

**A guide for clergy to understand recovery of family, friends and co-dependents of
people with addictions**

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Preface:

What motivated me to address the issue of addictions?

*“But to you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing on
its wings.” (Malachi 3:20)*

This project was born out of personal experience. At about the same time that I began my journey into the rabbinate, a member of our family began a rapid descent into the world of drug abuse and addiction. Shortly thereafter, another family member was revealed to have an eating disorder. Though I had some training in counseling and pastoral care, I was ill-prepared for the challenges that my family would confront with the problems associated with addictions. Early on our family was in denial that such problems even existed.

I, like many people in the Jewish community, thought that addictions, with only occasional exceptions, happened mostly to people in non-Jewish communities. *Shiker is a goy*, the *Yiddish* saying goes. Jews don't drink. Our communities don't have gambling problems, eating disorders or sexual addictions the way others do. These problems are isolated incidents in the Jewish community, anomalies.

Looking back, I realize that I was wrong, both about the Jewish community at large, and about my family. The most recent encounter with addictions in my family was not the first. Like many families, there were other members of my extended family, who

had showed evidence of substance abuse problems, and/or other addictions, that were not named. We didn't talk about it. And if we did, it was only through raised eyebrows or vague references in hushed tones. Too many trips to the race track led to financial problems for Aunt Hilda and Uncle Yossi. Cousin Sonya was a "weird eater," but weird eating was tossed off as weird eating, even if the weird eater became dangerously thin. *Shiker* was a closely guarded secret, even when the *shnaps* disappeared from the cabinet—and everyone knew it. Tanta Ruthie's excessive popping of pain pills was acceptable for pain management, but once the physical pain stopped, Tanta Ruthie continued to pop pills, and wash them down with a brandy. She became addicted to all kinds of substances. The emotional piece was not addressed; the pills anesthetized the underlying causalities. The addiction continued unnamed.

When I was in my early twenties, and already married, my father's sister, a favorite aunt, died of cirrhosis of the liver, a result of alcoholism. She was a beautiful, young woman, who was so much fun to be with, and who loved people. Yet she died alone, bloated and distorted-looking from her disease. Our family hardly ever talked about her again, or her horrific addiction.

I remember now that there were members of my family who were addicted to prescription drugs, such as Valium. In decades past, many women were given pills by their doctors to ease the pain of depression or for treatment of anxiety. For many, the side effects were almost as powerful as the symptoms. Countless people became addicted to pills. Many of those innocents used Valium or Xanax as a "gateway" drug to additional chemical substances. But we didn't discuss it.

There were also men in my family who seemed to take more than the requisite shot of *shnaps* during a *Kiddush* luncheon or other life-cycle event. *L'chaim*. We certainly didn't discuss that.

Years ago, I had attended an open Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting with a friend of mine, who was trying to win the war against addiction, one step at a time. He invited me "into the recovery rooms," AA lingo for where meetings take place. It was, until that time, the most spiritual experience I had ever encountered, albeit in the basement of a church.

In a cavernous setting with echoing walls, I was struck by how vulnerable we all are. How easy it is to stumble and keep rolling downhill with ever increasing speed. Yet, when the problem presented itself in my own family, I forgot all of the lessons I had learned. Our family was like a stranger in a strange land, *Mitzrayim*, not knowing the addiction language, where to go for help, or what to do. We were hopelessly and helplessly out of sync with addiction reality, and I was in training to be a rabbi.

Because the problem was not part of mainstream Jewish conversation, my family was caught off guard. We quickly discovered that when one family member begins a descent into the miasmatic world of substance abuse, the rest of the family plunges into a downward spiral. And there's no one to talk to. Or so we thought for a long time.

Shiker is not just a *goy*. It's been around in the Jewish community for a long time. The Bible records drinking as *shikor*, both the drink and the one who consumes it. Drinking is also part of Jewish cultural life, i.e., *Kiddush* (sanctification), for a *Sabbath*, *Havdala* and/or holiday *Kiddush* is recited over a glass of wine. Life-cycle events and many holidays include drinking and merriment as part of the celebration.

Problems arise with the excesses of drinking. It's a slippery slope from occasional, appropriate drinking to being out of control when someone suffers from the disease of alcoholism. Many Jews have been unable to recognize the blurred boundaries, and when they did, denial kept it hidden.

The overriding Jewish value is balance in all ways of life. The Rambam, the medieval philosopher and doctor, calls it the "*Golden Mean*." It is the reconciliation of opposites--choices, that each individual must make to stay centered in reality. The Torah says, "*I have placed before you, life and death; Choose life so that you may live.*" (*Deuteronomy 30:19*) Living enjoins people to take responsibility for one's own actions.

To an alcoholic the choice to drink at a holiday meal can turn a dream feast into a nightmare. The choice to attend a Twelve-Step program to gain control over an addiction problem may mean the difference between life and death. And so it is for family members and significant others of addicts, as well.

Many Jewish families, and whole communities have, for a very long time maintained a "*sha still*" attitude about addiction because it was such a "*shonda*"--an unspeakable embarrassment, that most of us have been sadly unprepared to handle. For this reason, the ensuing guilt and shame, and continued misery of being isolated with the pain of addiction takes its toll, both on the addict, and on the addict's families.

The truth is, addiction is a non-discriminating, and non-denominational disease, crossing all religious, racial, demographic and socio-economic barriers. Keeping the problem hidden only perpetuates the problem. Children of alcoholics, for example, many times grow up to be alcoholics themselves. Their unmanageable lives give birth to more

unmanageable lives, and this continues to be very costly to the family, to the Jewish community and to the community at large.

“For the Land that you are about to enter and possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come. (Deuteronomy 11:10)

It is This project’s goal is to address family members, co-dependents, and people who are in relationships with people suffering with addictions. It is to be used by Jewish clergy as a quick resource guide for understanding addictions, and their secondary repercussions. Its purpose is to help rabbis, cantors and chaplains assist their constituents to begin to identify and clarify the layers of problems associated with addictions.

In so doing, by offering resources it is intended to enable clergy to better understand the issues, and to make appropriate referrals. As this occurs, it should serve as a beginning exploration of the Twelve-Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and its spin-off groups, which because of their faith-based approach are seen as key to successful treatment of addictions. The challenge for clergy is to frame the recovery process in Jewish spiritual terminology, for the addict, the family, and significant others, so that they buy into the process.

Methodology:

“G-d created the universe in a manner in which we perceive our own existence as the intrinsic reality, and G-dliness as something novel and acquired. Our role is to achieve an entirely new level of perception, where G-dliness is the absolute reality and we are the novel creations, channels for Divine expression.” (Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson)

I will start with a discussion of how an addict affects the dynamics of a family. From there, I will explore a broad understanding of addiction, and some general information regarding addictions. This paper will examine the history of self-help organizations as they developed, and as they exist now. It will also address the history of addiction perspectives in the Jewish community.

For those interested in the statements regarding addictive behavior that have been made in our traditional Jewish texts, I will include a sample of Biblical and Rabbinic texts, through the various ages that make reference to addictive or aberrant behavior.

I will also explore Jewish texts and rituals as they relate to the Twelve-Step recovery process for people in recovery, i.e., the addict and those who are in relationship with the addict. This section will offer specific suggestions for clergy for helping addicts and their significant others find recovery through the integration of Jewish spiritual practices and Twelve-Step recovery language.

What I propose as a *tikkun*, a repair for family members, co-dependents, and people who are in relationships with people with addictions, is to address family members and friends of addicts in a unique way. I have asked a number of family members of addicts, all of whom are rabbis, to write a short *D'var Torah* (approximately 250-350 words), for each of the twelve *parshiot* of the *Book of Bereshit* (*Bereshit, Noah, Lech Lecha, Vayera, Chayei Sarah, Toldot, Vayeitze, Vayishlach, Vayeishev, Miketz, Vayigash, and Veyichi*).

By examining the characters and themes found in the Bible, families can contextualize their suffering and find solace in their moments of despair. The hope that our holy *Torah* offers can provide a source of strength for families and/or relationships in crisis.

Further, for each of the "recovery" *Divrei Torah*, I have written a short meditation, which can serve as a *kavanah*, an intention, or focus of prayer for *Shabbat* candle lighting for addicts and/or their significant others.

This will serve two needs. First, it will provide a ritual for family members and friends who come together for a Sabbath meal. Already framed as a peaceful interlude, it will shift the emphasis from darkness to light, which *Shabbat* offers as an oasis in time, and as a remembrance of G-d's rest after the process of Creation.

Much of this paper deals with alcoholism and/or drug addiction as the paradigm for families in recovery. But addiction can come in the form of substances (alcohol, drugs, food, nicotine, etc.), or experiences (sex, gambling, spending, etc.). While there are some differences in the manifestations and consequences of these various addictions, the patterns are similar. What is needed to recover from an addiction is shifting the paradigm

from being a “victim” to becoming “grateful in recovery.” This is a process that clergy can help facilitate in a spiritually meaningful and powerful way.

How Addictions Affect The Family:

“For the men were deeply humiliated.” (II Samuel 10:5)

For those of us who live, or have lived with family members who are battling chronic illnesses, we know that the ill person isn't the only one who suffers. The illness affects the entire family. So it is with addiction. Addiction is a disease, and the family is sick in it. The emotional ups and downs, the seemingly endless anxiety about what's coming next, the ongoing challenges, the depths of darkness never before imaginable, the abysmal pain, the feeling that life is spinning out of control, and that we are caught in a whirlpool with no way out, all of this and more, is part of the isolation that comes with living with a family member, or being in a relationship with a person who suffers with an addiction.

One friend, whose daughter is in recovery after years of intravenous (IV) heroin addiction, recently told me, "It's like a monster living in your living room, with no way to control it."

Considerable research has been done, and programs have been developed to support the addict, i.e., the creation of Twelve-Step programs, the development of support groups, detoxification facilities and treatment centers, and endless written material in the

way of books and articles. All of this has thankfully brought alcoholism out of the closet and into “the recovery rooms,” i.e., places where Twelve-Step meetings take place.

Addressing the family dynamic came much later. While there does now exist an array of support groups for families and significant others dealing with a person who is addicted, whether actively, or in recovery, not everyone knows how to access them, or feels safe enough to pursue them. Certainly not enough has been filtered through the Jewish community, for either the addicts or the people who are in relationships with them.

It wasn't until I learned about JACS (Jewish Alcoholics and Chemical Dependents and their Significant Others) through Arnie G., a recovering alcoholic who came to talk to the rabbinical students at The Academy for Jewish Religion, the seminary where I was studying to become a rabbi, that recovery began in earnest for me and my family. I was put in touch with Rabbi Abraham Twerski, a Hasidic Rabbi/psychiatrist, the founder and medical director of Gateway Rehabilitation Center in Pittsburgh, PA, and prolific author, whose landmark work in the field of addictions opened the Jewish recovery door to countless Jewish addicts who were clamoring to get in. His no-nonsense approach to dealing with addictions coupled with kindness, compassion, and a huge measure of patented Jewish spirituality lit the way. We began reading his books, which changed the way we thought, which changed the way we dealt with the addict, which changed the addict.

When my husband and I attended our first JACS spirituality retreat we were blown away. Here we were mostly alone and afraid, alienated by addiction from our family, friends, colleagues and the Jewish community, full of guilt and shame. In an

instant we became part of a support network of a Jewish community of more than 400 people, who gathered that *Shabbat* in October in the Catskill Mountains in Upstate New York, in a Jewishly G-d centered environment. This entire community knew our addiction nightmare, because they, too, had lived it.

We met men in *streimels* and women in *sheitles*, boys with *payos* and tattoos, rich Jews, poor Jews, Orthodox Jews, Reform Jews, Conservative Jews and Jews by birth who didn't practice any form of Judaism but knew they belonged in this space. We met old men and young girls and pious women, whose beloved teenage sons were "living in the *parasha*," i.e. struggling with their addictions, in in-patient treatment facilities. We looked different, we dressed in different kinds of clothing, we practiced our Judaism in different ways, but we had all journeyed the same path. Save for the minute details, our addiction stories carried the same tales of woe, the same frenzy.

My family continued to stay in touch with our new friends, attend meetings, read books by Rabbi Twerski (Stinkin' Thinking; Caution "Kindness" Can be Dangerous to the Alcoholic; Waking Up Just in Time; Addictive Thinking/Understanding Self-Deception; Twerski On Spirituality, etc.) and Rabbi Kerry Olitsky (Twelve Jewish Steps to Recovery; Recovery From Co-Dependency, etc.), on addictions, and for the first time, seek our own *serenity*, to which we finally realized we were entitled. At the same time I began to envision this project as a much needed resource in the Jewish community. Working on it has put me in touch with a myriad of amazing souls who have helped me on so many levels of my life.

One of the wonderful resources I met while beginning to write this paper was Rabbi Joel Dinnerstein. He told me that his entrance into the world of substance abuse

addiction was through his ex-wife, who was an alcoholic. In addition to being a rabbi and trained therapist, Rabbi Dinnerstein is the author of several professional articles and scholarly pieces on addictions and addictive behavior. He is also the founder and the rabbi of Congregation *Ohr Ki Tov*, part of the Carlebach Hassidic *Shul* in Brooklyn, which offers special Shabbat services and a menu of other programs for people with addictions, and their significant others.

During one of our initial conversations he stated, “There is very little help for family members who have become embroiled in the addiction chaos. If the addict is in the midst of active addiction the consequences are tremendous, and unending.

“Even if the family is able to find an in-house treatment facility for the addict, the family is still out in the cold, except for an isolated meeting, or week-long program at some of the facilities that attempt to address the family in crises as an entity. Mostly, what happens is that someone grabs the suitcase of the addict, and off they go. Hopefully, this can be a first step in the addict’s recovery, but the battered family member is left at the door scarred and abandoned, often with no clue about where to go for help and what to do for his/her own recovery. And there are virtually no long-term programs for families in recovery under Jewish auspices.”

Addiction as Spiritual Deficiency:

“Whoever studies Torah for its own sake his Torah becomes an elixir of life to him.” (B. Talmud Taanit 7a)

Addiction is an insidious and hideous widespread problem. More than 50 million Americans suffer from addictions. National magazines are covered with photos, and television and newspaper coverage is inundated with stories of celebrities or high-powered people entering drug rehabilitation centers. Those accounts of beautiful people falling from high places enter our collective consciousness in a way that causes us to pause and take stock. These people seem to have everything—exciting jobs, money, power, fame. Why do they fall prey to addictions?

Rabbi Abraham Twerski, M.D., says that people who suffer with addictions suffer from SDS--*Spiritual Deficiency Syndrome*. The addict is isolated, out of sync with G-d. His/her soul is in need of spiritual replenishing.” (JACS Conference October 2002)

Rabbi David Steinman, an Orthodox rabbi and counselor for the Drug Program at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City, writes eloquently of the addict and his spiritual alienation: "As Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato explains, the *Kabbalah* teaches us to become aware of the Oneness of G-d, and to guard ourselves from spiritually destructive acts, which come from seeing the world as random and gratuitous (as

Nietzsche says, if there is no G-d, everything is permitted), and to understand the physical and spiritual structure of the world and the effects of our acts upon it.

Kabbalah is thus action-oriented, logical and structured.

"This stands in stark contrast to the addict's unstructured behavior. Addicts are unstructured in time, seeing it as a series of separated incidents rather than a process. As one of my acquaintances remarked, 'Things happen but it doesn't really matter.' Each incident is seen as meaningless, lacking a context. Addicts are thus unable to plan, and each new event is a crisis. They do not dress appropriately for the weather or their surroundings, for they have fallen out of the structure of the natural world. Inappropriate social interaction is common, since that sphere also is in disarray.

"Addicts are given to feelings of anomie, of being disconnected from their world. They engage in frantic activity and anesthetize themselves to avoid a lack of connection and meaning. Viktor Frankl calls this 'Sunday afternoon neurosis,' the panic that sets in when there is nothing to distract from the lack of meaning. Thoreau's famous dictum, 'The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation,' is a subtle description to this same frantic scramble to avoid confronting the lack of meaning in one's life. The addict lives in a constrained and isolated world." (Steinman, *Jewish Concepts and Recovery from Chemical Dependency*, reprinted from JACS)

Living in Relationship to an Addict:

“Blessed is Hashem who has taken up the cause of my disgrace.” (I Samuel 25:38)

Imagine living with a person like this. The family often reaches out and tries to include the addict in family activities. But, while the addict is active in the addiction process, it is mostly frustrating and fruitless to expect to find common ground. The possibility for family life as it was imagined goes up in smoke. Dreams of “normalcy” are doused in the ashes.

Even a person in recovery for long time may be unable to blend in with a “normal” family dynamic. Re-creating anti-social behavior into socially responsible behavior is a long and arduous process. The black hole of loss is difficult to fill.

Many times there is wide disagreement among the family members about how situations should be handled. Inevitable rifts between the family members ensue. Sometimes a co-dependent situation arises with one party or another, that is the co-dependent develops an unhealthy relationship with an addict as a reaction to the addiction. Tension and irritability mount. There is a pervasive sense of anxiety about what might happen next, a gnawing feeling of impending doom.

"My husband wants to fix everything, and addiction can't be fixed except by the person in recovery, and only if he or she chooses to work through a 12-step program in a very earnest way. Even then, the odds are against winning the battle. Still, my husband gives him money, which the experts tell him not to do. We fight about this all of the time." (Amy M, mother of drug addict/alcoholic)

Quite regularly the family's worst nightmare is realized. The addict may steal from the family, or commit crimes, behave violently, resort to prostitution or just disappear for days on end. Sometimes he or she spends time and money in the criminal justice system. He/ she may spend time in jail. Too often the addict dies.

If the addiction is carried out over a long period of time, he or she will try to manipulate one or more family members, often triangulating and playing one against the other to affect a certain outcome, dumping responsibility onto someone else's lap.

One young woman remembers, "My brother always comes to me to 'help him out' after my parents refuse to give him any money, as they were advised not to do. He tells me these pathetic stories, and I feel sorry for him for the way he's messed up his life. But I feel sorry for all of us, because he messed up ours lives, too." (Bryna L. sister of addict)

The Addiction Cycle:

“Corruption is not His—the blemish is His children.” (Deuteronomy 32:5)

Lost jobs, failed relationships, bruised feelings, despairing confrontations--all of these failures are part of the addictive cycle. Family events metamorphose into shouting matches. Arlene G., the mother of an alcoholic notes, "When Gregg is with us, you can cut the tension with a knife. He is always doing something he shouldn't be doing, or saying something provocative. Someone finally loses it. It sets off a horrible shouting match. Everyone disperses angrily, and I end up going to my room. After that, it's sometimes difficult to get out of bed."

