, is a social activity, and most people take part in it with care and reason. In BT Sanhedrin 70a, the rabbis play with the word for wine that is pronounced *tirosh* but spelled in Genesis 27:28 and 27:37 as *tirash.* For the rabbis, this linguistic detail demonstrates that if one "merits[79]" he will be made a leader (*rosh*). If he is unable, he will be dispossessed of property and become poor (*rash*). A similar point is made with Psalm 104:15 and the word *yisamach.* In the context of the psalm, *yisamach* means that wine gladdens a man. Yet the Talmud warns that if an individual has low merit and poor character, wine will *yishamach,* destroy him. Both of these wordplays demonstrate the importance of an individual's pre-dispositions. In the case of the rebellious son, not all young people who drink or abuse drugs will become addicts. Yet discerning who is predisposed and who is not is a difficult task. One can easily cross the line, with the negative consequences being dire.

Even though BT Sanhedrin 70a seeks to limit the definition of the rebellious son (and continues to do so eventually rendering him non-existent), it more clearly outlined

[79] That is, if his character is strong enough to partake in drinking responsibly.

the characteristics of contemporary understandings of the dangers of substance abuse and addiction. In the case of the Bible's rebellious son, we learn that he is an individual disposed to abusing food and alcohol and that his addiction has caused him to be obstinate. His parents are unable to reach him and seek help from an outside source.

In the same vein, BT Sanhedrin 70a ends with Rabbi Meir's view that the "tree" from which Adam and Eve ate was actually a grapevine because "nothing else brings woe to a man." It is significant that Rabbi Meir uses Adam and Eve as his example. Adam and Eve were the first children, the first young humans to test the boundaries of their abilities and disobey the command of their parent. We must ask the merits of hard-set rules like "do not eat from the tree" and "do not do drugs." Such ironclad proclamations are bound to be broken. Perhaps if God had engaged Adam and Eve in a discussion about the dangers of the tree and what about the tree was tempting, the "fall into sin" could have been avoided. In this regard, the metaphor continues. The serpent offers peer pressure, preying on the young humans and their curiosity. With this model, we may ask parents: how will you reflect God in the way you teach your child about drugs and how you respond in the case of addiction and crisis? In the end, God casts Adam and Eve out of the garden. Only through this final, difficult act, do the humans actually transition to adulthood, hopefully prepared to meet life's challenges.

The Parent's Difficult Role

In many cases we may assume that a parent rebukes their child out of love for that child. Yet we must consider how difficult it would be for the loving mother and/or father of Deuteronomy's rebellious son to come forward and say "I do not know what else to

do," or worse, to ask for a severe course of action. The situation not only reflects the dire circumstances their child is in, but it potentially highlights the fragile state the parent is in as well. This can manifest in many ways. Parents may feel like failures. In other cases, the parent may be partly to blame. Addiction is an intergenerational problem and a parent's own issues can impact a child. Furthermore, co-dependence and enabling often become a part of the equation. A parent must come forward to rebuke their child not just for the benefit of the child, but for the benefit of the parent as well.

Sanhedrin 70b speaks to this theme by recounting how King Lemuel's[80] mother admonished him in Proverbs 31:1. According to the rabbis, the word *yisratu* teaches that she bound him to a post and said to him: "What my son! What my son of my belly! What my son of my vows!" The rabbis parse out this statement. In each section, they shed light on the complexities in the making of a rebellious son. Part of the fault lies with the child, but some also lies with the parent, in this case, the mother Bathsheba. The rabbis explain: Bathsheba says to Solomon "What my son," meaning that "everyone knows that your father was a God-fearing man and now they will say that it was his mother who made him sin." She fears blame. Whether David was a God-fearing man is questionable, as it is clear in I and II Samuel that David is not an immensely righteous person. Yet for the rabbis, King David was a profound and exemplary figure.

In addition to Bathsheba's reputation concern, she is also gravely disappointed in her son. The rabbis explain that "What my son of my belly" means that Bathsheba had to fight out of the harem to see David so that Solomon could grow up to be robust and fair.

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[80] As to the identity of "King Lemuel" and his mother, Rashi offers that it is Solomon and Bathsheba, and that Solomon was named "to God" because his wisdom and actions were dedicated in service to God.

The assumption is that David would have sex with a woman and never see her again. Bathsheba secured multiple visits in order to ensure the vibrancy of her child. Bathsheba implies that Solomon has misused these qualities she fought so hard for. She seems to ask with exasperation: "I gave you everything, and this is what you do with it?"

Finally, "What, my son of my vows" refers to when all the women of David's harem would take a vow saying: "Let me have a son fit to be king." Yet Bathsheba took the vow: "Let me have a son who is robust, full of Torah and fit for prophecy." In his deviant behavior Solomon has fallen short of Bathsheba's desire for greatness. The modern parent dealing with a stubborn or wayward child must ask: what were our expectations and hopes for our child? Were they too much? How must I adapt my vision to fit the person he/she actually is?

In regards to the personal character of the child, Bathsheba's rebuke continues: "Do not keep company with the kings that drink and get drunk and ask 'why do we need God?'" This statement exposes the myriad influences on a young person's behavior. Blame does not only lie with parent and child, but the environment is influential as well. What sort of company does the teen keep and how has peer pressure had an affect? In the end, Bathsheba's rebuke can offer us a small piece of the addiction mosaic. Addiction, particularly in teens, results from a wide variety of sources. Parents are especially intertwined in the addiction web. Their hardest role is to speak up and reach out in order to get help for their child as well as themselves.

"Surely You Must Rebuke"

All of these factors in a rebellious child's life can seem overwhelming for both the parents and the child, but the injunction to save a life (*pikku'ah nefesh*) is clear throughout all of Jewish text[81]. Saving a life requires intervention, often achieved through open rebuke. In the Holiness Code of Leviticus 19, verses 17-18 read: "Do not hate your brother in your heart; surely rebuke your neighbor and do not carry sin because of him. Do not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the children of your people (*b'nei amecha*), I am the Eternal."

This Leviticus passage highlights a number of important concerns. The first is an awareness of the private/public distinction. One should not privately hold a grudge against another, a grudge the individual holds presumably because the neighbor has done something abhorrent. Therefore, rather than blame the neighbor privately, the matter must be exposed publicly. The text expresses that keeping sins private is more dangerous than exposing them. By commanding this public airing of grievances, Leviticus exposes another concern: another's sin must be exposed in order for the observer not to carry responsibility or punishment for the other's sin. Deuteronomy relates to the Leviticus passages in that the parents of the rebellious son come forward publicly to address their concerns. As Bathsheba showed in BT Sanhedrin 70a, the parent incurs increasing guilt the more a child's behavior goes unaddressed. Families are therefore encouraged to seek outside help in the case of wayward children. By ignoring the problem or keeping it private, the sin grows and ravages the involved parties.

[81] This concept derives originally from Leviticus 18:5: "You shall keep my statues and my laws, which an individual shall do and live by them."

Yet these texts walk a fine line. When is one supposed to come forward? Where is the line between idle gossip and worthwhile intervention? The Medieval commentators assume that the private grudge holding leads to strife between neighbors. Rashbam offers that by open reproof, peace will occur. Ramban continues similarly: when you rebuke your neighbor, he'll either explain his behavior or apologize for what he did and you will forgive him. Rashbam and Ramban offer idealistic visions of neighborly relations. In actuality, open reproof is not so easy. It takes an immense amount of courage to come forward and expose the fault of another human. Furthermore, we are not always well received.

Worse than lack of intervention is a blatant disregard of a clear problem. BT Ta'anit 20b tells the story of the great Rav Adda bar Ahavah whose considerable merit miraculously protects him against collapsing structures. The tale begins that R. Huna has wine stored in a dilapidated house. He decides he wants to remove the wine before the house collapses. He brings Rav Adda bar Ahavah to the unsafe structure and engages him in a Torah discussion until R. Huna has removed all of the wine. After they leave, the house falls in.