“My husband is ill,” says Tasha C. “Alcoholism has been rightfully defined as an illness, but the out-of-control ‘sick’ alcoholic can’t be compared to a diabetic, say, who doesn’t take his insulin, because unlike the diabetic, my husband an alcoholic, drives a car drunk and pushes me around when he’s in a rage.”

Alienation begets alienation. What's a family member to do? Family members must seek professional help. Individual therapy and/or family counseling in some form is

critical for one's own understanding and balance. So is maintaining a spiritual routine through ritual.

Jewish tradition provides its own context for spirituality, and when combined with the support of traditional Twelve-Step programs the success rate is decidedly better. Once family members, friends, partners, and significant others attend some of the meetings, there is often solace found in the shared experience. Doing structured "step-work," which provides a "how to" for healing, is another key component for family members living in crisis trying to progress.

Breaking the Addiction Cycle:

“O people delivered by Hashem, the shield of your help.” (Deuteronomy 34:29)

One learns from the Twelve-Step meetings that while the addict is actively using drugs or alcohol, binge eating and purging, gambling, engaging in sexually addictive behaviors, etc., there's nothing anyone can do to help the addict. The addict must come to that reality by him or herself and begin to make different life-style choices. Often this happens when the addict “hits rock-bottom.”

Change, if it is to come, and statistically this does not occur in a high percentage of cases, is a very slow, very intense process. Recovery may involve many relapses and recoveries. Each time, the family is on a roller coaster ride of emotions—hope/lost hope--dreams/loss of dreams.

Panic and despair descend as an interloper. A cloud of shame creates a fog of despair, which moves through the body and pierces the soul. It's hard to focus on other matters. Heartache so agonizing, it's palpable, is a constant companion, as is futility and despair. These emotions give rise to even more isolation. Who understands? Who's there for the bruised and battered family?

The cycle moves through a continuum with little distraction. One crisis after another unfolds. The family learns to live with a new reality, ongoing trauma and tragedy. They need to stop, take stock, look back and try to move forward, one step at a time.

How Did We Get Here?

Definition of Addiction/ Alcoholism as Paradigm:

*“On Sunday we feasted,
We drank plenty of wine.
You must know how to be merry,
But you must know when to quit.
Let’s make merry!
Let’s rejoice.”*

(Hassidic Niggun with Polish verse, Buxbaum p. 104)

“The term addiction, derived from the root *addicere* meaning to adore or to surrender oneself to a master, has come into increasing popularity during the last decade. The term addict emerged after 1910 to replace an earlier term, *habitué* used to designate a person suffering with addiction. (White, p. xv)

Joyce Reinitz, a rabbinical student and addiction co-dependent therapist, defines an addict as someone who engages habitually and repeatedly in compulsive behavior that is out of control and often done in secrecy. When continued over a period of time the addiction interferes with other aspects of a person’s life. In order to keep perpetuating the addiction, other aberrant behaviors arise (i.e., habitual lying and stealing). These aberrant behaviors have consequences, that either perpetuate the cycle or change its course.

One of the most common addictions is alcoholism. Statistically, one in every thirteen adults across the United States becomes addicted to alcohol. Nearly 14 million people in the country abuse alcohol. Problems are highest among young adults 18-29, and lowest among adults ages 65 or older. People who start drinking at an earlier age tend to develop alcohol problems at some point in their lives. (NIAAA)

What is alcoholism?

*“Rav said to Chiya his son, ‘Do not ingest any unnecessary drugs.’”
(Pesachim 113a)*

Although the term “alcoholism” is understood today in common parlance, over the centuries there has been an evolution of naming and varying approaches to treating the problem. Naming a problem is at the root of finding methodologies to handle and treat it.

“Drawn from the Arabic word *al-kuhl*, a name referring to an antimony-based eye cosmetic, alcohol later came to mean the essence or spirit of something. It wasn’t until the eighteenth century that the word alcohol came to designate the intoxicating ingredient in liquor. The Swedish physician Magnus Huss introduced the term alcoholism in 1849 to describe a chronic alcohol intoxication that was characterized by severe physical pathology and disruption of social functioning. (White p. xiv, quoting, Sournia, J. A History of Alcoholism, Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1990) It took nearly a century for Huss’s new term, and the accompanying term “alcoholic” to achieve widespread usage in America. (Ibid., p. xiv)

“Alcoholism is a disease. The craving that an alcoholic feels for alcohol can be as strong as the need for food and water. An alcoholic will continue to drink despite serious family, health or legal problems.

“Like many other diseases, alcoholism is chronic, meaning that it lasts a person’s lifetime; it usually follows a predictable course; and it has symptoms. The risk for developing alcoholism is influenced both by a person’s genes and by his or her lifestyle.

“Research shows that the risk for developing alcoholism does indeed run in families.” (sic) “However, risk is not destiny.” (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism/ *Frequently Asked Questions*)

The use of the term “alcoholism” to designate a “disease” originated in the early nineteenth century in the writings of Benjamin Rush and the British physician, Thomas Trotter. It gained more importance as a ‘disease concept’ as the century progressed in the 1830s. Dr. Samuel Woodward, the first superintendent of the Worcester State Hospital, in Worcester, Massachusetts and Dr. Eli Todd of Hartford, Connecticut established “the first medical institutions for inebriates.”

“The concept of alcoholism as a disease lost favor in the early years of the twentieth century, but came back in vogue in mid-century, in part through pioneering studies at the Yale School of Alcohol Studies and the writings of E.M. Jellinek.” (Goodwin, p. 32)

According to The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), “Alcoholism is: A primary, chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations. The disease is often progressive and fatal. It is characterized by continuous or periodic impaired control

over drinking, preoccupation with the drug alcohol, use of alcohol despite adverse consequences, and distortions in thinking, most notably denial. (website, NCADD, *Definition of Alcoholism*) More succinctly, an alcoholic (addict) is a person who drinks, has problems from drinking, but goes on drinking anyway.” (Alcoholism: The Facts, Donald W. Goodwin, p. 29)

According to their internet web-site, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) states, “Alcoholism, also known as alcohol dependence, is a disease that includes the following four symptoms:

- **Craving**—a strong need, or urge to drink
- **Loss of control**—not being able to control the drinking once drinking has begun
- **Physical Dependence**—withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety after stopping drinking
- **Tolerance**—the need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to get high”

In her book Breakthrough/ What To Do When Alcoholism or Chemical Dependency Hits Close To Home, Ruth Maxwell writes, “Chemical dependency is an illness—a primary illness with its own set of symptoms and its own progressive stages. Chemical dependency is not a moral issue, nor is it a symptom of something else. Even if they should desire, people do not deliberately become addicted, nor, even though they may ardently wish to, do they prevent it.” (Ibid, p. 7) However, “Chemical dependency is different from other illnesses because it bears a stigma.” (Ibid, p. 9)

More men are statistically alcoholic than women, and men and women tend to tolerate alcohol in different ways. Women, in general, can tolerate less alcohol than men. Further, the disease of alcoholism takes a heavier toll on women's health, and exacts brain, heart and liver damage in a more progressive rate than men. (NIAA)

Diagnosing Addictions/ Paradigm Alcoholism:

“Something like a plague has appeared upon my house.” (Leviticus 14:35)

There is no diagnostic procedure, but there are a number of warning signs, and some questions an alcohol or drug user, or a person in a relationship with such a person needs to ask to determine if addiction treatment is required. Generally speaking, if one is even considering the questions, it indicates some cause for concern. According to NIAAA, if one answers “yes” to more than one of these questions, it is “highly likely” that a problem exists:

- Have you ever felt that you should cut down on your drinking?
- Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?
- Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover?
- Have you every passed out or had black-outs as a result of your drinking?
- Have you ever realized that you could not stop drinking once you began?
- Have you ever missed work, an event or an appointment as a result of drinking?

- Have you ever lied about your drinking?
- Have you ever felt the need to hide your drinking?
- Once you started to drink, have you ever been unable to stop?

“The symptoms of alcoholism fall into three groups: psychological, medical and social.” (Goodwin, p. 34)

“The most common causes of death in alcoholics are suicide, homicide, accidents, and a variety of medical illnesses, including acute hepatitis, cirrhosis, pancreatitis, subdural hematoma, pneumonia and alcohol related heart-disease.” (Ibid., p. 50)

According to a study conducted in 1990 by Thomas Bien and Roann Burge, cited in William L. White’s, Slaying the Dragon, “An overwhelming number (over 90%) of alcoholics smoke. Alcoholics smoke more cigarettes per day (98% smoke more than one pack per day), than do non-alcoholics smokers.” (p. 310) Any of the risks, that are, therefore, associated with smoking may then also become associated with alcoholics, as well.

In the last two decades AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases has been added to the list of costly side-effects of drug and alcohol addiction.

History of Alcoholism and Faith-Based Groups
Why They Have Endured:

“Two are better than one...for should they fall, one can raise the other; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and there is no one to raise him.” (Kohélet 4:9-10)

“The use of Alcohol goes back at least to Paleolithic times. The evidence for this derives from etymology as well as from studies of Stone-age cultures that survived into the twentieth century.

Available to Paleolithic man, presumably, were fermented fruit juice (wine), fermented grain (beer), and fermented honey (mead). Primitive society treated alcoholic beverages as nectar from the gods, a gift, referred to as spirits. All but three of the numerous Stone-Age cultures that survived into modern times have been familiar with alcohol.

Alcohol has been used medicinally and in religious ceremonies for thousands of years, but it also has a long history of recreational use.” (Goodwin, p. 20) William L. White, in Slaying the Dragon/ The History of Addiction Treatment in America, gives a

comprehensive historical overview of one of America's enduring problems. (Public lecture/November 6, 2002)

Native Americans began their involvement with substances when they came in contact with Europeans. Early American drinking reflected a synthesis of cultures. The Spanish, English, Dutch and French all brought alcohol to America, and as a result of its pervasive presence, it was called, 'the Good Creature of G-d. ' In early colonial America it was used widely by men, women and children to raise spirits, to celebrate and to nurse sick people, at the same time that various laws were being passed to control public drunkenness. In 1656 the Puritans pushed through a law in Massachusetts stating that each town was liable for a public tavern, since private drinking was considered to be more conducive to excesses than public drinking. Alcoholism and the Jewish Community, p.21)

"Methodists, Quakers, and Calvinists were early proponents of temperance, but Puritan clergyman, Dutch merchants, and Virginia planters agreed that alcohol was not only useful, but necessary. They were quick to condemn excessive drinking as an abuse of one of nature's wholesome gifts and saw the excesses as a violation of the divine will." (Ibid., p. 20) Cotton Mather, in the early 1700s, regarded drunkenness and revelry as weakening society and tried to suppress it.

Between 1790 and 1830, alcoholic consumption saw a sharp increase. The impact of alcohol on the family, and public drunkenness as an ever growing problem in the late 18th century, forced a re-evaluation of 'the Good Creature of G-d' into the 'Demon Rum.'" (White, p. 4)

The problem was complicated because even from its earliest days, alcohol production and consumption was a source of great financial gain. As a case in point, the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 was an act of rebellion by the farmers against the government, who levied taxes on them for turning their corn and rye crop into whiskey.

Even today, while it is well known that addictions cause a cultural, social, religious and societal drain, there is much illicit profit to be made by individuals and groups, fanning the fire of chemical dependency. The international illicit drug business generates \$400 billion in trade annually, according to recent United Nations estimates. It represents 8 percent of all international trade. It is about the same percentage as tourism and the oil industry. Yet many of the chief substances of this illicit business have been used to treat physical pain or mental distress as well as for pleasure. (The Pursuit of Oblivion, p.11)

Anthony Benezet, a religious leader, published a book entitled The Mighty Destroyer, which was thought to be America's first text on alcoholism. (White, p. 5) Alcoholics were attracted to the temperance movement. But in the decade between 1830 to 1840 the movement shifted from temperance to abstinence. In 1840 a new group, comprised of mostly members of the working class, in contrast to the socially elite of earlier temperance groups, formed the Washingtonian Society.

“The main bill of fare at a Washingtonian meeting was experience sharing—confessions of alcoholic debauchery followed by various accounts of personal reformation. (sic) This ritual of public confession and public signing of a pledge carried great emotional power for those participating. It evoked, at least temporarily, what would be described one hundred years later as ego deflation or surrender.” (White p. 9)

The first Martha Washington Society was organized in New York on May 12, 1841 for women and children. Women were encouraged to banish alcohol from their homes with slogans such as, “Total Abstinence Or No Husband.” (White p. 6)

Though the Washingtonian Society would eventually run its course for a variety of both internal institutional problems, and external cultural influences, all subsequent faith-based programs, including the landmark development of AA in 1935, would promulgate many of the philosophies first developed by the Washingtonian Society.

Quoting, Maxwell, White lists them as following:

- “the importance of maintaining a focus on the welfare and reformation of the individual alcoholic
- the potential power of a personal and public commitment to total abstinence
- the benefit of regular sober fellowship for the newly recovering alcoholic
- the power of experience sharing—their vivid recounting of the ways in which one’s life was affected by drinking and the benefits that one had received by sobriety
- the use of recovered alcoholics as charismatic speakers and in-service work to other alcoholics
- the use of religious/spiritual foundation for sustained recovery”

(White p. 14)

Between 1842 and 1850, fraternal temperance societies and reform clubs grew to provide sober support for the newly reformed alcoholic, as well as to lend financial aid.

(Ibid, p. 15)

Historically, according to White, mutual-aid societies led to the creation of “inebriate homes and asylums,” and reform clubs. These began in America in the late 18th century and continued through to the mid 19th century, based on writings by Dr. Benjamin Rush who thought that these “inebriates” were sick and needed to have medical treatment.

For a number of years, these had varying degrees of success with a myriad of treatments. For our purposes, what arose as a result of these homes were the mutual-aid alumni associations that gave way to the establishment of AA, which set the standard and tone for faith-based treatment of alcoholics that continue today.

What paved the way for AA is a number of circumstances and events coalescing at the same time. The story begins with Rowland H., a prominent person whose life was unraveling through the progression of his alcoholism. He consulted with renowned psychoanalyst Carl Jung in 1931. After treatment, and a subsequent relapse, Jung told Rowland H. that the only hope for him would be a “spiritual awakening or a religious cure,” and that this necessary experience would not be advanced through psychotherapy.

(White p. 128)

Jung’s warning led Rowland W. to the Oxford Group in England, that was established by Frank Buchman, a Lutheran Minister from Pennsylvania. There he met with an old friend, Ebby T., who had been in jail. In 1934, when Ebby T. was released

from jail he reached out to his old friend, Bill W. as part of the program of one recovering person reaching out to another.

Bill W.'s drinking was so bad that his wife Lois, brought Bill to Charles B. Town's Hospital in New York for "drying out." It was there that Bill Wilson had a religious epiphany. He then knew that he had to bring the message of spirituality and sobriety to others. It was at that time that he met Dr. Robert Smith, Dr. Bob, in Akron Ohio. Dr. Bob was trying to gain sobriety at the home of Henrietta Sieberling though the local Oxford Group. The rest, as they say, is recovery history. All other subsequent faith-based addiction groups took their initial cues from the AA philosophy which identified the Twelve Steps of Recovery and later the code of behavior that evolved into the Twelve Traditions.

AA excluded non-alcoholic substance abusers from their early meetings, but left it open for narcotic addicts to adapt the AA program for other addictions. Somewhere between 1946 and 1953 the founding of Narcotics Anonymous began in the South. The first Addicts Anonymous meeting, which later became NA, began in Lexington, Kentucky in 1947. (White, p. 219)

Somewhere in the early days of AA, addicts and family members met in the same rooms to work on recovery. As these meetings grew, a decision was made to separate family members from addicts. In the early 1940s, wives, and later husbands and wives, began to meet separately to concentrate on their own recovery by focusing on their own spiritual and emotional health issues. In May 1946 members of the San Diego AA began to organize themselves as "Alcoholics Anonymous, Associates." It was at this point that

the spouses of alcoholics would seek help before the alcoholic. Their first step read, “We admitted we were powerless to help the alcoholic.” (White, p. 221)

In the 1940s wives (and later husbands), began to band together to support the families in crisis due to alcoholism, and in 1946 organized themselves as “Alcoholics Anonymous Associates. In 1951, Lois Wilson and her friend Anne B. set up an office to support the family support groups. Their goals were as follows:

1. “To give cooperation and understanding to the AA at home.
2. To live by the Twelve Steps ourselves in order to grow spiritually along with our AA.
3. To welcome and give comfort to the families of the new AA.” (White, p. 221)

Just as the growth of AA grew through a series of articles, so did Al-Anon’s (significant others of alcoholics) expansion depend on the press. Articles in *Time* and *Life* magazines, *The Christian Herald*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Dear Abby* columns enhanced public awareness and brought new members into the groups. Due to the family’s potential lack of cooperation, or the potential for the family to sabotage the addict’s progress, some therapists were initially reluctant to bring family members in for treatment. Still, they met with great success and continue today as a great source of strength for the family members or persons in a relationship with an addict.

Rescuing or enabling is addiction jargon, meaning a destructive form of helping. The enabler is anyone who helps the addict to continue his/her behavior, or prevent the addict from suffering consequences as a result of the addictive behavior. In the long-run, this is a recipe for disaster.

Rabbi Abraham Twerski, M.D. says in the preface to his book Caution, “Kindness Can Be Dangerous to the Alcoholic.” I wish to state categorically that no one in the environment is responsible for the drinking of anyone else. Husbands are not responsible for their wives drinking, and wives are not responsible for their husband’s drinking. Nor are employers responsible for their employees drinking and vice versa. Obviously, people who interrelate can provoke feelings of tension and anxiety, hostility, or envy in one another, but the decision to drink away these or any other uncomfortable feelings is no one else’s but the alcoholic’s. This is a sick decision, and the issue of ‘responsibility’ for a decision emanating from an illness that distorts judgment and insight is difficult to delineate both morally and legally.” (p. ix)

Treating Alcoholism:

“Be strong and courageous.” (Deuteronomy 31:7)

There is no current cure for alcoholism. Even if a person has been successful in giving up drugs or alcohol for a period of time, the relapse rate is very high. “Any ultimate explanation of alcoholism must account for two features of the illness: *loss of control* and *relapse*. Loss of control refers to the alcoholic’s inability to start drinking once he (sic) starts. Relapse is the return to heavy drinking after a sobriety, and it is one of the great mystery of addictions. (Ibid., p. 77)

While there are some medications that effectively treat alcoholics for one reason or another, at one stage in the process or another, there is no medicinal panacea. In fact,

sometimes treatment drugs, like Valium or Xanax, can themselves become highly addictive.

Drugs such as Antabuse, that make a person sick if he or she drinks while on the drug, have some success, as do anti-depressants which address the accompanying underlying depression or other disorders that usually coincide with the addiction problem. Psychotropic drugs must be monitored by a medical doctor and all treatment should be part of a team approach.

Therapy to deal with feelings of poor self-esteem, which is at the root of many addictions, is ideal. According to Dr. Sam Klagsbrun, Medical Director of Four Winds Hospital, AA and psychiatrists used to not think highly of one another, but that has changed. The therapist and the faith-based programs should work hand in hand.

“Alternately, SMART Recovery (Self Management and Recovery Training) support groups provide a humanistic approach based on the rational-emotive therapy of Albert Ellis. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy and Motivation Enhancement Therapy are two widely used approaches for the therapeutic treatment of addictions for those who reject a spiritually based approach.” (Marcia Cohn Spiegel and Rabbi Yaacov Kravitz quoting the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Project MATCH Monograph Series, Rockville Maryland, 1995, in *Confronting Addiction in Jewish Pastoral Care/A Practical Handbook from Traditional and Contemporary Sources*, Edited by Rabbi Dayle Friedman, p. 270)

A combination of a variety of methodologies is often indicated depending, for example, if there is a dual diagnosis of other mental illness problems, such as bi-polar disease or an underlying depression. A thorough evaluation is vital.

The goal of all of these treatments is to have the addict break the addiction cycle. The family must be treated as well. If an addict returns to the same dysfunctional, sick environment, the same sick patterns will arise. The longer a person can stay “clean and sober” (out of the addiction cycle) without relapse, the better the odds are for long-term success.

Recovery comes in three stages: physical, emotional and spiritual. Treatment has varying degrees of success. De-tox centers may be indicated at the beginning of the recovery process for a safe haven for an addicted person to withdraw from addictive behaviors and substances before re-entering his/her daily life, and again at times of relapse. As the disease progresses, and relapses occur, it may also be necessary for an addict to enter detoxification centers as a safe, medically supervised haven to cleanse the body of substances.

What statistically seems to make the critical difference in managing the disease, is participation in a fellowship group such as AA, Nar-Anon, Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA), etc. First and foremost, it signifies a first step toward recovery. This is the gateway to a new life for a family that has traveled the addiction path.

The first step in the Twelve-Step program is to recognize that one is “powerless over the addiction,” and that some kind of spiritual connection, a Higher Power, i.e., “the G-d of my understanding,” is a source of strength for a person whose life is unmanageable and out of control.

This spiritual connection is created in a supportive community, with people who have been on the same addiction journey. Many of them have better lives because they have joined these programs and done work “in the recovery rooms.” Their faith in G-d

and in the fellowship programs serve as inspiration and support for the new members as they maintain continuing sobriety in an anonymous community.

People reach out to others in kindness and compassion. Isolation, loneliness, shame, guilt and despair find a new place in shared stories. The group process takes the emphasis off of the “self,” and moves it to helping and supporting the “other.”

Sponsors, people who are further along in the recovery process, and act as mentors, are successful in providing emotional support one on one and are happy to do so as part of their “grateful” recovery. Though some people do recover from addictions on their own, most do not.

“Working a program,” i.e. one of the Twelve-Step programs that are offered through the various faith-based support groups, is a step by step recovery process. Through the process of working the Twelve-Steps the addict and/or persons in relationships with addicts is helped by actively taking responsibility for one’s own recovery through a blueprint for a spiritual connection to a ‘higher power.’” The programs emphasize a reliance on G-d for love and blessing, a hope for forgiveness, and the need to connect to others in support and fellowship as he/she follows the recovery steps. This process creates a new way of looking at things and as a natural consequence, effects behavior modification.

Drunks, a Poem

We died of pneumonia in furnished rooms
where they found us three day later
when somebody complained about the smell
we died against bridge abutments
and nobody knew if it was suicide

and we probably didn't know either
except in the sense that it was always suicide
we died in hospitals
our stomachs huge, distended
and there was nothing they could do
we died in cells
never knowing whether we were guilty or not.

We went to Rabbis
they told us to pray
they told us to go and try harder
we tried and we died.

We died of overdoses
we died of Aids
we died in bed (but usually not the Big Bed)
we died in straightjackets
in the DT's seeing G-d knows what
creeping, skittering slithering
shuffling things
and you know what the worst thing was?
the worst thing was that nobody ever believe how hard we tried.

We went to doctors
they gave us stuff to take
that would make us sick when we drank
on the principle of so crazy,
it just might work, I guess
or maybe they just shook their heads
and sent us to places like Dropkick Murphy's
and when we got out we were hooked on paraldehyde
or maybe we lied to the doctors
and they told us not to drink so much
just drink like me
and we tried
and we died.

We drowned in our own vomit
or choked on it
our broken jaws wired shut
we died playing Russian roulette
and people thought we lost

but we knew better
we died under the hoofs of horses
under the wheels of vehicles
under the knives and boot heels of our brother and sister drunks
we died in shame.

And you know what was even worse?
that we couldn't believe it ourselves
that we had tried
we figured we just thought we tried
and we died believing that we hadn't tried
believing that we didn't know what it meant to try.

When we were desperate to go for help
we went to people with letters after their names
and prayed that they might they might have read the right books
that had the right words in them
never suspecting the terrifying truth
that the right words, as simple as they were
had not been written yet.

We died falling off girders on high buildings
Because of course ironworkers drink
Of course they do
We died with a shotgun in our mouth
Or jumping off a bridge
And everybody knew it was suicide
We died under the Southeast Expressway
With our hands tied behind us
And a bullet in the back of the head
Because this time the people that that we disappointed
were the wrong people
we died of convulsions, or of 'insult to the brain'
we died incontinent, and in disgrace, abandoned.

If we were women, we died degraded,
because women have so much more to live up to
and we tried and we died and nobody cried
and the very worst thing
was that for every one of us who died
there were another thousand
who wished that we could die
who went to sleep praying

we would not have to wake up
because what we were enduring was intolerable
and we knew in our hearts
it wasn't ever gonna change.

One of us had what the books call
a transforming spiritual experience
and he said to himself
I've got it
(no, you haven't, you've only got part of it)
and I have to share it
(now you've ALMOST got it)
and he kept trying to give it away
but we couldn't hear it
we tried and we died.

We died of one last cigarette
the comfort of its glowing in the dark
we passed out and the bed caught fire
they said we suffocated before our body burned
they said we never felt a thing
that was the best way maybe that we died
except sometimes we our family with us.

And the man in New York was so sure he had it
he tried to love us into sobriety
but that didn't work either,
love confuses drunks
and he tried and we still died
one after another we got his hopes up
and we broke his heart
because that's what we do.

And the worst thing was that every time we thought we knew what the worst thing
was
something happened that was worse
until a day came in a hotel lobby
and it wasn't in Rome, Jerusalem, or Mecca
or even Dublin, or South Boston
it was Akron, Ohio, for goodness sake.

A day came when the man said I have to find a drunk
because I need him as much as he needs me
(NOW you've got it)
and the transmission line

after all those years was open
the transmission line was open.

And now we don't go to rabbis
and we don't go to doctors
and people with letters after their names
we come to people who have been there
we come to each other
and we try
and we don't die.

Author Unknown (taken from the JACS Newsletter, May 2002)

Judaism and the "Recovery" Process:

*"The breath of my life will bless, the cells of my being sing in gratitude
reawakening." (Marcia Falk)*

For a long time, Jewish people felt marginalized in the Twelve-Step recovery process. First, addiction was traditionally thought to be a non-Jewish problem. Since there was no perceived problem, there was also no perceived need for the Jewish community to create a space to deal with the problem. Most of the fellowship groups (i.e. AA, Nar-Anon, Overeaters Anonymous, etc.), met in churches, and while there was no mention of Jesus Christ, many felt strong Christological overtones in the meetings. The Higher Power addressed in the Twelve-Step programs is intended to be non-denominational, but for some the Higher Power was/is seen as Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, in the early seventies, some members of the Jewish community came to discover and acknowledge that Jews do drink and suffer with addictions. Jews were attending meetings in churches, both because they had nowhere else to go, and/or

because for some the anonymity of the groups and the improbability of meeting other Jews in a church, made them feel safe to address their problems.

Clergy was resistant early on, and some still are to this day. But the fact is that the problem of alcoholism and other addictions is quite prevalent in the Jewish community, and denying the fact that it exists does more harm than good.

Also, the reality is that there is nothing un-Jewish about Twelve-Step programs. Quite the contrary. Judaism is a G-d centered religion, infused with great spirituality. Jewish sacred texts are filled with comfort and hope for those who seek a relationship with the Divine and want to be transformed away from their suffering.

Jews place a very high worth on community, particularly holy community. In Jewish terms, each person active in an addiction who is isolated and alone, is out of community. Judaism emphasizes the special need for spiritual community, particularly when one of its members is sick. *Bikkur holim*, visiting the sick has its roots in ancient Judaism as a core value.

In the practice and manner of the *Oral Tradition*, during recovery meetings or working “in the rooms,” people anonymously stand up and tell their stories of addictions and recovery. Other people “in the rooms” stand as witness. Each group, thus, becomes an *edah*, a holy gathering with a strong group consciousness. As a benefit, a social, spiritual and cultural connection is established by people struggling with the same issues, out of which comes a contextual basis for survival and renewal.

The following addiction story was presented at a Nar-Anon meeting, is the *Oral Torah* of Dorit and Hershel G., a middle-income Jewish couple, with good values and high hopes and aspirations for their two daughters, Rachel and Joan::

Case History: Rachel P. and Her family
A Story of Love and Hope

“As early as early childhood, Rachel showed signs of a difficult personality. She always posed a number of challenges to us that we were forced to confront, but for the most part she was doing well, and the family was climbing over the hurdles, until her teenage years.

Between the ages of 14-15, Rachel was popular in school and a good student, earning good grades in her honors classes. She was associated with a wholesome group of friends, and aside from the usual teenage issues, we were moving along. By age 16, Rachel was failing in her classes, changing grades on her report cards, and her friends shifted from the wholesome group to a fast crowd. Her boyfriend and some of her other friends were involved in a major drug heist at the high school. That worried us. It also worried us that we began to see signs of addictive behavior with her eating and exercising. We tried to take her to a psychiatrist, but she refused to go. It was difficult to live with her, and we didn't think we had many choices.

We continued to rescue her by paying for tutors to help her with all of her failing classes so that she wouldn't have to go to summer school. In so doing she, therefore, did not have to suffer any consequences for her own actions. Similarly, at seventeen, despite her behavior, we bought her a car, and sent her on two extravagant vacations. She had two car accidents, for which we assumed financial responsibility. As our insurance premiums went up, she continued to drive, and we continued to pay staggering premiums.

When it was time for her to go to college, we agreed to send her to Arizona State. In hindsight, it wasn't a good choice, but we did it because we wanted her to move ahead with her life and we wanted her and her constant problems out of the house. She ran up tremendous credit card debt, which we paid. After one year she came back home from Arizona, in January, after we had made the financial commitment to tuition for the spring semester, and after paying for her apartment. We thought if we sent her to a smaller school, maybe that would be better for her. Through our connections, she transferred to the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science (now known as Philadelphia University), but she flunked out in a year, after we had paid for the tuition. At the same time she was working in a woman's dress shop, and continued to run up credit card debt, which we paid. We even sent her to Greece for six weeks, footing the bill, so that we would have release from her insane behavior and demanding personality.

When she returned she attended Camden County Community College. She did well there, earning her Associate's degree, even making the Dean's List. Much to our happiness, she was accepted at Rutgers University in the spring semester to complete her undergraduate degree, but she was not doing well on all fronts. At that time she started to date an actuary from a nice Jewish family who introduced her to cocaine. She was in and out of the house, hanging around with this man and his unsavory friend, and, unbeknownst to us, using a lot of cocaine. Her behavior became very abusive to her father, her younger sister, and to me. There were always men in her life, and we later learned that she had sexual addiction problems. She probably had undiagnosed Attention Deficit Disorder, and really low self esteem. She always felt that she was being rejected by friends and men, and there were always new men.

She failed out of Rutgers's and worked in a car detailing business with one of these drug using friends, living at home. She convinced us to finance this business at the beginning to get it going. We had hoped that if we helped her she would find worthwhile work, become independent and self-supporting, and move ahead with her life. Instead, the business provided her with a lot of cash with which she brought drugs.

She became pregnant from the actuary and had an abortion, which my husband paid for without telling me. In the meantime another man, a drug addicted ex-football player became part of her life. She began sleeping a lot, and her behavior became erratic and explosive. The business was going downhill, so to protect our investment I began working in the car detailing business. This was despite the fact that I had serious surgery only weeks before to remove two thirds of my stomach. But Rachel wasn't paying the rent,

using the money for drugs instead, and her landlord shut down the business. We bailed her out with both the rent both for work and for her house. In addition, she was mounting up huge amounts of debt on her credit card and took out a bank loan for \$4,000. She also accumulated a huge number of parking tickets, which we continued to pay, because the car was in our name.

She moved back into our home. She stayed out all night long, causing us one sleepless night after the other, hanging out with a group of miserable friends, the dregs of the earth, using her money for drugs. And we continued to bail her out. There was also endless harassment from creditors, including constant phone calls from the bank for a loan she was not paying. She found a job with a private brokerage firm, collecting her money under the table. We gave her our car so that she could get to work.

At the beginning of that summer our housekeeper found a straw for cocaine. We threw her out of the house and she found an apartment downtown, but that didn't last long. We agreed that if she didn't bring her dogs home, she could come back with us. She did, and continued to work through the summer, but she was staying out all night, causing us sleepless nights, and my husband and I were fighting all the time.

We panicked and forced her to an intervention to be admitted to her first of many rehab facilities. She went to Hampton Hospital in New Jersey. After five days the insurance wouldn't pay, and we were faced with a bill of \$10,000. If she were to stay there for thirty days we would have had to pay another \$30,000 up front, which we couldn't do. We arranged for out-patient care and paid for that. But it failed. When she came out of the hospital she moved back with us. She was difficult and non-compliant. She was involved with yet another man, who we later found out was a drug dealer, and all of it was in our faces. She had several automobile accidents and everything began to escalate rapidly again.

She began counseling with a psychiatrist at this time and he put her on lithium. She didn't show up for her appointments, she didn't take the lithium, and the whole process became another failure. It was then that we put her into her own apartment. The counselor, not an addictions' specialist, convinced us that we should pay her expenses. Soon she moved out of the family home, hung out with a bad crowd, and became pregnant again by the drug dealer. She had another abortion, which we paid for again. In the meantime she stole a credit card, and there were two bench warrants out for her arrest. When she finally appeared in court, they threw her in jail because we didn't pay the bail. We let her stay in there for a week. This time we did not bail her out.

I was crazy. My husband and I were always fighting. He was spending most of his time commuting to his work in New York from where we lived in New Jersey, and wasn't around as much as I needed him. We were not on the same page as to how to deal with the problem, and we were still trying to find ways to fix things for Rachel and to mop up after her. We didn't know at that time that we were powerless to fix her. We didn't know

that mopping up was actually creating a bigger mess. We kept trying to find solutions, and we kept failing.

After her second abortion she was living on her own again. At that time, we received a call from a local hospital that Rachel had tried to commit suicide by overdosing on the lithium that the doctor had prescribed. She was placed in the eating disorder section of the hospital, who knows why, and was crying out for help. All of our friends showed up that night at the hospital. They were warm and wonderful, but they were clueless as to how to help us. Even though they knew a lot about our story, they had no experience with addictions, and we didn't have a common language to communicate about what was happening. They just pitied us. All of their children, save for the usual growing pains, were high-achievers, traveling in socially acceptable circles, and moving forward in their lives. So, besides the great grief and sadness we were experiencing was pain, isolation and shame.

Shortly after leaving the hospital, Rachel was evicted from her apartment for disorderly conduct, and for a brief time she moved back into our house with her dog. She then moved the dog and herself into the drug dealer's house. She became pregnant again and borrowed the money from her sister to have her third abortion.

At some point Rachel was living with us again with the dog. She was in a bad way with drugs. Though she didn't steal anything from us directly, she hocked her jewelry. Her main focus became where to find drugs. Our main focus became trying to get her to meetings, and we drove her to every one for more than three months, every day. It was there that she met Salvatore, a gigolo from South Philly. He, too, was an addict, and the two of them were in and out of trouble. They lived in many places, including his mother's house. She also did a stint at a half-way house in the ghetto.

When she left the half-way house she worked as a waitress and a bartender so that she could have cash at hand to feed her habit. Her drug habit really progressed to the point that she became an IV heroin user. It was at that time that she and Salvatore tried to kick the habit. When he entered a rehab facility on the guise that he was suicidal so that he could receive free services, Rachel tried to manipulate us into sending her to the same treatment center. This was the mid-nineties when Rachel was approximately twenty six years old. A doctor inserted pellets into her abdomen to help her detox and to help with her cravings for heroin. While the pellets did help for the heroin, it did not help for the cocaine. It cost us three thousand dollars for the initial procedure and \$1,000 a month thereafter. But it didn't work.

Rachel was back with Salvatore again, and she was living with us. She began to attend an in-patient treatment program at Kennedy Hospital, but after three or four days she started using again in the hospital, and they threw her out. It was at this point, however, that our lives took a turn for the better. My husband met a couple at Kennedy Hospital that recommended Naranon. We started to attend meeting, and began to learn how to "detach with love."

Rachel went to Florida to another rehab center and our home became peaceful again. Florida has a strong recovery community and we were hopeful. Rachel began to live in a half-way house, but soon she began to use again. After many horrible phone calls she moved back in with us again in New Jersey. She became unbearable again and hooked up once more with Salvatore. He moved to Florida and she convinced my husband to drive her all the way back to Florida from New Jersey, in her own car so that she would have a car at her disposal. We found out later that she had sewn heroin into the cuffs of her pants and was, therefore, using all the way to Florida, putting her father in jeopardy.

We left her in Florida. Shortly thereafter she started to call us, crying, and we arranged for another intervention in Florida. She moved into Gratitude House, which was mostly a facility for pregnant addicts, and stayed clean for six months. Right before the graduation, she began to break the rules, and she never completed the graduation. We went to Florida for two extended stays, going to meetings with her, and trying to get her and us on the right path. We found her an apartment in West Palm Beach. We were paying part of the rent for her. She seemed to be doing fine for awhile, and we were happy, but soon she found Salvatore again, and she relapsed. She began using heroin again.

They moved into a motel in Florida. She supported herself and her drug habit as a topless dancer in a bar, and descended rapidly into her heroin addiction. When she called us crying for help, we thought that she was going to die. We arranged for her to meet a man that helped her detox off of heroin in his detox hospital. She lived there for two weeks. We connected with a psychiatrist in Dade County, and Rachel checked into Transitions, another detox facility in North Miami. It cost us \$20,000 out of pocket expenses for six weeks, which we didn't have. This was right before our younger daughter's wedding. Up until the last minute we didn't know whether she would come to the wedding or not, but with two years of help from Naranon we had some strength to handle either eventuality.