When Rav Adda bar Ahavah realizes the way that R. Huna exploited him and his merit, he takes offense. He emphasizes what R. Yannai said: "a person should never stand in a dangerous place and say 'a miracle will be performed for me,' lest a miracle not be performed. Even if he has enough merit and one is sure a miracle will be performed, the action is deducted from his merits. As it is written (in Genesis 32:11): "I have been diminished as a result of all the kindnesses and all the truth that you have done for your servant." The Genesis proof-text demonstrates that if God has bestowed

extraordinary kindness to a person to this point in his/her life, it means that the amount of accrued merit has to have been depleted along the way. Therefore, without knowing it, one is in danger. Essentially, no one is safe – even those that God has protected until now. The rabbis are realists. Life cannot be lived waiting for miracles nor depending on the present following the patterns of the past. People must diligently protect their well-being in the real world and admit their vulnerability.

This story of Rav Addah bar Ahavah and R. Huna sets an important example for parents and community members dealing with an at-risk youth. One should be wary of endangering others knowingly while depending on a miracle. Even if a person appears to be safe, it is difficult to know what sort of "merit," or for our purposes, tolerance or predispositions, they possess. In the end, by ignoring the potential dangers and failing to address them with the young person, the parent mortally endangers the youth. They cannot just *hope* everything will be all right; they must behave in a way that ensures the safety of the one they are caring for. Relying on a miracle is therefore a great injustice. No matter the evidence that may substantiate that hope, one cannot rule out the worst. Their child might actually have a problem.

Furthermore, it is not insignificant that wine is the motivator for R. Huna's deceit and exploitation of his friend. The wine motivated R. Huna to not only endanger himself, but to endanger his friend as well. Drugs and alcohol do not just affect the person who abuses them. These substances create a network of problems, infiltrating the family system. BT Ta'anit 20b shows that even if we *assume* the safety of another, in order to *ensure* their safety, we must intervene in their behavior. In conjunction with Leviticus 19 it also demonstrates that one intervenes for one's own benefit as well (so that you may

not bear guilt). For these reasons, parents and community members must intervene in regards to a young person's drug use, whether that is in frank conversations that aim at prevention of abuse or public intervention when they assume or identify a problem. This is not *lashon ha-ra* but speech that aims at saving a life.

The Positive Effects of Rebuke

II Samuel 7 also highlights the value of a guardian rebuking a child. Seemingly well intentioned, King David wants to build a Temple for the Ark of the Covenant. The prophet Nathan encourages him to do so. Yet that evening, God tells Nathan to intercede and stop the plans because it is actually David's son who will build the Temple. God makes it clear that God will not build a physical house with David, but a dynastic house, a familial reign that will be eternal. Regarding Solomon, God says in verses 14 -16: "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to Me. When he commits sin, I will rebuke him with the rod of men and the affliction of mortals, but I will never withdraw My favor from him as I withdrew it from Saul from before you. Your house and your kingship shall surely be secure before you; your throne shall be established forever."

In establishing an eternal dynasty with David, God demonstrates the positive effects of rebuke. Whereas God completely withdrew from Saul, the same will not occur with David's line. Yet, God will not allow for inappropriate behavior. Where necessary, God will allow for human afflictions and struggles to strike the Davidic kings. As humans, they are not perfect. God understands that as a parent, God must make room for negative consequences to result from disruptive human behavior. By rebuking the kings of the Davidic line, God makes them stronger and better leaders. God's rebuke also

emphasizes the human limitations of these kings. No one, even one that God supports, is invincible.

This is an example of successful parenting: allowing enough room for a child to learn from their mistakes and to incur the punishments if necessary. Yet this is one of the hardest things a parent or any person close to a young person can do. Intervention and rebuke may seem hurtful to the child, but in the end it makes them stronger. Not only does loving rebuke yield positive rewards, but Rambam's Hilkhot Deot transforms rebuke from reactionary (Leviticus 19 and II Samuel) to pre-emptive and obligatory. In Hilkhot Deot 6:7 Rambam explains:

> It is a mitzvah for a person who sees that his friend has sinned or is following an improper path to return him to goodness and to inform him that he is sinning against himself by his evil deeds as [Leviticus 19:17] states: "surely rebuke your neighbor." A friend who rebukes a colleague - whether because of a [wrong committed] against him or because of a matter between his colleague and God - should rebuke him privately. He should speak to him patiently and gently, informing him that he is only making these statements for his colleague's own welfare, to allow him to merit the life of the world to come. If he accepts [the rebuke], it is good; if not, he should rebuke him a second and third time. Indeed, one is obligated to rebuke a friend who does wrong until the latter strikes him and tells him: "I will not listen." Whoever has the possibility of rebuking and fails to do so is considered responsible for that sin, for he had the opportunity to rebuke them.

While Rambam indicates that failure to rebuke means that one incurs the guilt (as expressed in Leviticus 19), his main concern is the relationships an individual's sinning puts in jeopardy. While he echoes the concern of Leviticus and its commentators by saying that the relationship between the two individuals is at stake, Rambam adds concern for the relationship the sinner has with himself, and the relationship the sinner has with God. In the case of a self-destructive person, they are disrespecting themselves. By doing so, they also disrespect their Creator. Frequently, addicted persons feel

alienated from themselves and they feel alienated from their Higher Power. Indeed, the first steps of Twelve Step programs stress re-inserting God back into an individual's life. Mending the relationship with parents, friends, etc., comes later in the Twelve Steps. Initially a person must understand they are of value and that their life is full of value. God is the reminder of this value. God is the most understanding party, the first one that will reaccept the sinner. The responsibility of the rebuker is to set this reconciliation into motion and create the foundation of all rehabilitation work. Again, one cannot expect a miracle in this regard. Rambam stresses that one must actively pursue this commandment because a life depends on it.

This is an immense amount of responsibility for anyone participating in an intervention. Repairing the relationship between a young person and God can feel like a daunting task. Yet the pay-off is immense. BT Sanhedrin 37a poignantly shares why one must take responsibility and what it can mean for the troubled individual. The rabbis share that there were some outlaws in R. Zeira's neighborhood. R. Zeira befriended them so that they would return and repent. For the word "befriend," the Talmud uses the verb *mekerev,* which has connotations of bringing one close as well as the sense of prayer and intercession.[82] The rabbis, evidently, objected to R. Zeira's actions of bringing the hooligans close and praying for them. Yet when R. Zeira died, the outlaws said: "Until now the short one with singed legs[83] prayed for mercy for us. Now who will pray for mercy for us?" The story ends by saying that the outlaws meditated in their hearts and made *teshuvah.*

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[82] Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Talmud,* 1410-1411.
[83] Rashi says R. Zeira's legs were singed in an accident and therefore this is what he was called.

This rabbinic story teaches that we must have the courage to stand up for the people whom others ignore or do not understand. It is much easier to write them off as ruffians, good-for-nothings and lost causes. They probably *are* scoundrels, but we learn that even they are capable of repenting and changing. No one is a lost cause. Therefore, we, the rebukers, set the example. We must draw the person nearer (sometimes, ironically, that means distancing ourselves from them), pray and intercede on their behalf. Eventually, we hope, the troubled individuals will realize they do not need us to do this for them, but that they are capable of these actions themselves. Yet because we showed them mercy, they can start to show that mercy on themselves and take responsibility for their own actions. We may need to set this example amidst challenges and controversy but the rewards are much greater. Rather than keeping faith with a miracle, we keep faith in our actions and take a leap of faith in another human so that they may offer themselves the same opportunity.

BT Berakhot 10a tells another story of ruffians. In this case, they target the great Tanna Rabbi Meir directly. Like many humans sometimes feel in the pit of our hearts, Rabbi Meir prayed that his terrorizers would die. Beruryah, his wise, learned wife said to him, "On what do you base your prayer? Is it because it is written [in Psalms 104:35], 'Let sins cease...?' Is 'sinners' written? No, rather, 'sins' is written. Furthermore, cast your eyes to the end of the verse: 'And they are wicked no more.' Since sins will cease, they will be wicked no more. So you should rather pray that they repent and be wicked no more."

Beruryah's rebuke works doubly. First, Beruryah understands that a human being is filled with potential. Addiction or other risky behaviors do not define a person; they

may completely takeover a person's life. Beruryah reminds Rabbi Meir that it is not the person we wish to eradicate, but the source of their sin. This teaches that we must respect the person and attack the cause of the sinful actions. For example, we must attack addiction, not the addict his/herself. Beruryah reminds us to rebuke the person for the sake of addressing the sin and how it has affected them, not because they are an inherently evil person.