From there Rachael moved to another half-way house. She got a sponsor, began attending meetings, met a woman who introduced her to a legitimate way of making money, selling phone cards, and relapsed again. She met yet another guy and her chemical and sexual addiction cycle continued. She moved in with Paul and lived with him for one and a half years.

At present, she is living on her own. She has been clean for almost two years. She is working and has a very rigid routine—she goes to the gym, works, and attends meetings every night. She has lots of friends, and is like a new person. We are all hoping that our family will all go to Florida and attend the meeting where she will receive her medallion for being clean for two years.

My husband and I are hopeful, not just because things are going well for Rachel, but because we have spent seven years in a very supportive Naranon group. We have learned

a lot. We learned that we must take care of ourselves despite what's happening with our daughter. The addict will not get better until he or she wants to, and sometimes that doesn't happen until she or he hits rock bottom. Sometimes that means jail or worse. You have to put aside the fact that your child may or may not recover. In our group there are people who come even though their significant others have died. The family has to "detach with love," when the addict is involved with the addiction, and learn to support the recovering addict appropriately in sobriety.

The members of the family have to focus on its own goals, and not try to fix the addict's behavior. You have to attend meetings and talk about your situation. It's best if you can attend the same meetings consistently—You won't be alone, and you will learn how to work the steps. Once you work the steps, you realize that you have support for getting healthy. Recovery is a process, and you have to live one day at a time.

We all live one day at a time through NA and NAranon. Thank G-d."

Addictions/ Impact on Family Members:

"Please G-d, heal her now." (Numbers 12:12)

In the beginning of an addiction problem, the family lives in a climate of denial. "Initially, and for quite some time, the dependent's illness is sporadic; crises are followed by lengthy periods of peace, which lead members of the family to believe that life has returned to normal and that they had little reason for concerns. Because of its subtle onset, and its sporadic nature, co-dependents cannot grasp the magnitude of the illness and are unable to see that the illness is present during times of peace as well as times of crisis. Instead, remembering the way life used to be, they live from crisis to crisis." (Maxwell, Breakthrough, p. 8)

According to Maxwell, "The dependent will repress, forget the unbearable, minimize, play down the seriousness or significance of an event, rationalize, use a plausible but inaccurate explanation for his behavior and he will intellectualize, speak in

generalities or theoretical terms in an impersonal manner, thereby removing himself from his feelings about specific events, But unlike most adults, the chemically dependent person in time will use these defenses rigidly and repeatedly. Then to make matters worse, much worse, he will invoke two additional defenses that are not routinely used by healthy adults: protection and denial. It is the chemically dependent person's use of these latter two mechanisms that causes the most problems for others." (Ibid., p. 65)

Addicts are manipulative and very cunning. They need to be to perpetuate their addictions. People who are in relationships with addicts often will become co-dependent with the addict. When Al-Anon became its own entity, and in 1979 when the concept of co-dependency emerged, a co-dependent was defined as someone whose life had become unmanageable as a result of living in a committed relationship with an alcoholic. Melody Beattie, author of Co-Dependent No More, defines a co-dependent as "one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior." (p. 36)

Caretaking causes problems. Caretakers ignore their own wants, needs, feelings, goals and desires all under the guise of putting an end to the addiction. The addiction doesn't end this way. It actually perpetuates the Karpman Drama Triangle. Caretakers rescue, they persecute and then they end up feeling victimized. (Ibid, p. 82)

Healing From Co-Dependency:

“I am Hashem Your Healer.”(Exodus 15:26)

A co-dependent person is one who lets another person’s behavior affect him/ her, and is obsessed with trying to control it. Since a person can’t effectively control another, particularly an addict, he/ she will unwittingly perpetuate the addiction process.

The addiction cycle must stop. The addict often can’t, but a co-dependent person must learn how to “detach with love.” This entails a three part formula from an old AA and Al-Anon formula called “**HOW**”-- **H**onesty, **O**penness and a **W**illingness to try.” As a by-product the addict may improve as well.

“Let go and let G-d,” the adage goes. The benefits are great. In time, the co-dependent gets a life, as they say. He/she finds spirituality and serenity independent of the life of the addict. By taking the first step, a person is able to create a relationship with a Higher Power. Once a person relinquishes control to G-d, everything changes.

This is beyond medicine and therapy. Faith-centered Twelve-Step meetings that foster recovery in like-minded supportive communities can steer the course of one's life from despair to hope. This is an important recovery first-step as described below.

Beyond Therapy A Parable:

“Picture ourselves standing on the shore. Way across the water is an island called serenity, where peace, happiness and freedom exist from the despair of alcoholism and other problems. We really want to get to that island, but we’ve got to find a way to get across the water—that huge void that stands between us and where we want to be.

We have two choices. In the water is an ocean liner, a cruise ship that looks real posh and cozy. It’s called treatment, therapy. Next to it, on the beach, sits a group of odd looking people. They appear to be rowing a boat, but we can’t see the boat, and we can’t see the oars. We can only see these happy people sitting on the beach rowing an invisible boat with invisible oars. The invisible boat is called Al-Anon (or A.A. or any other Twelve Step program).

The ocean liner honks, summoning us aboard the treatment and therapy cruise. We can see the people on board: they’re happy and waving to us to join them in their invisible boat. Would we choose the liner or the invisible boat? Of course, we’ll get on the ocean liner, the luxury cruise. The next thing we know, we’re heading toward the island of happiness.

The problem is about mid-way across the water, the ocean liner stops, turns around, and heads back to the shore where we started from. Then the captain orders everyone off the ship. When we ask, ‘Why?’ he says, ‘Our cruise only goes so far. The only way you can ever get to that island is by getting in the invisible boat (called Al-Anon, etc.).’

So we shrug our shoulders and walk over to the people in the boat. ‘Get in!’ they holler. ‘We can’t see any boat to get into!’ we holler back. ‘Get in anyway,’ they say. So we get in and pretty soon they say, ‘Pick up the oar and start rowing (working the Steps).’

‘Can’t see any oars,’ we holler back. ‘Pick ‘em up and start rowing anyway!’ they say. So we pick up the invisible oars and start rowing, and pretty soon we see the boat.

Before we know it, we see the oars, too. Next thing we know, we're so happy rowing the boat with the goofy people that we don't care if we ever get to the other side.'" (Beattie, *Co-Dependent No More*, p. 194-195, quoting Warren W. in Minneapolis on August 23, 1985, borrowing it from circuit speaker, Clancy Imislund who operates the Midnight Mission and lives in Venice, California.)

The Process of Twelve-Step Recovery Groups For Significant Others of Addicts:

"Do not fear, in order to elevate you has G-d come." (Exodus 20:17)

According to the book, How Al-Anon Works, most people who come to these meetings initially, come for quick answers, but soon see that there are none. "Reaching out for help in Al-Anon is unlike asking for help in most other places. In Al-Anon we do not give advice. Nobody tells anyone what to do in their own private situation. For example, we neither advocate or oppose staying married or getting divorced, confronting the alcoholics in our lives or keeping quiet, allowing our children to live at home or asking them to move out, breaking contact with our families or continuing to develop our relationships. These and countless other difficult decisions are uniquely personal and can only be made by the individuals involved.

In fact, we suggest that newcomers to Al-Anon make no major decisions for quite some time after coming to Al-Anon, because we find that our perspective on our circumstances undergoes a dramatic change during that time. By waiting, we often find

options we had not considered previously and discover that, over time, we become better able to make decisions we can live with. Thus, it would be absurd for any of our members to advocate one course of action over another. We don't know what is best for another person.

“Instead, we offer our own experience, strength, and hope. We talk about the problems we ourselves have encountered and how we have used the principles and practices of the Al-Anon program to help work through our problems. We share our feelings, our growth and our pain. We listen and we learn, identifying with stories others tell, and discovering new ways to approach our particular circumstances by hearing how others have dealt with similar issues. We suggest that you take what you like and leave the rest. Some of what we say may be helpful; some may not. Each of us is free to pick and choose, to use whatever seems useful, and to disregard the rest.

“What we don't do is spend a lot of time talking about the alcoholic. Instead, we learn to put the focus on ourselves. At first this approach may not seem to make a lot of sense. After all, it is much easier to recognize the alcoholic's problems than our own.” (p. 16)

As the Al-Anon literature states, “Our compassion and support might make a loved one's struggle with illness easier to bear, but it is simply not within our power to cure someone else's disease. We are powerless over another's alcoholism. (Ibid., p 18)

“We come to Al-Anon seeking change. We want to end our pain, and we turn to Al-Anon in the hope of finding what to do. But we aren't ready yet to take action, no matter how eager we are or how impatient we feel. Change is a process, and we in Al-Anon recognize that becoming aware is the first stage of this process. This involves

taking an honest look at ourselves and at our circumstances. Although it sounds simple, after years of hiding the unpleasant aspects of reality from ourselves as well as others, most of us find an honest appraisal to be a struggle. (Ibid., p. 21)

As the disease or addiction progresses with its ensuing problems, the family dynamic changes. Without treatment, the alcoholic becomes the central player in a drama that continues to unfold. He or she often proceeds from a posture of denial, righteous indignation, or psychological or physical inability to be able to make positive changes. He is unable, or refuses to accept responsibility for the illness or for the consequences of the aberrant behavior. Left to continue unbridled, the addict creates social, psychological, spiritual, physical and even economic hardships on the family.

The Twelve-Step programs for family members, friends and co-dependents (Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics, CoDa, Families Anonymous, Nar-Anon and more), offer help to those who seek it. They teach about searching for “personal serenity,” despite ongoing suffering. They contextualize the problem. Its members offer support and invite you into the community. The meetings offer something to do when one leaves the rooms. They provide a recovery manual in the form of a Twelve-Step program. They teach significant others that where the addict is concerned, everyone else is out of control. They cite the three **Cs** of understanding addictive behavior: They say, “Family members don't **cause** addictions, can't **control** them, and/or can't **cure** them.”

There is healing power in connecting with other recovering people. "I didn't want to go to a meeting. He had the problem, why did I have to go to meetings? At first I didn't say a word; I just listened. So many people told their terrible tales of living with an addicted person. At the core it was the same story. And it was my story, too. Eventually, I

learned that part of the healing was that I had to share, as well. When I did, that was a pivotal moment for me, and I haven't looked at my situation in the same way since." (TL, the wife of a gambling addict)

Alcoholism in Jewish Sacred Texts:

“Do not get drunk and you will not sin.” (B. Talmud Berachot 29b)

Families dealing with the effects of aberrant behaviors harken back to antiquity. The Hebrew Bible which begins with our family ancestral stories, records the disastrous effects of too much alcohol consumption. Starting with Adam and Eve, humanity is flawed and makes bad choices. G-d’s Creation of “free will” established the possibility for human mistakes, and also the possibility for progress. *“Were it not for the Evil impulse, no man would build a house, marry a wife, or beget children.” (Genesis Rabbah 9:7)* It therefore, becomes a question of balancing good and evil, i.e., the *yetzer ha ra* and the *yetzer ha tov*, or as Moses Maimonides states, the Aristotelian ethic of the “middle way.” Our Jewish sacred texts reflect a desire for balance.

“It is the purpose of Torah to make men reject and despise lust and to diminish his appetites as best as possible. He should indulge in his sensual drives only when

necessary. It is well known that intemperance in eating, drinking and copulation destroy man's perfection and is injurious to him.

Moreover, overindulgence in such activities upsets the social order and disturbs domestic relations. When one follows his passions in the manner of fools, he neglects and damages his intellect and his body; he dies before his time and causes anguish and worries to increase. He also multiplies the amount of envy, hatred, and wars in the world, for sensual men will do anything to take from other men to satisfy their lusts, since that is the highest goal of their lives.

G-d in His Wisdom has therefore given us commandments to counteract this goal in life and divert our attention from such activities.” (Maimonides, His Wisdom for Our Time, pps. 27-28)

In the Bible people get into trouble and fall out of favor with G-d when they do the wrong thing. Right from the beginning, Adam and Eve are banned from Paradise after they eat from the forbidden fruit. But they recover and live with a new reality. They recreate themselves after their trauma. And those who follow them do the same thing. Such is the human condition.

Nevertheless, harmony comes from Divine will coinciding with human free will—making choices that are acceptable to G-d and doing *teshuvah* when one has gone astray.

The Torah comments about choices and makes value judgments about excessive behavior. From all parts of the Hebrew Bible, the narratives as well as the didactic passages, the text teaches moderation in all behavior. It also sets an example for living in relationship with others by exemplifying how to make good choices

and how to act responsibly. The Rabbis continue and expand these observations in the *Talmud*, the Medieval Codes, The *Midrash*, *Chasidic* stories and beyond into Post-Modernism and contemporary Jewish society.

In the Jewish view, wine and strong drink are seen as an integral part of feasting and celebration, but they are also identified as temptations and gateways to improper ethical behavior. The texts are ambivalent about their position on drinking. “*Only beware for yourself, and greatly beware for your soul.*” (*Deuteronomy 4:9*) Excessive consumption of alcohol is not only bad for the body, but it leads to lack of judgment, which may bring about immorality and sin. This creates a gap between the user and G-d, which perpetuates what Dr. Abraham Twerski, a Hasid, rabbi, psychiatrist and addictions specialist calls *Spiritual Deficiency Syndrome*.

Spiritual Deficiency Syndrome invites a variety of secondary repercussions which affect the addict as well as the family. Each of the following texts speaks of the consequences of immorality and sin and the underlying themes which develop as a result of living a life out of balance. The texts carry with them the themes of shame and guilt, enabling, embarrassing family members, death, destruction and helplessness, among others. Seen in spiritual language, this lack of balance relegates humanity to a state of profanity which stands in opposition to the state of G-d’s holiness.

Examples of Drinking in Sacred Texts:

Noah, who was a "righteous man in his generation," became out of control after consuming too much wine. This text speaks to the themes of shame and embarrassment while under the influence of wine.

"Noah, the man of the earth, debased himself and planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered his nakedness within his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness, and told his two brothers outside. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and they walked backwards, and covered their father's nakedness; their faces were turned away, and they saw not their father's nakedness. Noah awoke from his wine and realized what his small son had done to him." (Genesis 9:20)

After Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Lot's daughters used wine to fulfill their purposes of repopulating the species. This text speaks to the possibility for immoral sexual behavior (also potentially addictive) while drinking.

“Our father is old and there is no man in the land to marry us in the usual manner. Come, let us ply our father with wine and lay with him that we may give life to offspring through our father. So they plied their father with wine on that night; and the older one came and lay with her father, and he was not aware of her lying down, and of her getting up. And it was on the next day that the older one said to the younger, ‘Behold I lay with my father last night; let us ply him with wine tonight as well, and you come lay with him that we may give life to our father.’ So they plied their father with wine that night also; and the younger one got up and lay with him, and he was not aware of her lying down and of her getting up. Thus, Lot’s two daughters conceived from their family. The older bore a son and she called his name Moab; he is the ancestor of Moab until this day. And the younger one also bore a son and she called his name Ben-ammi; he is the ancestor of the children of Ammon until this day.” (Genesis 19:31-37)

One of King David's wives, Abigail, was formerly married to Naval, who is described in I Samuel as a drunkard. When Naval captures the wrath of David, Abigail intercedes and averts a potential communal calamity. This text vividly conveys the dilemma of living with a family member who is defined as a “drunkard.” The question to ponder is: Is Abigail a rescuer or savior? How do family members have to mop up after the “drunkard?”

"Abigail then came to Naval and behold, he was having a feast in his house--a feast fit for the king. Naval's heart was pleased about himself, and he was very drunk, so she did not tell him anything minor or major until the morning's light. And it was in the morning when Naval became sober, his wife told him of these matters, his heart (seemed to have) died within him, and he was stunned. It happened after ten days that Hashem struck Naval and he died." (I Samuel 25: 36-38)

The tragic story of Job and his suffering is juxtaposed against drinking and feasting. Does the text suggest that feasting and drinking leaves a family vulnerable to tragedy? In the context of the *Job* story, i.e., bad things happening to good people, how can we interpret the fact that it mentions drinking and feasting twice, in such a short paragraph?

"There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; that man was wholesome and upright, he feared G-d and shunned evil. (sic) The man was the wealthiest man of all the people in the East. (sic) His sons would go and make a feast, at each one's home each on his set day; and they would send word and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. (sic) It happened one day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the home of their eldest brother, that a messenger came to Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing and the she-donkeys were grazing alongside

them, when Sabeans befell and seized them. They struck down the servants by the edge of the sword. Only I, by myself, escaped to tell you!

“This one was still speaking, when this (other) one came and said., ‘Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in the home of their eldest brother, when behold, a great wind came from across the desert. It struck the four corners of the house, it collapsed upon the young men and killed them.’” (Job 1:1-19)

Leaders who performed G-d's work (i.e. the *Kohanim* and the *Nazirites*) had to be especially responsible with regard to intoxicating substances. The priests were warned that they were not to enter *The Holy of Holies* while drunk.

"Hashem spoke to Aaron saying: Do not drink intoxicating wine, you and your sons with you, when you come to the Tent of Meeting, that you not die--this is an eternal decree for your generations. In order to distinguish between the sacred and the profane, and between the contaminated and the pure, and to teach the Children of Israel all the decrees that Hashem had spoken to them through Moses." (Leviticus 10:8-11).

“R. Man of Sha’ab said in the name of R. Joshua of Sikinn, citing R. Levi, Aaron’s sons were taken because of four offenses, the penalty of each one being death. Death was decreed for Aarons sons because they entered the Sanctuary having tasted wine beforehand, although Scripture says, ‘Drink no wine nor strong drink...that ye may die not.’” (Leviticus 10:19) (Pesikta De-Rab Kahana 26)

A Nazir was forbidden anything from the grape vine. The birth story of Sampson (a *Nazirite*) forbids his mother wine even during her pregnancy in preparation for her child's special service to G-d. This states that abstinence is the only choice for some people.

"There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of Danite, whose name was Manoah; his wife was barren, she had not given birth. An angel of G-d appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Behold now, you are barren and had not given birth, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. And now, be careful not to drink wine or aged wine, and not to eat anything contaminated. For you shall conceive and give birth to a son; a razor shall not come upon his head, for the lad shall be a Nazirite from the womb, and he will begin to save Israel from the Phillistines.'" (Judges 13:2-5)

"The woman came and told her husband saying, 'A man of G-d came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of an angel-very awesome. (sic) He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son. And now do not drink wine or aged wine, and do not eat anything contaminated, for the lad shall be a Nazirite unto G-d from the womb, until the day of his death.'" (Judges 13:6-7)

"The angel of G-d said to Manoah, 'Of everything I spoke to the woman, she should beware. Of anything that comes from the grapevine, she shall not eat; wine or aged wine, she shall not drink.'" (Judges 13:13-14).