Secondly, Beruryah rebukes the rebuker, Rabbi Meir. It is significant that after her rebuke of him, he prayed for them, and they repented. Beruryah perceived that her husband was acting out of fear and out of his own sins. Rather than allow him to continue his own self-destructive actions (that were inspired by the troubles of others), she rebuked him in order that he would correct himself. By doing this, he was able to set an example of self-control and *teshuvah* and could therefore, through his prayers and actions, help others to turn from their ways as well. Al-Anon is a modern example of what Beruryah teaches. Al-Anon is a recovery network that supports friends and family of addicts and substance abusers. Al-Anon's 12 Steps are intentionally identical to the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. This demonstrates that friends and family of the addict have also been impacted by the substance and must do a personal inventory of their own experiences, actions and emotions. Only then can they turn their lives around and/or support their loved one.

A Hasidic teaching of the Ba'al Shem Tov also acknowledges the mental state and personal struggle of the rebuker. The rebuker's struggle is evidentially connected to the sinner and the sinner's problems. In regards to Leviticus 19:17, the Ba'al Shem Tov said:

> One who sees faults in another and dislikes him for them is surely possessed of some of these very faults in his own person. The pure and good man can see only the goodness in others. We read: 'Thou shalt not hate they brother in they heart; thou shall rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.' This teaches us: Rebuke thyself first for seeing faults and thus being to a degree impure; then thou wilt not hate they brother, but feel love towards him. If thou rebukest him, it will be in the spirit of love. He will become attached to thee, joining the goodness within him to thine own goodness, and all his faults will disappear. If he should refuse to listen to thee and to admit his fault and abuse thee, he will lose thereby his goodness to three and remain wholly evil. Thus through a loving rebuke, either of these two courses is open: both of ye shall join in love, and both of ye shall attain improvement. Or if there is hatred left, it shall be in his heart.[84]

Before one can have a lasting impact on the person they are rebuking, the rebuker must understand themselves, their own problems, and how another impacts them. The Ba'al Shem Tov offers that one can only identify sin and struggle in another if they can identify sin and struggle in himself or herself. This understanding causes real compassion and rebuke that comes out of love rather than hypocrisy, jealousy or hatred. The Ba'al Shem Tov offers that the sinner will recognize this love and therefore be able to actually do worthwhile soulwork. The ultimate reward is that two souls are improved in this process. There are two acts of healing that occur.

Ad Ha-yom: These Texts Today

While the rabbinic texts on rebuke and intervention do not address addiction directly, the drinking habits of the rebellious son and the concern for general at-risk behavior apply to the problems of substance abuse and addiction. We identify the internal and external struggle of the addict: driven to a life of crime and detachment from himself or herself and others (including God).

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[84] Louis I Newman, *The Hasidic Anthology* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1934), 390-391.

These texts resonate emotionally for the parents and loved ones of today's young addicts. At some point, individuals in an addicted teen's life will reach their limit, and despite their most earnest efforts, they will not know where to turn next. They will need to make difficult decisions. In the event that they can muster the courage to intervene, stepping out publicly is scary and uncertain. But where else can they turn? No one is taught how to verbalize the problem or how to seek out treatment. Parents rarely speak to their kids about drugs, let alone intervene when there is a problem. It is up to the community to show compassion for these people and provide them with resources.

Finally, in this section I primarily focused on the "neighbor" of Leviticus 19 to be a general loved one: parent, family member or community member. Yet if we render *amit* as colleague, we understand that peers have an obligation to each other. We need to teach teens how to intervene with each other and how to identify at-risk, problematic behavior. They too are obligated.

Chapter Four: Contemporary Resources

Introduction

The Jewish community's response to addiction has greatly evolved in the last forty years. Outright denial has slowly morphed into community awareness and response. Anecdotal evidence shows that there are more cases of Jews seeking help for their addictions. This is partially explained by an emerging younger rabbinate, better trained to deal with these problems, as well as others who feel that a subject once taboo is becoming more mainstream.[85] A recent account of addiction and recovery materials found that "the fact that the Jewish community has its share of people suffering from addiction is old news. But Jewish initiatives and resources to combat and respond to addiction remain spotty in some places, wholly lacking in others, according to rabbis and recovery leaders throughout America."[86]

Despite an increase in the conversation, there is still much work to be done in prevention, intervention and recovery - especially with teens. The emerging openness has not yet trickled down to address teen addiction from a Jewish perspective. Jewish intervention and recovery materials for this cohort are virtually non-existent. For example, a significant resource within the Jewish recovery community is JACS (Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others). JACS is an influential organization associated with the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services that has reached thousands of addicted individuals and their loved ones. Yet

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[85] Hinda Mandell, "Crushing today's golden calf: traditionally Christian systems of treating addiction are getting a Jewish twist in the United States," (Jerusalem, Israel: Jerusalem Report Publications Ltd., 2005), 20.
[86] Ibid.

even the JACS teen website is unhelpful. The website offers virtually no support and no unique teen voice. This creates a potential barrier to Jewish teens seeking help. JACS' inability to provide a sufficient teen resource hints to greater deficiency in the Jewish world. While teens and their families may use adult materials, I have shown that teen concerns and needs are different from adults'. This calls for materials specifically developed for teens.

Unfortunately, outside of the recovery community, most presume that "nice Jewish boys" and "nice Jewish girls" are immune to such addictive behaviors. Recently, the Reform Movement has taken a strong interest in self-destructive behaviors as a whole. Addiction tends to fall under this umbrella but it has not yet received the attention it deserves. As a result of this silence, community members, clergy and families are ill equipped to respond to a loved one's addiction and to remain present for these individuals in their recovery. In this chapter, I will investigate the various historical and contemporary resources specifically geared towards and available to Jewish teens and their families. Following each resource, I will evaluate its appropriateness in a contemporary Jewish context. Lastly, I will present what additional values and resources are necessary in order to address the current issues of addiction through a Jewish lens.

It is important that the Jewish community specifically demonstrate its awareness and religious commitment to helping those in the community who suffer. Values and practices embedded in Jewish tradition are already available to families dealing with teen addiction. The experience of intervention, treatment and recovery may also inform one's Jewish belief. Recovery can positively influence one's Jewish practice just as much as Jewish practice can influence recovery. We may expose the shared values by looking at

historical and contemporary Jewish sources on the topic. By examining their evolution and their differences across denominations, we may best identify their value for Liberal Jews today.

Spirituality in Non-religious Resources

The lack of attention given to teen addiction in the Jewish community is ironic given that addiction treatment, and recovery in particular, is a highly spiritual process. Spirituality is a massive part of the twelve-step program. In the introduction to *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery*, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman writes:

> The beauty and significance of the Twelve Step program is that it enables us and those with whom we work to find a Jewish center of spirit and faith in our lives. Integrating the Twelve Step program with the profound teachings of the Jewish tradition and faith and with the traditional process of *teshuvah* (repentance and return) enables liberal Jews to find a program that puts into an understandable and doable process the search for the world of the spirit and a personal relationship with God.[87]

The search for a Higher Power is crucial in Judaism and it is crucial in the 12 Steps. Step one of the Twelve Steps is admitting powerlessness over one's addiction. Step two then dovetails with the first: belief that a greater power can help restore the addict to sanity. Step three is making the decision to turn one's will and life over to God as he/she understands God. The first three steps center on the search for the Higher Power in an addict's life. This can eventually help an individual find their Higher Power as a source of comfort and accountability. Simply put, the first three steps are "I can't, He can, I think I'll let Him."[88] The definition of this greater power is intentionally vague, but the

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[87] Kerry Olitzky and Stuart Copans, *Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery, 2nd Edition.* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2009), xxvii.
[88] Marshall, *Young, Sober, and Free*, 22.

relationship between individual and the Higher Power is essential to the recovery process. It means that there is a force and a strength that can be found outside of the sufferer. This assurance is powerful.