When Hannah prays to G-d for a child, she promises that if she is granted that child, he will become a *Nazirite*. As she prayed with such fervor that her lips moved, Eli, the priest at Shiloh, mistook her for being drunk. Here the text makes an assumption with regard to people's behavior, and even the appearance of people's behavior while under the influence of intoxicating beverages.

"'How long will you be drunk? Remove your wine from yourself!' She answered, 'No my Lord, I am a woman of aggrieved spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, and I have poured out my soul before Hashem. Do not deem your maidservant to be a base woman.'" (I Samuel 1:14-16)

The prophet Habakkuk likens a disobedient Israel to a drunkard, with its associated emotions: anger, shame and embarrassment and the consequences arising from confused thinking.

"Woe to him who gives his fellow to drink: You gather your anger and intoxicate them so that you may look upon their nakedness. You are sated more with shame than with glory. You too will drink and become confounded." (Habakkuk 2:15-16)

Our Wisdom Literature is replete with little epigrammatic messages about the dangers of too much eating and drinking. Moderation is espoused as the highest goal.

"Do not be among the guzzlers of wine among the gorgers of meat for themselves. For the guzzler and the gorger will be poor, and slumber will clothe you in tatters." (Proverbs 23:20-21)

This text speaks to a lack of discernment when one "lingers" over wine too long.

"Who is wounded for naught? Whose eyes are red? Those who linger over wine; those who come to inquire over mixed drinks. Do not look at wine becoming red, for one who fixes his eyes on the goblet all paths are upright. His end is like one bitten by a snake, like one dispatched by a serpent. Your eyes will see strange things, your heart will speak duplicities." (Proverbs 23:29-33)

The following text makes a very strong statement about poor conduct and bad judgment while under the influence of wine.

"The words of Lemuel the king, the prophecy with which his mother disciplined him: What is it, my son? And what is it, O son of my womb? And what is it, O son of my vows? Give not your strength to women, and let your conduct not destroy the protocol of

kings. It is not proper for kings who belong to G-d, it is not proper for kings to drink much wine, and for princes to imbibe strong drink. Lest he drink and forget the statute (of the Torah) and pervert the judgment of all the children of the poor. Give strong drink to the woebegone and wine to those of embittered soul. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and not remember his travail anymore.” (Proverbs 31:1-8)

Ben Sira, in the Apocryphal literature, speaks about the addictive quality of wine. He calls attention to its addictive quality and cautions about self control.

*“Do not aim to be valiant over wine, for wine has destroyed many.
Fire and water prove the temper of steel, so wine tests the hearts in the strife of the proud.
Wine is like life to men, if you drink it in moderation.
What is life to a man who is without wine? It has been created to make men glad.
Wine drunk in season and temperately is rejoicing of the heart and gladness of soul, with provocation and stumbling.
Drunkenness increases the anger of a fool to his injury, reducing his strength and adding wounds.
Do not reprove your neighbor at a banquet of wine, and do not despise him in his merrymaking;” (The Wisdom of Sira, 31:25-31)*

During the Rabbinic Period the subject of wine is addressed again, and the *Midrash* is full of observations and warnings of its harmful intoxicating effects. Here “downfall and sorrow” are seen as analogous to wine.

“Rabbah Anna, son of Cahana observes, ‘Whenever wine is mentioned in the Bible, some sorrow is connected with it.’” (Midrash Rabbah/Genesis 43:7)

“Whenever you find wine you find downfall.” (Tanhuma Noah 13)

The following text is a *mashal*, an example of what can happen when people become out of control as a result of their drunkenness. In this case, the mob became physical, “the uproar spread,” they were “arrested,” and they all perished.

“They used to mix strong wine with weaker wine so as to get intoxicated thereby. An incident is told of a company of dissolute men who sat and drank wine until midnight but could not get drunk. Other wine was brought in and they decided to mix one wine with the other. They kept on doing so until the wine overcame them. Then they rose and beat each other in their drunkenness. The uproar spread through the city and the guard arrested them, and delivered them up to the government, and they all perished.”

(Midrash Rabbah/ Numbers, Nasso 10:8)

The following texts use wine as an analogy to say that wine distorts knowledge. When wine is around discernment disappears. In the end, “no good comes from wine.”

“Wine and intelligence has been compared to Kimah (a constellation) and to Scorpio. Whenever Kimah is visible in the sky, Scorpio is invisible, and as soon as

Scorpio appears Kimah goes out of sight. So wine is like Scorpio and knowledge is like Kimah. As the Scorpion injures with his tail so wine injures in the end.” (Ibid)

“When the wine goes in intelligence takes its leave. Wherever there is wine, there is no intelligence. When the wine enters, the secret comes out.” (Ibid)

“If a man drinks one cup, which is a quarter, he loses a fourth part of his intellect. If he drinks two cups he loses two parts of his intellect. If he drinks three cups he takes leave of three parts of his intellect and his mind gets confused and he immediately begins to talk at random. If he drinks a fourth cup he completely takes leave of his reason...” (Ibid)

Accordingly, the Sages have said that a priest who has drunk a fourth of a log of wine is disqualified from Temple service, while an Israelite who has drunk a fourth of a log of wine is disqualified for giving judgment. All this serves to teach you that no good comes out of wine. (Ibid)

The following *Midrashim* about Noah, “who was righteous in his generation,” speak about what happens when wine is in abundance. Even the planting of the vineyard is seen as temptation for immoral behavior. According to these texts it is Noah’s fatal flaw which leads to drinking “immoderately,” becoming “intoxicated,” and “being put to shame” in a very short time (just one day).

“Noah was degraded and debased. “Why? Because ‘he planted a vineyard.’ (Bereshit 9:20) Should he not have planted something of use, such as a young fig-shoot or a young olive shoot? Instead ‘he planted a vineyard.’” (Bereshit Rabbah 36:3)

“He drank of the wine and was drunken.” (Bereshit 9:21) “He drank immoderately, became intoxicated, and was thus put to shame. Rabbi Hiyya ben Ba said: ‘He planted it, drank thereof, and was humiliated all in the same day.’” (Bereshit Rabbah 36:4)

This *Midrash* tells the story of a person who will go to extremes, i.e., go out in the middle of the night and put himself in danger to obtain wine. He then has a black-out, gets in trouble with the law and is “beaten and thrashed.”

“There was a certain man who was accustomed to drink twelve kists of wine every day. One day he only drank eleven, and when he lay down he could not go to sleep. So he got up in the night and went to the wine shop and said to the dealer, ‘sell me a kist of wine.’ He replied: ‘I will not open the door for you, because it is dark and I am afraid of the watchman.’ The man then looked up and saw an opening in the door. He said: ‘Give me some through this opening; do you pour inside and I will drink outside.’ He did so and the man drank and fell asleep at the door. When the watchman passed, they thought he was a thief, and they beat and thrashed him, and people applied to him the verse,

*'Who hath redness of eyes. Who hath inflammation round the eyes. Who suffers all this?
'They that tarry long at the wine.'*" (Esther Rabbah 5:1)

This text talks about losses. When a substance abuser has to support his/her addiction, the loss of all household property is a very real and common scenario.

"When it glidith down smoothly..." (Proverbs 23:31) "He makes his house smooth." He says: 'The purpose which this ladle of copper serves can be served by a ladle of earthenware. and he goes and sells it and drinks wine with the proceeds. The purpose which this copper pot serves can be served by an earthenware pot, and he goes and sells it and drinks wine with the proceeds. Rabbi Isaac ben Redifiah said in the name of R. Amni: In the end he sells all his household goods to buy wine.' (Ibid)

In a house where there is excessive drinking or substance abuse, the door is open for horrible immorality, even incest.

"Just as the basilisk parts death from life, so wine parted Lot from his daughters through incest." (Ibid)

Death occurs for some people when they drink after they have been warned against it, or drink at the wrong time.

“Just as the basilisk parts death from life, so wine parted Aaron through his sons from death. For Rabbi Simeon taught: ‘The sons of Aaron died only because they entered the Tent of Meeting when under the influence of wine.’” (Ibid)

Here the text talks about mass tragedy as a result of wine.

“Just as a basilisk parts death from life, so wine dragged away the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin into captivity, as it says, ‘But these also reel through wine, and stagger through strong drink.’” (Isaiah 27:7) (Ibid)

This text brings up the issue of domestic abuse, a crime of passion, where even a king puts his wife to death because he becomes angry under the influence of wine.

“Just as a basilisk parts death from life, so wine parted Ahasuerus from Vashti who was put to death, as it says, ‘On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine...’ (Esther 1:10) The result of which was that he was wroth with her and put her to death.” (Ibid)

A person who spends too much time in the tavern becomes intoxicated and becomes vulnerable to forces out of his control.

“Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath bleary eyes? Those whom the wine keeps till the small hours.’ (Proverbs 23:29-30)—those who are the first to enter a tavern and the last to leave it.” (Leviticus Rabbah 12:1)

This text conveys a strong warning about the powerful effects of wine, and the delusion it causes to be able to control oneself while under its influence.

“Rabbi Tanhuma said: Wine—its own mother (the vine) cannot stand up under the weight of the juice in the grapes, and you expect to stand up under it? Though the vine is propped up with many reeds and many pronged rods, it can not stand up (and sags) under the weight of the juice in the grapes, and you expect to stand up under wine?” (Leviticus Rabbah 12:4)

This *Midrash* speaks volumes about the horrific effects of drunkenness, the shame and embarrassment brought on by excessive drinking, and the humiliation it causes a family, especially a pious one. It also brings up the themes of co-dependency, trying to “fix” or control the addict, and enabling him--all to no avail. The father in this story, though shamefully pelted with stones by children, has still not hit his “rock bottom.”

There was a pious man whose father drank much wine, and every time he collapsed in the marketplace, boys would come, pelt him with stones and pebbles, and mock him: ‘Look at the drunk!’ When his pious son saw this, he was so humiliated that he

wanted to die. So every day he would say to his father, ‘Papa, I will send word and have delivered to your home all the kinds of wine that are sold in the city, just so you won’t have to go the tavern for a drink, for you bring shame upon me and upon yourself.’ Every day he spoke this way once and twice, until the father promised him that he would not go to the tavern.

Thereafter, every morning and evening, the pious son would prepare food and drink for his father, put him to sleep in his bed, and then leave him. One time when it was raining, the pious son went out into the marketplace on his way to the synagogue for prayer and saw a drunkard lying in the marketplace. A stream of rainwater was pouring down upon him, and older and younger boys were pelting him with stones and pebbles, throwing mud at this face, even into his mouth. When the pious son saw this, he said to himself: ‘I will go get Papa, bring him here, and show him this drunkard and the shame children and teenagers heap upon him—perhaps he will learn to restrain his mouth from drinking in taverns and getting drunk.’

“And so he did: he brought him to the marketplace and showed him the drunkard. But what did his father do? He went over to the drunkard and asked him in what tavern he had drunk the wine that got him so drunk.” (Tanhuma, Shemini 11)

This text formulates Abraham as superior to Balaam because of his “modest appetite.” Blessings and curses are recalled as a theme in the juxtaposition of these two leaders.

“Whoever possesses these three qualities is numbered among the disciples of our father Abraham, and those who possess the three opposite qualities are found among the disciples of wicked Balaam:

A generous spirit, a humble soul, a modest appetite—

Such a one is a disciple of our father Abraham;

A grudging spirit, an arrogant soul, an insatiable appetite—

Such a one is a disciple of wicked Balaam.” (Pirke Avot 5:21)

This Talmudic text equates anger, drinking and sin as an inextricable triangle.

“The prophet Elijah said to Rabbi Judah brother of Rabbi Salla the Pious:

‘Refrain from anger, and you will not sin; drink not to excess, and you will not sin.’” (B.

Berachot 29b)

The following texts make a value judgment on the propriety of women drinking. Especially where women are concerned, the Rabbis want to establish very clear boundaries.

“One glass is good for one woman;

Two are a disgrace;

With three she opens her mouth with lewdness;

With four she solicits in complete abandon even an ass on the street.” (Ketubot 65a)

“A woman whose husband is not present should drink no wine; and if she be in a different place, not in her own house, she may drink now wine even if her husband be present. This law applies to other intoxicating beverages as well. If, however, she is accustomed to drink wine in the presence of her husband, she may drink a little in her husband’s absence.” (Shulchan Aruch 42:16)

Rashi commenting on the next Talmudic passage says that too much wine created a mood of levity, which created an environment in which it was possible for the woman to commit adultery, and/or to even being suspected of committing adultery.

*“Rebbie says, ‘Why is the Tractate of Nazir right before the Tractate of Sotah in the order of the Mishnah? To tell you that anyone who sees her in her state of disgrace should separate himself from wine (like a Nazir).’ (Sotah 2a) **Rashi** says, “The consumption of wine creates a mood of levity, which ultimately led to her being suspected of having committed adultery.” (Rashi on Sota 2a)*

In the wisdom of the Sages, moderation is advised with wine and drugs that are believed to have healing properties. Excesses, or using substances for purposes other than for what they were intended, leads to downfall.

“At the head of all healing (when taken in moderation) am I—wine. At the head of all death (when not taken in moderation) am I—wine. Only where there is no wine are drugs required.” (B. Bava Batra 58b)

Joseph Caro in Medieval Spain writes about wine for the mourner, stressing moderation.

“At the meal of condolence following a funeral the mourner is allowed to drink a little wine (sic) just enough to help him digest his food, but not enough to satiation.”
(Shulhan Aruch 205:1)

The following text illustrates that the Rabbis permitted the joys of a sensual, physical life, but it cautions about too much of a good thing.

“Eight things are harmful in large quantities but beneficial in small ones: travel and sexual intercourse, riches and trade, wine and sleep, hot baths and bloodletting.” (B. Gittin 70a)

This following text acknowledges that the Rabbis have permitted drunkenness on designated occasions like *Purim*, but to a person that has a problem with alcohol consumption, this is a disaster. It talks about the danger of blackouts. A person may be able to sustain a few of them, but to survive over and over again is compared to the great miracle of *Purim*.

“Rava said: On Purim it is a man’s duty to mellow himself with wine until he cannot know the difference between ‘Cursed be Haman’ and ‘Blessed be Mordecai.’

Rabbah and Rabbi Zera joined together in a Purim feast. Rabbah became mellow and plied Rabbi Zerah with so much drink that he passed out. The next morning Rabbah sought mercy and revived him. But the following year when Rabbah said to Rabbi Zera, ‘Let the master come and we will celebrate Purim together,’ Rabbi Zera replied, ‘(Sorry), but one cannot expect a miracle on every occasion.’” (B. Megillah 7a)

The Talmud is very clear that a leader must not render a decision while under the influence of too much wine.

“Rabbi Judah said in the name of Samuel: He who has drunk a fourth of a log of wine may not issue a decision. (Eruvim 64a)

The Medieval Law Codes continued to direct the community towards moderation in drinking, and to understand that it has a spiritual purpose.

“When man eats and drinks it is not to enjoy his food and drink but to have strength for G-d’s service.” (Tur/ Orach Hayim 14:182)

“One should not eat or drink voraciously; (sic) One should not drink a glass of wine at one draught, for one who does so is a bibber.” (Shulchan Aruch 42:2)

Examples of Chasidic Stories:

The **Chasidic Stories** are filled with tales of the magic of drinking and drink as part of the ecstatic joy of Jewish celebration. They also address the issue of too much wine consumption as a means to a loss of piety.

The Baal Shem Tov, when asked whether it is inconsistent to indulge on *Shabbos* writes:

“‘Not at all,’ the Baal Shem Tov said. ‘There was once a king who had to exile his son for behavior unbecoming a prince. The remorseful son lived in anguish, longing to return to the royal palace.

After a period of time, the prince received a message from his father that he was now welcome to return home. The prince’s joy was boundless, and he wished to celebrate in song and dance. He knew however that people would think him insane if he abruptly

began to sing and dance. He therefore threw a party with abundant food and drink. When the guests were in high spirits, they began to sing and dance, and this gave the prince the opportunity to sing and dance without appearing ostentatious.

‘Everyone was dancing, but for different reasons. The guests were happy with drink, whereas the prince, who was sober, was rejoicing, because he was to return to the palace.

‘So it is with Shabbos. The neshama wishes to exalt in spiritual delights, but it is trapped within a physical body, which may inhibit the neshamah’s spiritual aspiration. We therefore give the body some physical pleasures, so that it may be happy with its gratification, leaving the neshamah uninhibited in its quest to reach spiritual heights.

‘It is, of course, a serious mistake if one thinks that all there is to Shabbos is the food and relaxation. This must be properly understood as only a way to facilitate the spiritual adventures of Shabbos.’” (Ibid, p. 292-293)

The Shretele That Took a Little Nip (Weinreich, Yiddish Folktales, p. 343)

Reb Shiye Heshl, a bookbinder, tells this story:

“My grandmother used to tell all sorts of tales, but I have to say that she never told any lies. Once she told us that one day when she was lying in bed, she saw an elf, a shretele, crawl out from under it. Her baby was also lying in the bed and crying. The shretele went up to it and rocked it for a while, then gave the baby a light slap which made it stop crying. After that the shretele trotted up to the cupboard where a flask of brandy was stored. It took out the brandy, had a few nips, and ran back under the bed.

“Well, from that time on, my grandmother never had to buy brandy, because no matter how much you poured out of the flask the shretele had sipped from, it always remained full.

The Love Potion: (Weinreich, p. 243)

I know another little tale, not quite proper, but it is amusing. If you like, I'll tell it to you.

Once upon a time there was a husband and a wife, very poor folk. To make it worse, they had a great many children, all girls. And it happened that the wife, as was not unusual with her, was pregnant again. Her husband thought, "Who knows, perhaps G-d will send us a son this time, and I haven't even got the wherewithal for a circumcision feast." He concluded that, what with one thing and another, he would do better to go out into the world begging for alms so that he would be able to pay for the circumcision feast." So that's what he did, and it wasn't long before his family lost all track of him.

Meanwhile his wife came to her time and was, with G-d's help, delivered of a boy. But her house was very cold and she had nothing to heat it with. Lying in bed, she remembered that there were a few pieces of coal somewhere in the attic corner. She turned to her daughters and said, "Children, go to the attic, where you'll find a few bits of coal. Bring them down so we can warm up the house a little. I'm very cold." So her daughters went up to the attic and found the coal. But they noticed that there was something bright and gleaming among the coal scraps, and they ran down to their mother and told her so.

"Well," she said, "bring me a couple of pieces of whatever it is that's glittering there." So they fetched down two pieces of the bright stone. When their mother saw what they had, she knew at once that it was something valuable. She said to her oldest daughter, "Carry one of these to the goldsmith and ask him what it's worth."

The goldsmith took one look and knew that it was no ordinary stone but diamond. He brought it from the girl for a great deal of money, which she took home to her mother. Well, it wasn't long before there were all sorts of good things in the house, and more than enough money to pay for a circumcision feast.

Now that she was prosperous, the woman felt that it wasn't suitable to keep living in her village. She and her daughters moved to a large town where they bought a fine house, and soon she became well known for her charitable gifts to the poor.

All sorts of poor people from all corners of the world visited her, drawn by her reputation for generosity. Among those who came was her own husband, who was still trying to gather enough money for a circumcision feast.

The woman knew him at once, but he did not recognize her because her appearance had changed with prosperity. Well, she handed him a substantial sum of money. When he saw it he stood amazed; no one had ever given him so much before. The woman said, "Don't be so surprised, sir. Take this and buy yourself some fine clothes; then come back and help us celebrate the Sabbath." And that's what he did. When he returned, she welcomed him, seated him at the head of her table, and asked him to bless the wine. Her children looked on wondering, but they said nothing. When the stranger had finished blessing the wine, the woman served him two large pieces of fish, well peppered and salted, and then other fine dishes: soup, meat, stew. The poor man downed everything and relished every bite.

When the meal was over, she showed him to a room where he could spend the night. Then she made up her own bed and went to sleep. But in the middle of the night, the poor man awakened with a powerful thirst, so he left his room and stumbled around about in the dark, searching for water.

The woman called to him, "Sir, what are you looking for?"

"For something to drink, he replied.

"Come here," she said. "I'll give you something to drink."

So he went into her room, where she poured a glass of wine and handed it to him. He drank and he smacked his lips. Then he said, "That's a mighty tasty drink. What is it?"

She replied,

*"The drink is wine
And you are mine,
And I am thine."*

And in the morning she told her children, "This is your father."

"Then there is the famous story of Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassoc, who said that he learned the meaning of ahavas Yisrael (love of fellow Jews) from a drunkard. When passing a tavern, Rabbi Moshe Leib overheard a conversation where an obviously inebriated man said, 'Ivan, I am your best friend. I love you, Ivan.' The other man, equally tipsy, said, 'Not true, Stepan. You do not love me.' Stepan began crying, 'Don't say that Ivan. I truly love you.' 'Well then,' Ivan responded, if you really love me, tell me where I hurt. Tell me what I am lacking." Rabbi Moshe Leib said, 'One cannot claim to love another person unless one can feel his pain and know what he is lacking.'" (Twerski, *Not Just Stories*, p. 82)

History of Jews and Drinking:

“On the eve of Passover close to mincha (the afternoon prayer), a man must not eat until nightfall. Even the poorest man in Israel must not eat until he reclines (at the Seder) and they should give him not less than four cups of wine, and even if he receives help from the charity plate.” (Pesachim 99b)

It’s obvious from our sacred texts that wine and strong drink has been in the Jewish community for a long time. Wine was used for cultic practices, offerings, medicinal purposes, feasts and for sanctification of holidays and life-cycle events. It was an expected manner of observance.

Since the time of Noah, many Jews, particularly in Eastern Europe, from the fourteenth century on, were involved with cultivating vineyards and orchards, brewing beer, the production, sale and distribution of wine, etc. Many scholars supported themselves with this profession, such as Rashi and Rabbenu Tam. (Marcia Cohn Spiegel,

The Heritage of Noah: Alcoholism in the Jewish Community Today, MA Thesis/ HUC-JIR, 1979)

Starting with the first humans, Adam and Eve, people have always tried to exceed boundaries. The added component of drinking increased the potential for aberrant behavior. Therefore, the Rabbis wanted to avert problems brought on by drinking and tried to appropriate drinking in various ways.

Holidays, such as *Purim* were designated as days of reveling. The Talmud says that we should drink until we don't know the difference between, "Cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai." (*ad lo yada, B. Talmud, Megilla 7b*). However, what we know about contained excesses is that they don't work where the disease of alcoholism is concerned. Alcohol begins by initiation. One drink and the whole process can start to roll out of control. A *Shabbos* dinner with a small amount of wine can turn a peaceful *Shabbos* into a war zone. *Pesach* with four glasses of wine for each person at the *Seder* table can be a recipe for disaster for people who are at risk. Once the cycle begins, it's easy to stumble and keep rolling downhill with ever increasing speed. And other innocents follow.

An addict I heard speak, half-jokingly claimed that the wine he sucked on during his *bris* was a gateway experience into the world of drinking and drugging. A *Bar-Mitzvah* boy and his friends getting soused as a "rite of passage," became a launching experience for a teen at risk for alcohol abuse.

In general, moderation in all actions has always been the Rabbis' recommended means for personal piety and for serving G-d. According to their views, balancing

opposing inclinations, i.e., the *yetzer ha rah* (the evil inclination), and the *yetzer ha tov* (the good inclination), is the secret to healthy living.

For a person with the illness of alcoholism, the ability to keep the two impulses in balance is extremely challenging. Thought patterns must be altered, and for many complete abstinence is indicated.

In Rabbenu Bachya's book, Duties of the Heart, written in the last third of the eleventh century, he writes about abstinence as a means of keeping in control, i.e., to help overcome the power of the *yetzer ha ra*.

“Abstinence is a term with many connotations. The term is a well-known expression, but its real meaning is hidden and obscure. When the clay is removed and the seal is broken, its hidden meaning is revealed as well as its purpose. (sic)

“General abstinence is practiced to promote the health of our bodies and improve our welfare. Some examples are the regulation of kings in governing the nations, the regimen prescribed by physicians for the healthy as well as for the sick, and the self-control exerted by every intelligent person in retraining his desire in regard to food and drink, sexual relations, clothing, speech, and other activities and pleasures.” (Paquda, Volume II, p. 786, 787)

Despite their piety and stories, drinking in the Chasidic community was/is part of the *Shabbat* experience and a generally acceptable behavior at weddings and other life-cycle events. *L'Chaim!* We know now that this has caused a lot of problems in the community, both in terms of the drinker, and for those around him/her. Domestic abuse

as a repercussion of alcoholism is a problem associated with strong patterns of drinking, as are other forms of immoral, illegal and aberrant behavior.

Though Jews have always had drinking as part of their rituals, Jewish drinking was seen as a myth. When Sheila Blume and Dee Dropkin set out to do their landmark study of Jewish alcoholics, they were asked: “You’re going to study Jewish Alcoholics? All three of them.” (Alcoholism and the Jewish Community, p. 123) Prior studies had maintained that a high percentage of Jews drank a little, but a low percentage of Jews drank a lot.

Jewish drinking is a relatively new disease in terms of diagnosis, and to some extent, it is still unrecognized in the larger community. A refusal to recognize alcoholism, drug addiction, etc., has made education and treatment less forthcoming. Since the Jewish community denied the problem, there was no help for people who had suffered with it. The problem continued, the denial continued, the suffering continued, and there is no way to calculate the damage that is done when nothing is done.

The truth is, many Jews were/are drinking and abusing substances. In the early seventies, there were a number of studies which placed the problem of alcoholism clearly in the face of the Jewish community. Jewish teens were also identified as problem drinkers, along with their non-Jewish compatriots. Yet, there was no real movement to deal head-on with the problem, and despite the evidence, widespread denial prevailed.

It was reported at a number of AA meetings, that Jews comprised a notable population of the culture. On the other side, there were a number of Jews who would not go for help because the meetings were held in churches, or contained language that felt

anti-Jewish to them. The first AA meeting held in a Jewish setting was in Central Synagogue in New York.

In 1979 a pivotal event took place in Brewster, New York. The first weekend retreat for Jewish alcoholics was held in a Jewish environment under the aegis of the Task Force on Alcoholism. Its stated mission was: “to bring together recovering Jewish alcoholics, spouses, and significant others in a Jewish setting. It is for those who are seeking to explore the values and spiritual resources within Judaism that may strengthen their continuing recovery. The anonymity of participants will be guaranteed throughout.”

The retreat participants came from every stream of Judaism and defied stereotyping. They were male and female, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, belonged to synagogues (50%), and were unaffiliated, had Jewish rituals in their lives, and/or paid no attention to Jewish rituals.

“This extraordinary and unprecedented event brought together forty-three persons, alcoholics, spouses and a few significant others as a vanguard group, breaking new ground and working without prior experience. They shared two powerful things in common—their sincere desire to continue their recovery from the disease of alcoholism and their Jewish heritage. Those of us who were responsible for planning the retreat had anticipated the search for continuing sobriety, but had only scratched the surface in our anticipation of the deeply felt hunger for a sense of Jewish fellowship and community, both spiritual and communal. Jewish spirituality was perceived as a central element in the recovery process by the participants to an extent to which the planners could only have guessed. Five thousand years of Jewish living enveloped the gathering. The dynamics of Jewish spiritualism and the path to a sober life style merged and were found eminently

compatible.” (Ellen R. Bayer and Dr. Stephen J. Levy, *Notes on the First Retreat for Jewish Alcoholics* in *Alcoholism and the Jewish Community*, Blaine, p. 334)

Rabbi Barry Woolf, Jewish chaplain for the state of Minnesota and on the staff of the Hazeldon Drug Treatment Program was the spiritual director of this first retreat. Under his direction many truths were spoken. It was learned that if Jews are told at every junction that there is no problem they can't get better. Judaism is an ethical religion, but alcoholism is not a moral issue. It is a progressive illness, which left untreated leads to socially unacceptable behavior at one end of the spectrum, and death at the other.

Up to this point Jewish clergy were generally not helpful with the problem. Many recovering addicts and alcoholics attributed their recovery to non-Jewish clergy. Jewish families and communities were ignorant of the problem and often sabotaged recovery on many levels. Addicts felt that they had no resources in the Jewish community for help. This added to the isolation, shame and despair already present in their lives.

Rabbi Woolf also made it known that the tenants of Judaism are consistent with the principles of AA and other faith-based Twelve-Step Programs. He stated, “G-d cares about chemically dependent people as about all people, for the basis of their inclusion is found in their history, ritual, and culture of the Jewish people.” (Blaine, p. 339)

The retreat participants responded overwhelmingly to the traditional *Shabbat* services that were offered, the inclusion of *all* of the participants to stand under a *tallit* while they were called to the *Torah*, and traditional text study, all with addiction as the overriding theme. For the first time, an AA meeting was ended with the recitation of the *Shema*, and the singing of *Hatikvah*, the Israel national anthem meaning, “The Hope.”

The participants had wished that greater numbers of rabbis than those in attendance (Rabbi Woolf and two rabbinical students) would be sensitive to their problem, to name it, to understand it, and to show up armed with an understanding of the problem. Nevertheless, they were delighted with their initial effort.

By the end of the retreat the participants had developed a number of recommendations, that they felt they needed in order to continue in their sobriety, and to help others:

- “ To continue to sponsor Jewish retreats for Jewish alcoholics
- To recommend curriculum enrichment in rabbinical schools and seminaries, as well as within medical schools
- To interpret this disease to the Jewish community at large in order to dispel various myths dealing with alcoholism in general, and the Jewish alcoholic in particular
- To open up more synagogues to house Alcoholics Anonymous meetings
- To sensitize clergy to the needs of alcoholic members of their congregations
- To produce written spiritual materials to continue helping the alcoholic’s reconciliation with his/her being Jewish” (Blaine, pgs. 342-343)

“Jewish Alcoholics and Chemically Dependents and their Significant Others (JACS), was founded in 1979 by a group of less than two dozen and has grown to serve thousands. In the late seventies, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York’s Task Force on Addictions first recognized that the Jewish community had yet to

acknowledge the growing problem of alcoholism and drug addiction in its midst. Under the auspices of the Federation, a small group of recovering and concerned Jews organized a weekend retreat for 45 people. That powerful experience led to the creation of JACS.

Through JACS, recovering Jews and their families connect to one another, explore their Jewish roots, and discover resources within Judaism to enhance their recovery. JACS members represent the entire spectrum of Jewish experience, affiliation and observance. JACS programs include weekend retreats, spirituality days, recovery *Seders*, holiday workshops, study groups and educational lectures.”

It also has a teen network that offers help and encouragement to teens in recovery or needing recovery. In an attempt to offset the still prevailing myth that *Jews Don't Drink*, the shame of which prevents many Jewish addicts or their significant others from reaching out for support, JACS offers a number of vehicles for Jewish outreach into the Jewish community.

Since the time of the first retreat in 1979, JACS have sponsored more than ----- semi-annual retreats, reaching out to more than 200 Jews from every stream of Judaism, including the unaffiliated. It offers scholarships for clergy who seek enlightenment and training.

JACS has inspired the formation of more than 50 independent, mutual support and community education groups of Jews in recovery all over the U.S., as well as in Israel and other countries. In its commitment to research, in 1997-1998, JACS sponsored the first major study of Jewish alcoholics and their families. It also publishes a newsletter, the *JACS Journal*, and has a library of audio and video tapes, and articles and books. Its web site is visited by 25,000 people a month.”

(Quoted from the JACS brochure)

A Guide for Jewish Clergy:

“Many of those who sleep in the dusty earth will awaken: these for everlasting life and these for shame, for everlasting abhorrence. The wise will shine like the radiance of the firmament, and those who teach righteousness to the multitudes will shine like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3)

Even though there is still a stigma regarding Jews with addictions, there are a number of reasons why a person living with addictions may seek the advice of a clergy person as a first step. First, clergy offers the cloak of anonymity. There is a tremendous amount of guilt and shame associated with addictions. Privacy and anonymity is key.

Often, when a person comes to a clergy member for help, he or she is generally seeking a Jewish religious or spiritual response to the problem. It is often assumed that the clergy person will listen. Advice may or may not be sought.

Since Judaism is considered a religion of action, a person seeking help from a rabbi or cantor may expect assignments, i.e. things to do, i.e. prayers, meditations. The

addict or people in relationships to the addict may expect referrals or links to other sources of help for the particular problem.

Sometimes, meeting with a clergy person holds less stigma than meeting with a mental health professional. Therapy is often seen as long term. Meeting with the rabbi or cantor should have clearly defined boundaries.

Seeking the counsel of a member of the clergy may hold the promise of a short-term answer, as opposed to a therapist, or group setting, which may demand a long-term commitment.

Rabbis and cantors are often seen as maintaining a mantle of holiness. People trapped in an addiction cycle may have lost their connections to G-d and spirituality, or have never had it, and are now eager to explore Jewish spiritual living as a path to recovery. This is where lasting holy connections in a Jewish context can be made. Clergy must seize the opportunity.

How A Rabbi Or Cantor or Chaplain Can Prepare For An Encounter With An Addict Or Person In A Relationship With An Addict:

*“Three things restore a person’s good spirits: beautiful sounds, sights and smells.”
(B. Talmud, Berakhot 57a)*

- **Recognize** that there **is** a problem with many kinds of addictions in the Jewish community. *Shikker is not just a goy.*
- **Seek the help** of JACS and other individuals, as well as rabbis and cantors who have experience with the problem for sources and advice.
- **Meet contacts and stay connected to addictions counselors** who can be available to you for questions. Someone who is in recovery for a period of time, is a good person to list in your phone book. People in recovery consider “reaching out” as a vital part of their continued recovery efforts. You will find recovering addicts to be very “grateful” for their sobriety, and generous with their time and understanding of the problem. Use them as critical assets. Get to know them. Familiarize yourself with the problem of addictions through them.
- **Attend** open AA meetings or Al-Anon (or any appropriate Twelve-Step meetings), and begin to get a feel for what happens “in the recovery rooms.”
- **Know the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions** (See Appendices.)

- **Take the first step yourself**. Know that you are powerless to even counsel someone with a drug and alcohol problem (or other addictions problems) without G-d's help.
- **Meditate and pray** for G-d's guidance in trying to help someone with the problem of addiction.
- **Hone your ability to listen**. Rabbis and Cantors often talk too much. Listen. Know that just being a concerned presence is good enough sometimes.
- **Gather resources**. Familiarize yourself with sources. The shelves of libraries are filled with volumes of material in the form of books and magazine and newspaper articles. Spend some time reading and searching for information. Also, the internet is a fast track to many relevant sites as well. Surf the web. (See Appendix for sites.) Shelves of bookstores are lined with all kinds of self-help books for myriad addictions. Buy a few for your personal library and read through them to become educated. (See Bibliography for suggestions.)
- **Attend JACS spirituality conferences** where it is possible to receive training or workshops specifically tailored to the training of clergy.
- **Speak about addictions** from the pulpit and in other appropriate forums. (A variety of relevant texts are included in this project for your perusal and use.) Deliver relevant recovery *Divrei Torah* or tie an addiction/recovery story you've been told to the *parasha*. (Recovery *Parshiot* for the *Book of Bereshit* are included within this packet as well as other relevant texts from our sacred sources.) You may also use the Oral Torah of someone else's story as a departure point on the subject of addictions.
- **Create safe Jewish settings** for meetings to take place. Though AA and other fellowships are considered non-denominational and ecumenical, i.e., "The G-d as I understand Him"...many Jewish people still find the overtones to be Christian. Similarly, many meetings take place within the walls of churches, which some Jewish people find difficult to attend. (Keep in mind though, that there are still others who do like to attend meetings in churches, citing more anonymity.) Since connecting to faith-based groups is critical to the process of recovery, attending a meeting in a synagogue or in another Jewish space, is often a validating experience. (Various texts are included to be used as relevant addiction topics.)
- **Create spiritual settings** for families in recovery, such as *Shabbat* dinners, special *Passover Seders*, healing services, etc. The community experience is very important to help with feelings of isolation. (Texts, which are included in this packet, may be used in these spiritual settings as well.)

- **Serve both wine and grape juice at Kiddush** for people who want to participate but can't drink intoxicating beverages.
- **Prepare for a crisis.** Sooner or later someone will call or come to your office with drug/alcohol or other addictions issues. By wanting to do everything you can to help you will need to have information and resources beforehand.
- **Establish a packet of material** with Jewish texts and a bibliography of self-help and/or spiritual readings to give to people who seek your help. (A number of these are listed under enclosed in this packet.) Add others that seem particularly relevant and/or resonate for you.
- **Call people in advance** who you think may have a problem saying, "I've missed you these last few weeks, etc."
- **Join a growing movement** to establish a Jewish de-toxification center or day care center for in-house treatment. (Currently Yatzkan and Beit Teshuva exist and Chabad offers some Jewish in-house services.)

What is Beit Teshuvah?

"*Beit T'shuvah* (Hebrew for "House of Return"), founded in 1987, is a residential treatment therapeutic community for those who are recovering from substance abuse, alcoholism and other compulsive disorders such as gambling. The program provides a special healing environment to individuals whose lives have become unmanageable and who wish to recover in a supportive home-like environment.