Given this emphasis on spirituality, it is surprising to find that the best materials for addicted teens are non-religious sources. With God so present in recovery, one would assume that religious institutions would be primed to help teens suffering from addiction. Yet Judaism, in particular, falls short. *Young, Sober and Free* by Shelly Marshall is a non-religious source that aims to speak to young people in recovery, specifically the network of recovering young people called "Youth Enjoying Sobriety." It uses age-appropriate language to convey a 12 Step approach to recovery. Being a 12 Step-based work, it significantly promotes a Higher Power but not God per se. God language appears, but is not connected to one faith. The Higher Power is spiritual but undefined, seen as an outside force that motivates an individual to be creative and useful: "Self-centered is not spiritual. Any working connection with a loving, creative Higher Power or being of service to our fellow man is practically nonexistent in our using lives. Our reliance is on chemicals, not on God. Our energy is directed toward a drug, not our family and friends."[89] In this case, God represents greater purpose in an addict's life. With a belief in God, an addict can feel useful and connected to family and friends rather than hopeless and outcast.

Young, Sober and Free draws its language from the 12 Steps and does not come out of a specific faith, therefore it best addresses the challenge in feeling, finding and defining a Higher Power. Without a specific faith, there is greater opportunity for

[89] Marshall, *Young, Sober, and Free*, 9.

questioning and redefining. When someone has felt so alone and abandoned, traditional concepts of God can feel ludicrous and inaccessible. Therefore Marshall assures the reader not to make the search for God complicated. God does not need to be distant or miraculous – God can be "more down to earth, solid."[90]

Specifically on the topic of intervention with teens, the Partnership for Drug Free America[91] offers an extensive website with a step-by-step guide for reaching youth at critical moments. It addresses parents and adults, helping them to navigate the emotional process of intervening. "Time to Act[92]" is an interactive, easy to use site that operates as a personal guide. The home page reflects the major message to parents: do not panic, you can do this. It contains two options: "I think my child is using" and "I know my child is using." Both options stress similar approaches to action. Remaining calm is most important and opening the lines of communication is essential. The "I think my child is using" site provides tips for looking for signs and identifying risk factors. "I know my child is using" stresses setting clear limits and establishing consequences. The "monitoring" section offers an extensive to-do list for a parent to stay involved and accurately informed regarding a teen's behavior. Importantly, there is a final section in how to seek outside help. This includes help for the teen and also encourages the rest of the family to find community and help with others, such as Al-Anon. The site acknowledges the stigma and embarrassment that parents may feel by admitting that their child has a problem to an outside source.

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[90] Marshall, *Young, Sober, and Free*, 19.
[91] The Partnership for Drug Free America is a large non-profit organization aimed at teens and parents on topics of substance abuse and addiction.
[92] http://timetoact.drugfree.org/

Deeply understanding the emotional component to intervention, the site also offers two in-depth eBooks available for free download. The *Intervention e-Book: What to do if your child is drinking or doing drugs*, helps a parent to prepare and navigate formal and informal interventions properly. It also offers advice for follow-up and processing. The *Treatment e-Book: How to find the right help for your child with an alcohol or drug problem* also provides a step-by-step guide and resources, providing proper questions for a parent to ask.

In addition to this intervention site geared towards parents, The Partnership for Drug Free America also has a companion site for teens called "Check Yourself."[93] This site engages teens through interactive, age-appropriate exercises. Teens may take quizzes and play "decision games" as well as read real accounts of other teens' experiences with drugs, alcohol and addiction. It is meant for teens to evaluate themselves but it also provides resources enabling teens to help their friends. The emphasis is similar to the parents' site: stay calm, communicate properly, and know that what you are doing matters.

In conjunction with the themes already discussed, these resources perpetuate a clear theme in their intervention and recovery materials: you are not alone. These easy-to-use resources assure parents and teens that they are capable and supported in their efforts to help themselves and others. Most importantly, they must act in order to save the many lives that may be consumed by addiction.

[93] http://www.checkyourself.com/

Analysis

While the Partnership for Drug Free America websites do not explicitly speak of spirituality and *Young, Sober and Free* is not based in any one religion, both resources (and many other non-religious resources) can easily be transformed for use in a Jewish setting. For example, classes for teens and adults can use the Partnership for Drug Free America's interactive sites through projectors and navigating the pages as a group. An explicitly Jewish aspect may supplement the secular materials.

Yet God's role in intervention and recovery remains difficult. While the Twelve Step's Higher Power develops the spiritual aspect, given that authority figures are already questionable for teens, the search for a Higher Power to turn to could be particularly difficult. By not being bound by a certain religious dogma, *Young, Sober and Free* acknowledges this struggle most effectively.

But religious dogma and struggling with God do not need to be mutually exclusive. In Judaism in particular, the struggle with God and one's identity is central. Rabbi Abraham Twerski, a pioneer and major contributor to Jewish recovery materials makes a distinction in the application of God and spirituality to recovery. In an interview with Hinda Mandell, he agreed that there is no doubt that spirituality is the "backbone of recovery" but religion is not.[94] He conceded that at times religion can act as an impediment to seeking help and it creates unnecessary divisions and barriers. Twerski seems to imply that anyone who calls AA "too goyish" (for example) is just using religion and culture as an excuse not to attend.[95] Judaism has valuable responses to these

[94] Hinda Mandell, "Crushing today's golden calf: traditionally Christian systems of treating addiction are getting a Jewish twist in the United States," 21.
[95] Ibid.

spiritual questions and Judaism as a practice may be helpful in directing an individual, including a teen, in their recovery.

Orthodox Jewish Resources

In 1973, Leo Landman, a faculty member at Yeshiva University, published a study of drug abuse in the Jewish community from an Orthodox perspective. The work shows the wide spectrum of attitudes towards drug abuse. Some contributors deny abuse and addiction's presence in the Orthodox world altogether, claiming it is only a modern, secular issue. Other Orthodox leaders express no difference between the two worlds. The main controversy is how secular society and modern American life influence the life of religious youth. There is a tacit debate in the study if religious life sufficiently deters drug abuse. Dr. Moses Tendler writes that "modern man, cut loose from his ancient moorings in the Judaeo-biblical traditions, as turned to the pharmacopoeia as his surrogate bible…"[96], showing that Judaism is a proper barrier to the idolatrous nature of abuse and addiction. Yet Samuel Scharage reflects Judaism's lack of natural protection:

> Why shouldn't the Jewish home be as affected by drugs as any other middle-class home? What is "Jewish" about so many of our homes that would provide them with that 'extra layer of protection'? Regrettably, too often, the answer is little or nothing. So the Jewish home of today is fair game for the plague – there is no *mezuzah* protecting it from drugs and other social ills that surround us. As the homes of the Nation go, so will the Jewish ones go!"[97]

While modern studies and more open community conversations regarding drugs make it clear that a halakhic lifestyle is clearly not a deterrent for addiction, liberal Jews

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[96] Moses Tendler, "Ethical Implications of the Drug Culture" in *Judaism and Drugs*, ed. Leo Landman (New York: Commission on Synagogue Relations, 1973), 62.
[97] Samuel Scharage, "A Hassidic Approach to Alienated Youth" in *Judaism and Drugs*, ed. Leo Landman (New York: Commission on Synagogue Relations, 1973), 181.

may consider how religious living can be a resource of values that may address drug addiction, treatment and recovery. Tendler finds that Judaism offers four major ways of avoiding drug problems. First is an insistence on free will and free personhood, second is injunctions against noxious substances and self-harm, third is insistence that a Jew follow the law of the country, and fourth is group association and identification with a moral people builds a moral identity.[98] For Tendler, the Torah's ethics create a "domino effect" of ethical behavior and by avoiding contact with "morally degraded elements of our society"[99] young Jews will be safe.

Years have brought greater acceptance and understanding of addiction in the religious community. Yet these values endure as helpful. Samuel Scharage's 1973 essay accurately predicts the future of Orthodox approaches. While he still implies that modern, secular society is the initial culprit in causing addiction, he understands that the Jewish family unit is not immune. Ahead of his time, he stresses a sense of belonging and strengthening the family unit.[100] He suggests that health of the family unit and its communication seem to be helpful in prevention, intervention and recovery, a lesson we will discover in more contemporary resources.