The Jewish Committee for Personal Service and founding director, Harriet Rossetto, opened *Beit T'shuvah* to meet the need for an effective treatment approach for Jewish men and women whose recovery needs were not being met by existing resources. Mark Borovitz, a recovering alcoholic with a troubled history, and an amazing story of recovery and return, is the community Rabbi.

The Jewish Committee for Personal Service, under the auspices of Gateways Hospital and Mental Health Center, established the program to provide a supportive healing environment to Jews recently released from jail or prison and to provide an alternative to incarceration for those who can benefit from a recovery environment. Residents participate in intensive Jewish study, individual and group counseling, and Twelve-Step recovery leading toward full recovery and independent living.

The *Beit T'Shuvah* campus is located in West Los Angeles. The facility, "the house,"

is a warm living space with multiple courtyards and comfortable living rooms. *Beit T'Shuvah* is the only treatment program of its type in the United States. It is a therapeutic community based on Jewish spirituality integrated with the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and psychotherapy. Their programs include residential treatment, primary care, sober living, and independent living. It also offers family care, alumni aftercare and crisis intervention as part of their outpatient services, as well as a speakers bureau, educational seminars, and a prevention institute as part of their community services program.”(Information quoted from their brochure)

For further information call: (310) 204-5200 or visit their website www.beittshuvahla.org.

What is Yatzkan?

According to an article in *Where, What and When* printed in Baltimore, Maryland, “Between five and nine percent of the general Jewish teen population are substance abusers.” The Yatzkan Center, in Amityville, New York was designed and is under the administration of Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski to answer the need for recovery for Jewish teen population. It provides extensive and intensive treatment in a Jewish facility with kosher food. Yatzkan offers up to ten months of residential treatment that is medically supervised, and offers treatment and life management skills integrating models of The Twelve-Step Recovery programs and the Twelve Traditions.

Its main goal is relapse prevention, educational rehabilitation, family therapy and involvement, and aftercare treatment. It teaches the teen to make good choices, and to take responsibility for one’s own actions.

For further information call: (631) 841-3640

What To Do When You Get An Addiction Related Call:

*“Whoever saves a single soul, it is as if one saves an entire universe.”
(Sanhedrin 19b)*

If it hasn't already happened, someone with an addiction, or in a relationship with someone who is addicted, will one day walk through your office door, or be on the other end of the telephone, frantically seeking help. How you respond, i.e., recognize, react, refer could make the critical difference in saving a life or the *neshama* of a family. Praying for them in that moment will be a source of strength and calming.

The clergy person can be very important in the process of getting help for family members. Finding an addictions counselor, or leading family members to an appropriate Twelve-Step support group is pivotal. No matter what place the addict is in, persons in relationships with addicts will need to be supported.

The clergy person can reassure people that they are not alone. Others have walked this path and have survived and even thrived as a result of this crisis. Clergy can show

people that they will learn how to help themselves, to seek their own spirituality and serenity in the recovery process, if they are willing to pursue further help.

The clergy person can ensure them that in time they will do better in a supported environment, and quite possibly, in time, so will the addict. The significant other will learn not to *enable* the addict, whether consciously or unconsciously, to continue the addiction. He or she will learn what he can control or not control. As a result, the whole family dynamic may change for the better. Many have already.

What To Do When An Addict Or Person In Relationship With The Addict Arrives:

“Know that Hashem, He is G-d; He made us and we are His.” (Psalms 100:3)

- **Listen**. The central rallying cry, the call to faith in the Jewish religion is the *Shema*. It’s important to hear what is being said with sensitive, non-judgmental ears. Many people living with addictions have amazing stories to tell, filled with crime, drama and intrigue, just as our ancestors did. People in crisis and recovering addicts love to share. We bring these new stories into the fold of the *Oral Tradition*, and honor them as part of our sacred heritage, by listening respectfully.
- **Know** that some people with addictions are turned off by Judaism, and/or religion in general. Try to be understanding of their issue/s.
- **Have patience**. Revelation comes in stages. Be a vessel for sparks.
- **Validate and acknowledge the person seeking help**. The fact that he or she is coming to you indicates a bold act of courage that must be recognized.
- **Name the problem**. What are you dealing with? Make an initial assessment about where the person is in the process, and what he or she is seeking from your meeting.

- **Be kind and compassionate.** You will hear horrible tales you never imagined possible before. Remain calm, and encourage the story. This is *Oral Torah* and deserves respect.
- **Ask. Determine how you can be of help.** Try to get a clear understanding of the meeting. Since recovery from addiction is living “one day at a time,” try to illicit what is needed for right now.
- **Concentrate on the moment.** Look for simplicity.
- **Use principals of *bikkur holim*,** i.e., visiting the sick to help in framing questions. The person coming is in pain, often in crisis, and in need of compassionate healing.
- **Use Jewish spiritual language, where relevant.** (See Section on Jewish spirituality.)
- **Meditate or Pray with the person seeking help.**

Examples:

Psalm 23/ A psalm of David

*The Lord is my shepherd;
 I lack nothing.
 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
 He leads me to a water in places of repose;
 He renews my life;
 He guides me in right paths
 As befits his name.
 Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness,
 I fear no harm, for you are with me;
 Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.
 You spread a table before me in full view of my enemies;
 You anoint my head with oil;
 My drink is abundant.
 Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me
 all the days of my life,
 And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
 For many long years.
 (JPS Translation)*

A Prayer for Recovery:

G-d, as I prepare to enter the wilderness, I pray
 that you give me the strength to make it,
 that you give me the strength and happiness for another day,
 for the faith to believe, to be free of all sins, that you help show
 me the way, that my journey would be a smooth one; if I weren't so afraid of the
 unknown,
 that I be open and accepting of your will,
 that I enter with no preconceived notions,
 that I have the courage and the health to overcome all obstacles including myself,
 that you grant me the insight to deal with every situation as it arises,
 that I take action on your guidance,
 that my soul be open and relish the journey,
 that I can accept my journey as my journey accepts me,
 that I can remember that I am a part of you,
 that I can see the holiest in this moment.

The residents of *Beit Teshuvah*, 1993

- **Initiate a Niggun for centering.** *“For the conductor, upon Neginos, a psalm a song.
 May G-d favor us and bless us.” (Psalms 67:1-2)*
- **Suggest books, tehillim, readings and poems** that are relevant.

Example:

Psalm 38/ A Psalm of David. Lehaazkir

O Lord, do not punish me in wrath;
 Do not chastise me in fury.
 For your arrows have stuck me; Your blows have fallen upon me.
 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your rage.
 No wholeness in my bones because of my sin.
 For my iniquities have overwhelmed me;
 they are like a heavy burden, more than I can bear.
 My wounds stink and fester

Because of my folly.
 I am all bent and bowed.
 I walk about in gloom all day long.
 For my sinews are full of fever;
 There is no soundness in my flesh.
 I am all benumbed and crushed;
 I roar because of the turmoil in my mind.
 O Lord, You are aware of all my entreaties;
 My groaning is not hidden from You.
 My mind reels;
 My strength fails me;
 My eyes too have lost their luster.
 My friends and companions stand back from my affliction;
 My kinsmen stand far off.
 Those who seek my life lay traps;
 Those who wish me harm speak malice;
 They utter deceit all of the time.
 But I am like a deaf man unhearing,
 like a dumb man who can not speak up;
 I am like one who does not hear,
 who has no retort on his lips.
 But I wait for You, O Lord;
 You will answer, O Lord, my God.
 For I fear they will rejoice over me;
 When my foot gives way they will vaunt themselves against me.
 For I am on the verge of collapse;
 My pain is always with me.
 I acknowledge my iniquity;
 I am fearful over my sin;
 For my mortal enemies are numerous;
 My treacherous foes are many.
 Those who repay evil for good
 Harass me for pursuing good.
 Do not abandon me, O Lord;
 My God, be not far from me;
 Hasten to my aid,
 O Lord, my deliverance.
 (JPS Translation)

Sample Healing Imagery:

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably with your feet on the ground and your hands on your lap. Take three deep cleansing breaths, emphasizing the exhale. See yourself wandering in a dark forest. See a light to the right. Move slowly towards the light. As you get closer, see that there is a clearing in the woods with a circle of light coming from above. Step into the middle of the circle of light. Ask for G-d's help. Imagine the hands of G-d reaching down. Place your hands in G-d's hands. Feel yourself being lifted out of the darkness into the hands of G-d. Allow yourself to be gently placed down with your feet on the earth. Breathe out gently. Open your eyes. Say to yourself, *Ken Yhi ratzon*. May it be G-d's will.

(By Student Rabbi Joyce Reinitz in the name of Madame Colette Aboulker-Mouscat (Jerusalem Sage))

- **Expect to be a lightning rod for anger.** The person coming for help is wounded and in distress. Anger and negativity is usually never personal, but as clergy we symbolically represent a lot of issues. Stay calm and compassionate, and keep the situation in perspective.
- **Refer.** Unless a rabbi or cantor is a trained therapist and/or trained addictions counselor, boundaries must be set immediately. Move the process along by helping to make a connection to the appropriate referral party/parties. Help could be in the form of a recommendation for a self-help group, a school counselor, a medical doctor, an agent of the law, a therapist specializing in addictions, a spiritual guide, or another person living with the same problem. This is an important piece in beginning to create a support community.
- **Arrange an intervention.** For a person who refuses treatment, a formal *intervention* is a recommended way of forcing a troubled person to seek help. Generally the process begins by obtaining the services of a trained professional interventionist who will assemble a professional team. (Contact any treatment center for referrals.) The interventionist then gathers people in relationships with addicts, i.e. concerned family members, employers, and/or close friends, who write a sentence or two about how that person's drinking or addicted behavior has affected them. During the intervention those statements are read. The presence of clergy can be important here as well. It is critical that arrangements be made in advance with a treatment facility, so that the addict can enter immediately following the intervention.
- **Provide source material if requested.**
- **Do not judge or be preachy.**

- **Stay in touch.** Check in periodically and let the person who sought your counsel know you are interested in what happens, and that you care.
- **Pray for addicts and the persons in relationships with them.**
- **Be a source of strength and hope.**
- **Help people who seek you to take the first step toward recovery.** The first step towards recovery is recognizing the unmanageability of life under the influence of drugs, alcohol or other addictions. By coming to you, they have already taken an important step. Clergy can help people develop a relationship with G-d, who can restore “sanity” to those whose lives have become unmanageable by living under the influence of addictions.
- **Use Jewish models to suggest rituals for recovery.** Rituals are very important in being able to concretize an event and are an important vehicle for change and transformation.

Suggested Jewish Rituals for Recovery:

*"We will do and we will listen."
(Exodus 24:7)*

- The *Shema*. Reciting the *Shema* as a declaration of faith and as an establishment of unity with G-d and the Jewish people creates an important understanding of one's place in the world, the Jewish community, and one's relationship with G-d. "*Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One.*" (Deuteronomy 6:4)
- *Shema al ha mitah*. The nighttime prayer evoking the angels is an important ritual for peace and serenity at night, when restorative rest is vital to recovery. "*May it be Your will, Hashem, my G-d and the G-d of my forefathers, that you lay me down to sleep in peace and raise me erect in peace.*" (Liturgy)
- Daily prayer with the *Siddur*. The path to peace and serenity is found through prayer and being in relationship to G-d. Appealing to G-d may be spontaneous or fixed within the liturgy and tradition. "*I will betroth you to Me forever, and I will betroth you to Me in righteousness, justice, kindness and mercy.*" (Hosea 2:21)
- Teachings during traditional prayer services that call attention to healing and recovery. i.e., the *refayenu* blessing in the daily *Amida*. "*Heal us Hashem, then we shall be healed.*" (Liturgy)

- Meditation as prayer *and* contemplation, *hitbodedut*, helps in the establishment of a relationship with the Higher Power of G-d. *“To You silence is praise.” (Psalm 65:2)*
- Prayer Services with the *kavanah* of healing. *“Blessed are you, Hashem, Our G-d who straightens the bent.” (Birchot HaShachar, Liturgy)*
- *Mikveh*, with the *kavanah* of purifying and/or starting “clean.” *“Blessed are you, Hashem, our King, King of the Universe who has made us holy with Your commandments and commanded us concerning immersion.” (Liturgy)*
- *Havdalah* with the *kavanah* of “separating.” *“Blessed are You, Hashem, who separates between holy and secular.” (Havdalah liturgy)*
- *Tachanun* as a daily spiritual practice leads to humbling before G-d. *“Do not treat us according to our sins, do not repay us according to our iniquities. Though our iniquities testify against us, O Hashem, act for Your Name’s sake.” (Liturgy)*
- A change of name ceremony/ adding a name ceremony can reframe identity. Changing one’s name or adding a name such as *Chaim* or *Chaya*, meaning life, signifies a change in status. *“And G-d said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife—do not call her name Sara, for Sarah is her name. I will bless her.’” (Genesis 17:15-16)*
- Journaling, writing a “gratitude journal,” creating one’s own spiritual autobiography, or creative writing based on recovery is an important tool in self-discovery and healing. *“We gratefully thank You, for it is You who are Hashem, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers for all eternity; Rock of our lives.” (Amida, Liturgy)*

**Example: A Poem of Despair and Hope
by An Anonymous Mother**

I had a little boy once;
 His eyes were brown and wide,
 But underneath the crooked smile
 He hurt a lot inside.
 He starting smoking grass to numb the pain of fear,
 Of being alive and isolated; there was nothing he held dear.
 Then pills and drink he did consume,
 They took his soul away.
 So life became one endless night, without the hope of day.
 “But I let go, and I let G-d,” and the healing did begin.
 Hashem became my hope and my light.
 The promise of change drifted in.

- *Techinot*. Yiddish devotional prayers written mostly by Central and Eastern European women during the 18th and 19th centuries are being revived as a sweet source of spiritual writing, a pouring out of the heart to G-d. “*Forgive us the transgressions that we now confess to you. Receive our prayers as you did Chana’s prayer when she said, ‘I am a deeply grieved woman.’ Don’t judge us, because no person is clean before You.*” (*Techinas/ A Voice From The Heart* by Rifka Zakutinsky, p. 47)
- Daily short readings of *musar* or other ethical literature serve as a reminder of our highest selves, especially during the process of recovery.
- Counting Blessings at the time of *Sefirat HaOmer*, the counting of the *omer* between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*. “*Master of the Universe, You commanded us through Moses, Your servant, to count the Omer Count in order to cleanse us from our encrustations of evil and from our contaminations.*” (Liturgy)
- Teaching people to express gratitude for their lives and for G-d’s world is an important step for recovery. “*Rabbi Meir Says, ‘Everyone must recite 100 blessings every day.’*” (*Talmud, Menachot 43b*)
- Read stories of triumph over tragedy as *kavanot* for healing. Stories from the Bible, *Midrash* and other Rabbinic literature, both modern and ancient are wonderful sources of inspiration for people in recovery. The *Oral Torah* stories of others who have come through the darkness and despair of tragedy, crisis, and illness are key for finding hope. (See Rachel’s story in this text.)
- Burial. Create a burial ritual for the old identity or for objects associated with addiction. “*You have transformed my lament into dancing for me; You undid my sackcloth and girded me with gladness.*” (*Psalm 30: 12*)
- Study *Kabbalah* for mystical insights into how to reach G-d through the ten *sefirot*. “*Awakening below causes awakening on high.*” (*Menachem Mendel Krendel*, quoted by Rabbi Larry Kushner in *The Way Into the Mystical Tradition*, p. 129)
- *Vidui*. Confession as a means of purifying and cleansing is an important vehicle for recovery. The High Holiday liturgy has many examples that may be adapted for recovery purposes. “*Hashem, Hashem, G-d, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to anger and Abundant in Kindness and Truth. Preserver of kindness for thousands of generations, Forgiver of iniquity, willful sin and error, and who cleanses. May you forgive our iniquities and our errors and make us your heritage. Forgive us Our Father, for we have erred; pardon us, our King, for we have willfully sinned; for You,*

My Lord are good and forgiving and abundantly kind to all who call upon You.”
(High Holiday Liturgy)

- Develop a mantra or *kavanah* that one can access at times of trouble. “*G-d is with me, I shall not fear.*” (*Adon Olam, Siddur*)
- *Tehillim*. Many people find comfort and solace through the recitation of *psalms*, which are believed to have healing powers. Rav Nachman of Breslov identified The *Ten Psalms* of the *Tikkun HaKlali, The Complete Remedy*, which when recited as a unit are said to embody the concentrated power of the entire *Book of Psalms*. These *psalms* are 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137, 150. (*Likutey Moharan II, 112*)
- *Tzedakah*. Some people put money in a *tzedaka* box for the expressed purpose of helping a loved one or themselves heal. It is stated, “*The end result of tzedaka will be peace, and the labors of tzedakah will yield eternal peace of mind and security.*” (*Isaiah 32:17*)
- *Teshuvah*. Repentance or returning has always been the cornerstone of Jewish renewal. Our sources are filled with a step by step understanding of how this can be achieved. “*Bring us back to You, Hashem, and we shall return, renew our days as of old.*” (*Lamentations 5:22*)

Medieval Examples of Teshuvah Steps:

Rambam’s Laws of Repentance:

1. Confession before G-d which includes:
 - a. naming the specific sin
 - b. statement of regret at having sinned
 - c. expression of shame felt at having sinned
 - d. pledge not to repeat the same sin.
2. Abandonment of sin
3. Change of Thought
4. Change of name

5. Contribution to Charity
6. Supplication to G-d
7. Public Confession (is praiseworthy)
8. Acknowledgement of your sins on this and the following Yom Kippur
9. Reparations for sins against other people
10. Apology to victims of the sin.
11. Self-Restrain from repeating the sin when the opportunity to do so presents itself

Rabbenu Yonah of Gerona:

The Gates of Repentance

1. Regret for having committed the sin
 2. Forsaking the sin
 3. Experience Sorrow over the transgression
 4. Bodily suffering in Relation to the sin
 5. Worry over the punishment for the transgression
 6. Feel shame at having transgressed before G-d
 7. Behave with humility (i.e. Speak with a low voice)
 8. Have a humble attitude
 9. Break the physical desire to commit the sin
 10. Compensation to prevent recurrence of sin (in behavior)
 11. Moral inventory
 12. Consider the punishment from G-d and the consequences of sin
 13. minor transgressions as equivalent to major ones
 14. Confession
 15. Pray for forgiveness
 16. Reparations (monetary, apology request for forgiveness, confession)
 17. Pursue acts of loving-kindness and truth
 18. Keep your sin before you always
 19. Fight off your evil inclination. Don't give in to sin when the desire is strong
 20. Turn others away from transgression
- Ethical Wills. For centuries, the writing of ethical wills has been a valuable tool in putting individuals and their groups in touch with their core values.
 - Covenant (*Brit*) Documents. Write a Covenant document between you and G-d to solidify a legal spiritual document for recovery. *"I have set my*

rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the Covenant between Me and the earth.” (Genesis 9:13)