A GIFT for Teens is another Orthodox approach published in 2000 by Roiza D. Weinreich. Like most contemporary resources, her book does not deal with addiction specifically but with at-risk youth and the underlying depression and stress that may contribute to teen drug use. The book aims to lift the spirits of the reader. GIFT stands for gratitude, inspiration, family and friends, and triumph. Weinreich advocates

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[98] Tendler, "Ethical Implications of the Drug Culture," 64-68.
[99] Ibid., 68.
[100] Scharage, "A Hassidic Approach to Alienated Youth," 181.

appreciation for nature, family, friends and food as a means to finding more joy in life. She also advocates relying on loved ones while promoting God as the ultimate caregiver. The method is similar to other contemporary resources. The book mixes meditations, poems, first hand testaments, and mantras that attempt to reach the reader in a myriad of emotional and intellectual ways.

Analysis

While *A GIFT for Teens* seems to be a good blend of contemporary approaches and religious values, the simplicity with which it approaches depression[101] would be inaccessible for a liberal Jew as well as a more traditional Jewish youth in crisis. As we will see, other resources advise against ironclad solutions, as well as blanket statements that ignore the real and deep feelings of the individual (see Gordon, *When Living Hurts*).

More importantly, these Orthodox sources demonstrate the greater power Jewish tradition can have in issues of substance abuse and addiction. Judaism may be an effective practice and directed belief that can help a sufferer. Yet it can also be a vehicle for denial. The aspects of Judaism that speak to a person's broken soul and wrap them in a caring community can assist in more effective healing.

Conservative Jewish Resources

In 1980, the United Synagogue Youth (the youth division of the United Synagogue of America) published *In God's Image: Making Jewish Decisions About the Body.* It is one volume in a greater collection that speaks about teen-related issues. The

[101] i.e. "Take each day in stride, appreciate what you have, you'll grow up before you know it" (Roiza Weinreich, *A Gift for Teens* [Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2000] 25).

curriculum speaks directly to a teen, blending text study, discussion questions and a few reflective exercises. In this volume, the focus is on the body as a whole with issues related to drugs dominating two chapters.

The book stresses choosing the right options for one's body while promoting the Jewish values associated with sexuality, profane language and "external substances." The book emphasizes choice and creating the desire to choose a healthy lifestyle. The chosen texts are balanced; stressing the dangers of external substances while also presenting the times they are permissible.[102] This allows for nuance in the conversation.

In the second chapter on "external substances," *In God's Image* addresses the purposes of drugs and the need for an appropriate time and place. The book promotes Judaism as a self-disciplinary system for classifying and properly appropriating substances like alcohol.[103] Reflecting the ancient rabbis' ideas, the chapter includes overeating and the need for self-discipline in that regard. The book also echoes the rabbis' call to intervene by including exercises that "develop a set of strategies that a friend or a group of friends can use to help an individual to break a habit such as smoking, overuse of alcohol, or the use of illegal drugs."[104]

The final chapters of the resource are highly interactive. They help the teen to develop and implement goals for how they treat their bodies. They not only list these goals, they also list the forces that help and hinder achieving them.[105] The book also

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[102] Bernard Novick, *In God's Image: Making Jewish Decisions about the Body* (New York: United Synagogue of America, Dept. of Youth Activities, 1994), 24.
[103] Ibid., 47.
[104] Ibid., 53.
[105] Ibid., 67.

helps a teen to create a timeline for achieving these goals by highlighting certain actions they may take and when.[106]

Analysis

In God's Image is the only resource I found that references BT Pesahim 113a as well as the Meiri's response to it. This offers a deeper examination of Jewish values pertaining to drug use. For the most part, other resources concentrate heavily on the value of *kedushat ha-guf*, maintaining the integrity of the body and one's health. More varied texts, like those included in *In God's Image,* may allow for a broader conversation and a better reflection of substance abuse and addiction's nuance. Not only is there a range of consequences, but there are also competing pressures and messages in a teen's life. Varied texts may respond to this better. More than other resources, *In God's Image* highly reflects the rabbi's understanding of drugs (as presented in Chapter Two) and appropriately translates it for modern purposes. While the use of text in this resource is exemplary, it is also the *only* thing the resource provides. A more varied approach would be helpful in truly reaching teens.

Along with the helpful choices of text, the goal setting and implementation is one of the resources' most worthwhile contributions. This method is personal, interactive and highly executable. This exercise and strategy has the most potential to reach a student and have enduring impact. The curriculum needs updating, though. While promoting Judaism as a good system for regulating one's life, like the Orthodox sources, it overemphasizes Judaism's power. For example:

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[106] Novick, *In God's Image: Making Jewish Decisions about the Body*, 73.

> Jews have always used wine as an integral part of ritual, as a symbol of joy or sanctification of an event or time. In its place, and within limits, it can serve an important role. Such a basis for alcoholic consumption provides guidelines for its use, both in ritual contexts and in general. Studies confirm that traditional Jews have generally been able to control their dependence on alcohol despite their use of it. They seem not to have made drinking as important a part of their social and personal life as less traditional Jews or non-Jews.[107]

While it is important to teach the regulatory values of Jewish tradition, we cannot view them as magical protectors.

Reform Jewish Resources

Reform Jewish teens are most assimilated into American culture and therefore significantly reflect the statistics and challenges surrounding teen addiction. An added challenge is that Reform Jewish teens compartmentalize their Judaism, using it less to inform their secular life choices like drinking and doing drugs.[108]

This effort to integrate Reform Jewish communities and addiction issues reaches back to the 1970's. William J. Leffler's *Guide for the Jewish Teacher* was published by the UAHC and coincides with the Union of American Hebrew Congregation's 1971 resolution on drugs.[109] It includes classroom activities and projects to deal with a number of issues - drugs and addiction being just one topic. Even though it was written in the 1970's, the guide resonates with our contemporary ethos as Leffler addresses a culture of ambivalence to drugs, stressing the paradox of drug use: they seem to heighten

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[107] Novick, *In God's Image: Making Jewish Decisions about the Body*, 47.
[108] Kadushin, "Being a Teenager in America: Trying to Make it," 12.
[109] The resolution states that the Union recognizes problem of "drug use and abuse within our own families and to create congregational programs that shall guide parents in establishing meaningful relationships with their children, helping them to avoid this tragic experience" and that synagogues provide educational programming to "help them understand drug use and abuse in the light of the Jewish tradition and materials issued by the UAHC and other agencies" (51st General Assembly, November 1971)

appreciation for life but they really lead to withdrawal from life experiences.[110] Instead of rabbinic halakhic practice being the helpful religious value (as it is in the Orthodox resources), Leffler uses Deuteronomy 30:19 and the preservation of life as the touchstone of his resource. Overall, he stresses that Jews are partners in creation and must be life-givers, not takers.[111]

Leffler stresses the consequences of using drugs, developing activities that illustrate pain (by biting on one's finger), missing out (having a student leave the room and miss a group experience), tolerance (holding an ice cube for an extended time) and dependence (trust falls) feel like. Drugs, he says, lead to all of these negative sensations.[112] Leffler intends for teens to actually *feel* the consequences that a teacher is educating about. The physical ramifications of these activities may be problematic and they do not necessarily express the deep, nuanced pain and emotions that result from repeated drug use and addiction. A single exercise cannot teach this. However, if an exercise raises a question for a student about risks and physical consequences, it has accomplished a lot. Leffler's most beneficial activities stress greater values of commandedness and responsibility[113] and the value of turning to an uninvolved third party for help and advice.[114] Most significantly, Leffler advocates responsible decision-making and engages teens in a conversation of *who* makes decisions in their lives: parents, society, friends, and themselves.[115] This approach best responds to the diverse

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[110] William J. Leffler, *Guide for the Jewish Teacher* (New York: UAHC, 1970), 2.
[111] Ibid.,3.
[112] Ibid.,12.
[113] Ibid., 23.
[114] Ibid., 25.
[115] Ibid., 33.

sources from which teens experience stress and pressure, both of which may contribute to addiction.

In 1989 and 1993, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (now the Union for Reform Judaism) adopted two more resolutions dealing with drug use that, in part, targeted teen drug use. Both resolutions call for increased programming for temple youth and a study of the current issue. Heeding this call, in the 1990's the UAHC Committee on Drug and Alcohol Abuse produced a resource entitled "Fighting Substance Abuse: A Program of Education and Healing." It includes a video, a lesson plan for grades four through six, a two session workshop for parents and teens about conflict, an article by Allen S. Kaplan called "Jews are Chemically Dependent, Too," an article on SLICHA – a recovery network for Jews meant to compliment AA, and a sermon by the chair of the committee, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman. The resource as a whole draws heavily on Jewish texts as a source for teaching Jewish values, a distinguishing characteristic from the 1971 efforts.

The program centers on sharing in small group conversations, indicating a new approach. It establishes confidentiality in order to create a more comfortable environment. The Drug and Alcohol Education Program for Grades Four through Six emphasizes how to make choices in the face of peer pressure. It urges youth to turn to families, Jewish heritage and individuals in Jewish institutions as resources and teaches the value of saying no and standing up for what they believe in.[116] The lesson understands that it is not just enough to learn Jewish values, but a student must also learn how to live and defend those values.

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[116] Sharon Wechter, *Fighting Substance Abuse: A Program of Education and Healing* (UAHC Committee on Drug and Alcohol Abuse), 6.

In regards to teens, the "Parents and Teens: Healing through just conflicts" sessions are particularly noteworthy. Like the contemporary Partnership for a Drug-Free America materials, the sessions stress conflict resolution and communication. Session one investigates how families work. Intergenerational groups role-play and learn the concept of *shalom bayit*.[117] It relies heavily on Egon Meyer's ideas of "just conflict." For Meyer, a just conflict is when "family members may disagree over what are the best goals to pursue or how best to pursue them, but they do not allow such disagreements to deteriorate into an acrimonious assault on each other's worth as a human being."[118] All sides are granted legitimacy and consider the pain the other side may be experiencing.[119] Session two helps families decide how they will support each other in conflict and in their general behavioral choices. In this session, the family develops a "family *brit*," a covenant that helps the family begin exploring responsibilities and obligations of the parents and teens to each other.[120]

The 1990's resources and resolutions make a strong declaration: a conversation regarding teen addiction must enter our synagogues in formal ways. Unfortunately, no major curriculum or initiative has been developed by the URJ, let alone entered the congregations. As the 1971, 1989 and 1993 resolutions show, this problem has still not been addressed properly in our congregations.

The North American Federation of Temple Youth has responded in a limited way.

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[117] Wechter, *Fighting Substance Abuse: A Program of Education and Healing*, 12-14.
[118] Ibid., 14.
[119] Ibid., 14-15.
[120] Ibid., 16.

In 2005 – 2006 the NFTY Action Theme[121] was R'fuah Sh'leima: The Renewal of Mind, Body, and Spirit. The theme centered on national and global healthcare as well as mental health and substance abuse. Substance abuse was included in order to talk about personal health and wellness, stressing that "the overall lesson in R'fuah Sh'leima is the idea that if you need to sacrifice volunteering at a soup kitchen or a food bank to maintain your grades or your health, you are still taking part in social action by healing yourself and giving yourself the opportunity to become the best version of you"[122]. Few programs from this initiative are accessible in the program bank, as those provided are just archived examples of the greater initiative. One program, which may or may not be associated with the Action Theme is entitled "Substance Abuse Program." Its expressed goal is "for program participants to understand substance abuse, why people have addictions, not to judge people with addictions, and how to help people with addictions."[123]

This isolated program, written by teens for teens is an important addition to teen addiction resources. It acknowledges physical and mental addictions, the difference between substance abuse and addiction, as well as the stigma associated with both. It presents nine steps for someone who wants to help a friend with addiction, offering age-appropriate advice such as: do not be an accomplice, do some research, do not gossip, and show positive reinforcement. It also provides these insightful closing words that

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[121] Article Six of the by-laws of the NFTY Constitution requires that, each year, NFTY select an Action Theme, which serves as "the main social action topic that NFTY learns about and takes action on in a given year." The theme is intended to "provide guidance on the social action goals of NFTY for that year."

[122] http://www.nfty.org/resources/actiontheme/archive/0506/

[123] http://www.nfty.org/_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item_id=2622&destination=ShowItem

compassionately express the different tendencies and experiences of individuals, some of whom might become addicted:

> It is socially unacceptable at this point in our lives to use controlled substances as our escape from our problems. However, especially with alcoholism, it begins with that same craving. Everyone has something about themselves that they are unhappy with, prejudices against themselves if you will. Some people just don't think that they have the support system to fight against these disappointments and that's when substance abuse comes in to play.[124]

In Fall 2007, *Reform Judaism Magazine* dedicated its seasonal issue to intervention, addiction and related topics. Despite coinciding with the second "Insider's Guide to College," the issue did not address teens and youth directly. Ruth Sohn's article "Truth or Consequences" is the most helpful contribution as it blends themes of The Partnership for a Drug-free America and Jewish concepts in regards to intervention. She offers biblical, Talmudic and medieval texts that speak to the value of intervening and the process with which one may do so. Effectively defining rebuke and intervention from a Jewish perspective, she provides a Jewishly inspired how-to for an individual intervening with a loved one. This how-to blends Jewish wisdom with modern psychology and the texts presented in this paper, offering a uniquely Jewish resource on intervention. She advocates that people monitor themselves, become aware of their own feelings, concerns and motives. She advices: stay calm, consider the other person's feelings and potential embarrassment. Remain diligent in assessing your own feelings.[125] As a supplement, Reform Judaism Magazine and Dr. Alan D. Bennett developed a "Truth or Consequences" Discussion and Study Guide. Again using a myriad of Jewish sources, the texts and questions explore free will, responsibility for other's behaviors, and proper

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[124] Ibid.
[125] Ruth Sohn, "Truth or Consequences" in *Reform Judaism Magazine*, Fall 2007.

rebuke.

The entire Fall 2007 issue was purposefully placed in autumn to coincide with the Days of Awe. This simple action is an important lesson in how Judaism may uniquely speak to issues regarding drug addiction and intervention. These are personal challenges to which Jewish values may have a significant impact. Furthermore, the Jewish calendar is a powerful tool in addressing people's lives. It systematizes periods of reflection, starting over, joy and grief. For example, during the Days of Awe, Judaism has institutionalized a period of reflection, repentance and community action. Jews are obligated to come together in order to communicate and intervene, rebuke and forgive. This is an important reminder that religion is a powerful tool in intervention and recovery. It provides a secure personal and communal foundation for the hard work of recovery. The Jewish religion sends the message that work of the soul is ongoing and in constant need of renewal. It makes the search for God less arduous; it provides a language for continuing recovery.

Caring for the Soul, edited by Richard Address in 2003, was created in response to the need to raise awareness and reduce the stigma of mental illness in congregations. Mental illness is often a contributing factor to drug use and addiction. As we have seen in other contemporary resources, the guidebook offers a variety of approaches and sources. There are textual sources for "meditation or thought,"[126] traditional psalms, modern psalms and a sample sermon. It also includes a Havdalah Healing Service[127] that re-imagines traditional symbols for the topic. For example, the spices refer to the extra soul a human receives on Shabbat and that soul may be the return of the person's old soul

[126] Richard Address, ed. *Caring for the Soul* (New York: UAHC Press, 2003), 15.
[127] Ibid., 59-60.

and their life.[128] Like sources before it, *Caring for the Soul* takes account of family dynamics and advocates addressing family needs by helping the family discover "their strength, skills and abilities in dealing with this situation."[129]

Similar to *Caring for the Soul*, the Union for Reform Judaism's "Kedushat HaGuf" project produced *Resilience of the Soul* by Rabbi Edythe Held Mencher. It acts as a congregational guidebook in dealing with self-destructive behaviors in teens. There is nothing explicit about addiction, but the book has overarching themes and topics that can be applied to those dealing with addiction and intervention.

More than other Jewish resources, it best conveys the unique angle and the important place of the Jewish community in dealing with these serious teen issues. In a sample letter to congregational parents, the program stresses that it is not a therapeutic initiative; rather it is about expanding the boundaries of the conversation.[130] It is about creating a safe and caring Jewish environment, because while a synagogue cannot necessarily offer therapy, it can offer a place in which "they can draw upon human and spiritual sources of affirmation, cooperation, acceptance and hope."[131] The sourcebook advocates clear goal setting and engaging congregants across generations.[132]

Like *Caring for the Soul*, *Resilience of the Soul* contains a variety of resources to help a congregation implement a comprehensive program dealing with self-destructive behaviors. It uses biblical characters like Hagar in order to express values having to do

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[128] Ibid., 59.
[129] Address, *Caring for the Soul*, 95.
[130] Edythe Held Mencher, *Resilience of the Soul*, 7.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., 3.

with a parent thwarting the demise of a child.[133] It also compares characters, juxtaposing Elkanah's authoritative intervention with Hannah with Ruth's caring approach to Naomi.[134] In doing so, it teaches the values of listening and proper ways to show compassion in an intervention setting.

This represents a more contemporary approach to teen issues in which facilitators recognize the subjectivity of emotions and situations. The sources of stress and the affects of stress vary in every teen, as well as their ways of communicating. The publication therefore offers opportunities for individuals to write their own blessings,[135] provides various prayers to recite, and teaches lessons through case studies. The only explicit mention of drugs is in a case study relayed by Abraham Twerski in which he met with a heroin addict and addressed the way in which the addict treated their body. The story conveys the need to instill self-worth and self-esteem in order to address drug use and drug problems.[136] *Resilience of the Soul*'s themes can easily be translated to addiction related topics. Lessons regarding intervention and emotional resilience are universal.

When Living Hurts by Sol Gordon (2004) works similarly to *Resilience of the Soul* and *Caring for the Soul*, although it mentions drugs and alcohol more directly. The stated purpose of the book is to help those teens who want to aid others who are in trouble. It is also for those who are lonely, depressed or suicidal. The touchstone

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[133] Ibid., xiv.
[134] Edythe Held Mencher, *Resilience of the Soul*, 119.
[135] Ibid., 129.
[136] Ibid., 161.

concept is that we are all our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We also need to learn how to deal with disappointments and imperfections in an imperfect world.[137]

Like other resources, the theme of purposeful language appears, urging that saying things like "do not worry," (for example) does little to make a person stop worrying.[138] It also stresses self-esteem, defined as "appreciating my own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others" and not necessarily meaning feeling good about yourself.[139] It advocates healthy behaviors that can help to lift one's mood (i.e. learning a new skill, exercising) as well as trying to become a *mensch*.[140] Gordon stresses: "Bless others and then bless yourself, aspire to be a good person most of the time, doing a good thing (*mitzvah*) without expecting something in return."[141] This includes what Gordon calls "Mitzvah Therapy," an alternative and sometimes an addition to counseling that makes an individual feel needed, wanted, and appreciated by doing good deeds for others.[142]

In regards to drugs specifically, Gordon provides personality indicators of a drug problem, such as lying, untrustworthiness, poor judgment and volatility.[143] An important contribution of *When Living Hurts* is stressing that the drug is not the problem:

> Getting off the stuff will not automatically solve your problems. You will still need time, patience, energy, and motivation to make new friends and develop new interests. The most difficult period is the first three or four weeks after stopping. This is a period of high anxiety and tension. It's the time to learn something new, find a hobby, try a new sport, exercise a lot, or get involved helping others who are in worse shape than you are. Above all, don't expect to be perfect and don't

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[137] Sol Gordon, *When Living Hurts* (New York: URJ Press, 2004), 1.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Gordon, *When Living Hurts*, 2.
[140] Ibid., 7-16.
[141] Ibid., 16.
[142] Ibid., 17.
[143] Ibid., 18.

> expect anyone to appreciate what you are trying to accomplish. It is a gift you are giving yourself.[144]

Underlying stresses, depression, and anxiety are factors in addiction. These problems lead to drugs but they are not alleviated with the absence of the substances. This demonstrates why non-drug specific materials can be effective in addiction education and intervention.

When Living Hurts also discusses the parent/child relationship, making it yet another resource that stresses the health of the family unit. It assures parents that they do not need to compromise their values. They may need to improve their communication skills and learn how to properly address their teen's developmental state. Modern psychology and *When Living Hurts* find that teenagers want to feel like valued members and decision makers of the family.[145] The book stresses positive reinforcement[146] as well as the value of guilt:

> There is nothing wrong with generating guilt in a teenager who has misbehaved…Irrational guilt that overwhelms a person is not helpful, but rational guilt, which organizes a person and helps him or her avoid repetition of undesirable behavior, can be a constructive force – at least until the hoped-for "good judgment" kicks in.[147]

Analysis

In regards to the Jewish element, *When Living Hurts* is not as successful as *Caring for the Soul* and *Resilience of the Soul* but makes some good contributions. For most of the book, Gordon quotes secular and Christian sources like Shakespeare and C.S. Lewis, rarely bringing in Jewish sources. Yet he slowly transitions into using them more,

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[144] Ibid., 18-19.
[145] Ibid., 112.
[146] Ibid., 115.
[147] Ibid., 116.

perhaps slowly drawing in the reader as the later chapters of the book deal directly with spirituality and God. Like Marshall in *Young, Sober and Free*, Gordon undertakes the important task of redefining God and the purpose of religion. He offers that one cannot expect that religion and faith will alter natural events and that believing in God does not mean that only good things will happen to you.[148] The book suggests that instead of asking: "if there is a God," ask: "what is God."[149] It does this in a Jewish context though; making it a good example of what Judaism can offer this conversation.

From all of these Reform Judaism resources, it is clear that information regarding drugs can be explicitly incorporated into formal and informal Jewish learning environments and that educators, clergy and parents can blend Jewish values with teen issues. While the call to action has occurred, little has been done. This is unfortunate, as along with being the perfect forum to explore God and spirituality, Reform institutions are best equipped to create a caring community in which the isolation of addiction may be attended to. Strengthening connections to others and to God is essential in prevention, intervention and recovery.

Many of these programs are effective in incorporating the family and working on the family unit. While strengthening the family unit is of immense significance, there are other factors in the world of drug abuse and addiction. Relationships to friends, media and self-identity are crucial to properly approaching addiction in a teen.

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[148] Gordon, *When Living Hurts*, 126.
[149] Ibid.

Pluralistic Resources

The best source for talking Jewishly about teen addiction and intervention is by far the Partners in Prevention program by Beit T'shuvah. Beit T'shuvah is a uniquely Jewish treatment facility located in Los Angeles, California. As a facility, it offers inpatient and outpatient care, family counseling and a variety of community programs. "Partners in Prevention" is a fully developed six-module curriculum for ages 12-18. The curriculum is based on six workbooks that explore Jewish identity, values, community and drugs. It is meant as a preventative tool in Jewish settings, helping students to develop their own values, coping mechanisms and approaches to difficult life decisions and emotions.

The workbooks are unique in that they center on an individual's personal identity journey and how it relates to Judaism, secular society, friends, family and decision-making. Rather than just applying Jewish values to established concepts and lessons, the program explores Jewish identity first so that it can then properly apply it to the issues at hand. "Who Am I Today?" explores self-image and how a teen spends their time and senses their own freedom and rebellions. "My Core Values" utilizes the *yezer ha-ra* and the *yezer ha-tov* as examples of how individuals can live both/and rather than either/or – all demonstrating that there is no such thing as perfection. It has students write their own serenity prayer – seamlessly connecting twelve step ideas to the individual and Judaism. "My Relationships: According to Torah" advocates knowing and loving yourself and explores contract versus covenant. It also shows that God, like humans, can be full of contradictions. Despite this, both are holy. "Personal Inventory" continues the theme of how humans are like God and defines *teshuvah*, accepting one's positive and negative

actions and how they impact others. “My Future, My Faith” centers on decision-making and how a teen may live life according to their own personal values.

“Staying Free from Alcohol and Drugs” is the workbook that explicitly talks about drugs and alcohol. It encourages teens to think about their past and current drug use and stresses the negative consequences and “false promises” drugs make.[150] It states: “though our faith stresses the importance of wrestling with good and evil, you may be tempted to ease the discomfort of the struggle by using drugs. Drugs may seem to temporarily relieve your uncomfortable feelings, but taking a drink, pill or smoking something cannot resolve the challenges God has given you.”[151] The workbook deals significantly with the teen’s relationship to God and how God would feel about the teen’s drug use. This leads to expressing healthy habits that can deter destructive behaviors.

Analysis

This curriculum is exceptional because it does not just teach; it creates an experiential and collaborative learning environment. This is similar to the strategy in the United Synagogues of America’s *In God’s Image*. The workbooks have a personal journal feel to them. They are more about personal exploration than dogma. By helping teens to explore these topics in a personal and nuanced way, they can more easily access concepts that we have shown to be essential in helping addicted teens. They explore their role in their family and what they want from their families. They begin to express a God-concept, making it easier for them to connect to their spiritual sides and a Higher Power.

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[150] For example, someone may think that drugs will improve the way they think or act (“Staying Free from Alcohol and Drugs,” [The Change Companies and Beit T’Shuvah, 2006], 5).

[151] “Staying Free from Alcohol and Drugs,” 5.

It builds self-esteem by showing that their thoughts and opinions matter most and that they have something essential to offer. The program also offers a parental workbook called “Supporting My Child,” appropriately addressing the fact that both parents and children need to be prepared to face the tough aspects of adolescence. While “Partners in Prevention” is meant to be a deterrence tool, the issues it brings up are essential for teens in any place: non-user, occasional user, addict or person in recovery.

Conclusion

Despite a growing acknowledgment of substance abuse and intervention in the Jewish community, Jewish institutions have failed Jewish teens in providing resources, education and support on these topics. By addressing teen substance abuse directly, a Jewish institution can meet one of the greatest challenges facing Jews in any generation. With almost 20 million Americans ages 12 and older currently using illicit drugs, the danger is very present. Drugs of all types are easily available and new abuses are being concocted every day.

As we have seen, the problem of drugs and the need for community intervention existed long before the modern era. The rabbis understood that while some substances may be beneficial because of their healing properties, as Rashi showed, what is good for one part of the body may be harmful to another part. Drugs are potentially habit forming and may cause significant damage financially, physically, mentally and socially. Many substances (food, alcohol, drugs) and behaviors (gambling, sex) contain dual properties and require regulation for an individual to keep them under control. The rabbis rightfully perceived that human beings are born with different dispositions and some individuals may not be able to control themselves. Young people are particularly vulnerable and behaviors they develop early in life can follow them into adulthood.

Therefore the rabbis demonstrate a clear need for the adults in a young person's life to intervene and rebuke the young person in order to save the life of that individual. This rebuke not only impacts the drug user, it also has the potential to preserve the integrity of the intervening rebuker's life. In discussing intervention and rebuke, the

rabbis make it clear that destructive behaviors impact the entire family unit. Adults are therefore obligated to speak up and address the behaviors before it is too late.

Paired with modern science, our Jewish texts can respond to one of the darkest aspects of the human condition. Jewish tradition can meet teens, their parents and their friends in a place of darkness and help shine light and love. This takes courage and thoughtfulness on the part of all parties, but it is important work that still needs to be done. As much as research and resolutions have increased in recent years, the Jewish community is still loath to discuss teen addiction and substance abuse out of denial, fear and lack of understanding. The extent of the problem is under-publicized and therefore efforts to address it are weak.

As I have shown, though, Jewish homes and synagogues are ideal places to broach these topics. They not only provide access to the corpus of Jewish wisdom and literature, they can also establish a caring community and spiritual direction. As it stands, there are a variety of resources available to parents, teens, and congregations who want to address substance abuse and addiction. They vary in style as well as objective. For example, some address prevention while others approach intervention and recovery. Jewish resources in particular vary in their approaches to God, the importance of *halakhic* practice, and use of modern science. There are also various pedagogical methods that run through them all. No one program will be perfect, but by gathering the effective methods, congregations and Jewish professionals can gain a better sense of how to develop a meaningful program and how to compassionately and effectively talk about teen substance abuse publicly.

First, mixed pedagogical methods are the most effective tools. The most engaging programs were those that employed lecture, small group discussions, personal journaling and videos. By bringing these methods together, a program is able to reach participants on different levels and respond to individual styles of absorbing information. Going forward, more programs should incorporate modern media and social networking. The Internet is the new way communities communicate. There should be an online component to in-person programs and/or programming follow-up. For example, before or after a program, teens can anonymously share experiences and ask questions through the free website "formspring,"[152] a question and response site that allows for free expression and exploration of various topics. While finances may be a concern in creating websites, Jewish communities can use already established sites (like those through the Partnership for a Drug-Free America) and adapt them with Jewish text and content. Furthermore, short YouTube videos or simple movie-making can be incorporated into programming, as most Jewish youth have access to simple media creation programs and portable computers. These modern tools respond to where teens are today by addressing the way they learn and socialize. It is also an opportunity to infuse Judaism into these online and technological spaces, causing greater integration of Jewish and non-Jewish life.

Secondly, it is advisable to develop programs for teens by teens, or at least with a teenage reader very much in mind. This is reflected in the medium (like the internet) but also in language. A teen's developmental stage must be taken into account. This greatly affects how efforts in prevention, intervention and recovery will appear to the teen. For

[152] http://www.formspring.me

example, God language will be particularly difficult, as well as lessons on decision-making, since the teenage brain indicates continuing maturation in that regard. As some of the existing resources show, journaling and personal spiritual exploration must be incorporated into youth programming. Self-empowerment is an essential part of responding to teen substance abuse. It may be achieved through articulating personal values and learning how to defend them. Retreats are excellent forums for this type of soul-work. By eliminating distractions, retreats create safe spaces and a tighter community. They also allow for creative liturgy and intense sharing. A Jewish institution could offer a retreat for just teens, or even better, a family retreat dealing with personal spirituality and caring for one's body (specifically in regards to substances that are regularly abused). As I have shown, addressing the family unit is crucial to prevention, intervention and recovery initiatives. A family retreat would not only allow for the family unit to bond away from everyday household chores and carpools, it could also be an opportunity for different generations to find camaraderie within and outside of the age group.

Age groups are particularly relevant in substance abuse initiatives. Teen years are a time when peer pressure is particularly powerful, as teens value their friends highly. Teens need to explore how they relate to one another as well as how they perceive and deal with outside pressures. Similarly, modern media and celebrities are role models that need to be addressed and analyzed. What messages are teens receiving? Are they even aware of them? Film/television show viewings with small group discussions incorporate a popular medium while critically examining them. Films that show the negative effects of addictive substances (such as "The Basketball Diaries" (1995) and "Almost Famous"

(2000)) are important, as are films that paint drugs in a comical or positive light ("Pineapple Express (2008) and "Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle" (2004)). Films that show drugs as whimsical or even fun-enhancing are particularly important in order to expose the positive subliminal message that teens are absorbing.

Finally, any substance abuse-related materials for teens must work to establish a caring community within the Jewish institution. This is expressed in many ways, from visibility of drug issues in the congregation (i.e. bulletin, sermons, website, allowing AA meetings in the temple) to explicit offers of help and pastoral care. Clergy and other leaders can model and promote productive communication skills as well as demonstrate the proper ways to show concern.

As I have shown, Jewish institutions have the ability, but are missing a tremendous opportunity, to address the problem of teen substance abuse and addiction in a meaningful way. The community must get involved because ultimately Judaism preaches *kedushat ha-guf* and *pikku'ah nefesh*, protecting the integrity of the body and the soul. Yet synagogues dealing with teen substance abuse can have an impact in an entirely different way. Not only can Judaism affect an individual's drug use and addiction, addressing these issues can also influence a person's Judaism. While Jewish institutions and communities may be places for these conversations and interventions to occur, the spiritual conversations that develop may bring an individual closer to God and Jewish living. This makes addressing teen addiction and substance abuse even more of a Jewish issue and it therefore requires more attention and care than we have given it. By exposing teen substance abuse and doing something about it, we have the ability to

change lives and to strengthen the next generation of Jews – preserving not only individuals souls but also impacting the Jewish tradition and our connection to God.

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