- **Music.** The healing power of music is well established. Sing a song or a *niggun* (wordless melody) to elevate the soul and lift the spirits. *“I shall sing to Hashem for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse with its rider to the sea.” (Exodus 15:1)*
- **Chesbon HaNefesh.** The traditional taking of an accounting of one’s soul during the month of *Elul*, in preparation for the High Holidays is a way of looking at one’s *midot*, characteristics, and perfecting them at any time of the year.
- **Bitul Chametz.** The traditional nullification formula that is used after the search for leaven prior to *Pesach* may be adapted to the recovery process. *“Any chametz that I have in my possession, whether I have recognized it or not, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have removed it or not, should be annulled and become ownerless like the dust of the earth.” (Liturgy)*
- **Biur Chametz.** Writing out sins and burning them in the tradition of burning leaven prior to *Pesach* can be adapted to the recovery process as a means of ridding oneself of unwanted *chametz*. *“Blessed are You Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His Commandments and has commanded us in the removal of chametz.” (Liturgy)*
- Wrapping oneself in a *tallit*, a prayer shawl, putting on *tefillin*, phylacteries, or wearing a *kippah* is a way of putting on ritual adornments as outward signs of connections to G-d. *“It shall constitute tzitzit for you, that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them; and not explore after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray.” (Numbers 15:39)*
- **Taschlich.** Casting out of one sins into a body of water which is traditionally done during *Rosh Hashanah* may be adapted to any stage of the recovery process. *“Who is like You, who pardons iniquity and overlooks transgression for the remnant of His heritage? He does not maintain His wrath forever, for He desires kindness. He will once again show us mercy, He will suppress our iniquities. You will cast all of their sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:18-19)*

- *Hoshanah Rabah* as a way of beating away sins after *Sukkot*. (A version of this may be adapted to other holidays as well.) “*Today may you place with the manifestations of your strength, five strict powers which have been sweetened through the beating of willows, the custom ordained by Your holy prophets.*” (Liturgy)
- *Selichot* as a spiritual practice asking for forgiveness. “*Forgive us Our Father, for in abundant folly we have erred, pardon us our King, for our iniquities are many.*” (Liturgy)
- Fasting as a purification process for recovery. “*Return to me with all your hearts, and with fasting and weeping.*” (Joel 2:12) **Note: Make sure this is not suggested for people with eating issues!**
- *Rosh Hodesh* as a time for spiritual renewal and prayer. “*This month will be for you the beginning of months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.*” (Exodus 12:1-2)
- *Kaparot*. Prior to *Yom Kippur* (or however one adapts it, a rooster or money is tossed around one’s head three times to remove sin and iniquity. “*This is my exchange, this is my substitute, this is my atonement. This money will go to charity while I will enter and go to a good, long, life, and to peace.*” (Liturgy)
- Plant a tree or a garden as a way of establishing new roots. “*Give her the fruits of her hands; and let her be praised in the gates by her very own deeds.*” (Proverbs 31:31)
- Art and handiwork as a form of expression can be a ritual for understanding and change. “*You shall make a Breastplate of Judgment of a woven design, like the craftsmanship of the Ephod shall you make it: of gold; turquoise, purple and scarlet wool; and linen—twisted together—shall you make it.*” (Exodus 28:15)

CREATING SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY:

“We are Your Congregants and You are our Portion” (High Holiday Liturgy)

Judaism has always emphasized the need for community. There is a tremendous amount of value to be gained in the gathering, especially for people in recovery. People with addictions, and those in relationships with them should not have to choose between their sobriety and their heritage. Clergy people can be enormously helpful in creating a spiritual recovery community within a Jewish framework, which would provide a great advancement towards addressing the isolation and spiritual deficiency that an addict and significant others experience.

Plan and sponsor a “Recovery *Shabbat*,” where people can share their recovery stories in an atmosphere of healing through the rituals and traditions of *Shabbat*. (Recovery *Parshiot* from the Book of Bereshit at the end of this paper, as well as some prayers, may be used as a springboard for centering and discussion.)

Clergy can also plan and/or design “healing services” for people in recovery and their significant others, as well as “*recovery Seders*,” etc.

These events may call for the creation of a Recovery Sourcebook with poems, prayers, *kavanot* and select readings, which may be developed by a community of recovering people and their supporters. Once this is completed it will become an important source of reaching out to others in the model of the Twelve-Steps.

Both JACS (212) 397-4197, and Beit T'Shuvah (310) 204-5200, have original Siddurim, and Haggadot created with the theme of recovery. Call for copies. Also, Rabbi Joel Dinnerstein of Congregation *Ohr Ki Tov*, meets regularly with addicts and their families at the Carlesbach Hasidic Shul in Brooklyn. Please call him for further information and ideas (718) 677-7550.

“All my life I have struggled in vain to know what man is. Now I know that man is the language of G-d.” (Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk)

Twelve Step Programs work because they create community. At the same time, belonging to a program helps defeat *Spiritual Deficiency Syndrome* through the healing power of G-d’s love. The process transfers the focus from the self to others and to G-d. Most important, just as Jewish people have a recipe for Jewish living, i.e. *halacha*, so too, do the faith-based recovery programs by providing a blueprint for transformation through Twelve-Steps.

Rabbis can help a person enter the recovery process by making Jewish spiritual language accessible in the working of the Twelve Steps. Use your imagination and creativity in reframing concepts that are already embedded in Jewish tradition to be applicable to the Twelve Steps. *“One who begins to improve himself is supported in his efforts.”* (B. Talmud Shabbat 104a)

Suggested Examples:

- **Ritual:** *“Purify yourselves and change your clothes.”*
(Genesis 35:2)

(See above for many ritual suggestions.)

- **Humility:** *“Praised are You Lord Our G-d, King of the universe who graciously bestows favor upon the undeserving, even as he has bestowed favor upon me.”* (Birkat Ha-Gomel)
- **Mercy:** *“The Divine Attribute which encourages goodness exceeds the attribute which sends punishment.”* (B. Talmud, Yoma 46a)
- **Gratitude:** *“It is good to thank You Lord, To sing praises to Your Name.”* (Psalm 92: 2)
- **Serenity:** *“Great is the peace of those who love Your Torah, and there is no stumbling for them.”* (Psalm 119:165)
- **Spiritual Refinement/Midot:** Working on self-attributes for improvement through the recovery process is an important practice) *“If spiritual awareness is being, then what do you do once you have reached such holiness? If living in this world is in doing, then how shall you be while you are doing? You must sanctify the deed with the spirit and embody the spirit with the deed.”* (Lawrence Kushner, Honey From the Rock, p. 43)

- **Balance:** The reconciliation of two opposing forces, i.e., the *yetzer ha ra* and the *yetzer ha tov*, allows one to make good choices. *“The world exists only because of self-restraint in strife.” (B. Talmud, Hullin 89a)*
- **Simplicity/ Living each day:** *“Teach us to number our days and we will acquire through a heart of wisdom.” (Psalm 90:12)*
- **Forgiveness:** *“Great is the person who ignores his own dignity and is not angered by affronts.” (Midrash Gadol Ve’gedolah 15)*
- **Transformation:** *“Hillel used to say, ‘If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for Myself, what am I? And if not now, when?’ (Pirkei Avot 1:14)*
- **Shame:** *“Turn away my humiliation which I dread, because Your mandates are good.” (Psalm 119: 39)*
- **Abandonment:** *“Those who see me on the street avoid me. I am put out of the mind like the dead. I am like an object given up for lost. (Psalm 31:12-13)*
- **Mitzvot as Spiritual Practice:** *“When a person travels a road, let that person make it a road of G-d, and let him invite G-d to be his companion.” (Zohar III, 87b)*
- **Teshuvah:** *“And G-d said, ‘I have pardoned them as you have asked.’” (Liturgy, Kol Nidre)*
- **Community:** *“How good and pleasant for brethren to dwell in harmony.” (Psalm 133:1)*

- **Respecting Ones Body** (i.e. Awareness of what is being put into the body, *Shmirat haguf*): *“Praised are You, Lord, Our G-d, King of the Universe who with wisdom has fashioned the human body, creating openings, arteries, glands and organs, marvelous in structure, intricate in design. Should but one of them, by being blocked or opened fail to function, it would be impossible to exist. Praised are You, Lord, healer of all flesh who sustains our bodies in wondrous ways.”* (Traditional morning liturgy)
- **Study/ Renewing the Mind:** *“For I give you good instruction; do not forsake my Torah.”* (Proverbs 4:2)
- **Surrender:** Make a decision to serve G-d unquestioningly.
“Hinenei.” (Genesis 22:1)
- **Kavanah/ Spiritual Awakening:** *“I place my spirit in His care, when I wake as when I sleep. G-d is with me, I shall not fear, body and spirit in His keep.”* (Adon Olam)
- **Prayer:** *“For the Fount of Mercy is a G-d compassionate, Who shall not let you wither, and shall not destroy you, Nor shall G-d forget the covenant made with your ancestors, the one promised by oath to them.”* (Deuteronomy 4:31)
- **Turning One’s Life around:** *“You turned my lament into dancing.”* (Psalm 20:12)
- **Trust:** *“All bounty comes when one trusts in G-d. Hearing stories and teachings from the true tzaddikim arouses a person from his*

spiritual slumber. That person can then express himself fervently before G-d.” Rebbe Nachman, Likutey Moharan I, 60:8)

- **Joy:** The Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chasidism teaches, “Through joy you can reach d’vekut, intense love of G-d, with the Infinite One, Blessed be He.” (*Ish Ha-Pele, quoted in Buxbaum, Jewish Spiritual Practices, p. 481.*)
- **Acts of Loving Kindness/ Gemilut Hasadim:** “These are the precepts that have no prescribed measure: the corner of the field, the first fruit offering, the pilgrimage, acts of kindness and Torah study.” (*Mishnah Peah 1:1*)
- **G-d in Nature:** “For in His hands are the depths of the earth, and the heights of the mountains are His, For the sea is His and He made it. And the dry Land His hands formed.” (*Psalm 95:4-5*)
- **Respect for Others:** “G-d has told you, O humanity, what is good, and what Adonai requires of you: only to do justice, to love goodness, and to walk modestly with your G-d.” (*Micah 6:8*)
- **Music:** “It is good to make a habit of inspiring yourself with a melody. Great concepts are contained in each holy melody, and they can arouse your heart and draw it towards G-d.” (*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom #273*)
- **Tikkun/Atonement:** “For transgressions from man towards G-d, the Day of Atonment effects atonement; but for transgressions between a man and his fellow man, the Day of Atonment does not

effect atonement until he shall have first pleased his fellow man.”

(Mishnah Yoma 8:9)

- **Fear:** *“In the presence of Your glory I stand and am afraid; Your eye can see each thought inside my head.” (Shlomo Ibn Gabriol)*
- **Making Restitution:** *“A person is liable for any damage he does, even in his sleep.” (B. Talmud Bava Kamma 26a)*
- **Torah study:** *“Torah, while one studies it, protects one.” (Sotah 21a)*
- **Faith:** *“I have placed G-d before me always, and because He is at my side, I shall not fail.” (Psalm 16:8)*

FAITH: A STORY

“It was Timothy’s twelfth birthday. He had saved up enough money to buy himself a present. Nickels, dimes and quarters—he went to the neighborhood store, put his change on the counter, and—wonder of wonders—had exactly the right amount to buy the big red kite on the wall behind the cash register. The happiest kid in the world, he went to Van Cortland Park in the Bronx and began to fly his new kite.

There were great winds that day, and he let out some string, and a little more string, and a little more until the kite was so high and far away you couldn’t even see it anymore. When you looked at the boy, all you could see was a happy kid running with string in his hand.

A very respectable and rational-looking man in a business suit came upon the boy and stopped him. ‘Son, what are you doing?’ he asked.

‘What do you mean, sir?’ Timothy asked. ‘I’m flying a kite!’

‘Flying a kite? What do you mean? I don’t see a kite. You don’t see a kite. How do I know there’s a kite?’

Timothy looked at the man very gravely, 'I know there's a kite sir— because I can feel the tug.'" (Gafni, *Soul Prints*, p. xxix)

Connecting Bereshit to “Recovery”

“So G-d Created Man in His Image, in the Image of G-d He Created Him, male and female He Created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

When individual family members or persons in relationships with addicts come together, it is important for them to realize that even without the addict, the family is still a unit, and can unite in hope and healing whenever possible. Our rituals are important tools for negotiating through dark times. The weekly celebration of Shabbat offers an opportunity for a shift in energy and consciousness. Simply lighting the Sabbath candles is an act of recovery, bringing light into the darkness of living with addiction.

Shabbat naturally separates holy time from secular time, and it is called an *oneg*, a delight. For families living with addictions, “delights” are hard to come by. But G-d commands us to *“Obey the Sabbath day, and Keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8)*

Jewish tradition tells us that there are many "liminal" moments, threshold times, when our future is held in the ether. The unknowables of addictions create many liminalities, and family members or persons in relationships with addicts are often scared and afraid of the unknown, which is always out of their control.

The time that we are commanded to kindle the Shabbat candles is at dusk. At this curious juncture, it's difficult to distinguish where day ends and night begins. Often the sun and the moon are visible simultaneously. This time is known as *bein arbyim*, or *bein hashmashot*, and G-d is said to hover near. It is at this moment that we literally and figuratively, “Let go, and let G-d.” We validate our struggles, lamenting our losses, our unfulfilled dreams, but we search for our own serenity with G-d, in the peacefulness of *Shabbat*.

The Book of Bereshit is about our family beginnings—our creation, and our re-creation after trauma. The stories offer hope, healing, and the promise of a covenant with G-d, if only we can surrender to the Divine Will.

A Family Prayer for Shabbat:

We thank You, O G-d, for the gift of your Shabbat,
For the home in which we observe it,
And for the dear ones with whom we share it

May the joy of Shabbat gladden our hearts,
And may its peace quiet our spirits.
As we observe Shabbat together,
May we understand it meaning and capture its mood.
Bring us closer to one another in love;
With laughter and soft words,
With shared concerns and mutual respect.
Help us to make our home a sanctuary,
Warmed by reverence, adorned by tradition,

With family bonds that are strong and enduring,
Based on truth, trust and faithfulness.

Keep us far from strife and anger;

May we be spared shame and reproach.

Help us to live in the week ahead
That You may look upon all we have done
And find it good and worthy of Your blessing.
(*Likrat Shabbat, p. 6*)

Introduction to the “Recovery” Parshiot of Bereshit:

“Recovery” Parshiot Written by Rabbis:

הפוך בה והפוך בה דכולא בה

“Turn it, and turn it over again for everything is in it.”
Avot 5:22

The next twelve “recovery *parshiot*” on the *Book of Bereshit* have been written by rabbis, rabbis who have lived with the pain and trauma of addictions in their families. Some have revealed themselves by name, others have preferred, for a variety of reasons, to remain anonymous. They have all found truth, revelation, and serenity in the holy words of our *Torah*. Having had a spiritual awakening based on their experiences, they have chosen to carry the message to others.

Each *parasha* carries a meditation, *kavanah* or *techinah*, a short devotional prayer, based on each of these personal *D’vei Torah*, which I wrote. I connected some of the key words of the *D’var Torah* as part of the message conveyed by each rabbi. They are meant to serve only as a guide to further prayer, meditations, and dialogue. Each family in recovery, who uses these stories and these meditations are encouraged to do so with the

complete freedom of personalizing these writings to help them stay strong on the path of recovery. *Hazak. Hazak!*

**“Recovery” *Parshiot* and Meditations for Shabbat Candle Lighting
Based on the 12 *Parshiot* of *Bereshit***

Parashat Bereshit:
By Lynnda Targan

Bereshit is the beginning of our world. It starts with the story of G-d's Creation. We learn at the time of G-d's Creation of the heavens and the earth that there was a vast emptiness, which the *Torah* refers to as *tohu va vohu*. Often people in relationships with addicts will describe their lives as this--an abysmal nothingness.

Yet G-d hovers near, and calls for light. "G-d says, 'Let there be light,' and there was light, and G-d saw that the light was good, and separated between the light and the darkness." Family members and friends of addicts yearn for light and goodness. This is the wonder of day and night. Out of the darkness comes light--hope, healing, order out of chaos, and the possibility of a new tomorrow, a new reality.

G-d's crowning moment was the Creation of humanity, after G-d's own

likeness. "And behold, it was very good." G-d gave his earthly creatures Adam and Eve, The Garden of Eden. G-d also gave them Free Will. And almost instantly, though they were living in Paradise, they made a bad choice, which changed the world forever. Despite this bad decision Adam and Eve recovered, and created a new reality for themselves, and history moved forward, as did the destiny of the Jewish people, and all of humanity.

This is one of the important lessons of the *Torah*--that we can re-create ourselves after trauma and tragedy. And not only can we, but we must.

We learn from the *Torah* that life is a gift from G-d. It is precious and precarious. Our greatest assets can be whisked away from us in a single chilling instant. And in spite of our pain and suffering, we must be grateful for the gifts that we do have, today, at this moment.

G-d rested on the 7th. day of Creation, and we are commanded to do the same. Our holy *Shabbat* is a time to come together with our families, imperfect as they all are, to enjoy what we do have. The angels join us.

As we light the Sabbath candles, we symbolically invite light into our lives. This is important as we try to nourish and sustain ourselves during difficult times.

Much in life is out of our control, as we've learned by being in relationships with friends and relatives who are addicted. But at this liminal moment, a transition, when G-d hovers near, we must pause, and create a Sabbath of peace and serenity for ourselves and our families.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Bereshit:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the Shabbat candles during the week of **Parashat Bereshit**, that You help us create an oasis of light. We ask that we may be able to separate from the tohu va'vohu of addiction to enjoy Your holy Shabbat. We pray that just as the first humans made mistakes and recovered from their trauma, so may this family find the road to recovery. May it be your Will, G-d, to shine Your countenance upon our troubled family and guide us on the healing path.*

Cen yhi ratzon.

Parashat Noah:

By Rabbi Malka Drucker

When we imagine the story of Noah, one of the first Bible stories that we read as children, we see an ark stuffed with animals, lots of water, and a rainbow. But the story goes on, and what may be most interesting about the important and powerful narrative is that we don't think much about it. What follows the subsiding of waters is this: "Now Noah was the first man of the soil; he planted a vineyard. When he drank from the wine, he became drunk and exposed himself in the middle of the tent." The Torah then goes on, characteristically metaphysical, to propose that something horrific has happened to Noah. The rabbinic tradition suggests that one of his sons, Ham, either raped or castrated him.

It must have been unbearable to be in the ark. At the outset, they heard the shrieks of terror and moans of agony as the entire world died before their eyes. We don't want to imagine the atmosphere of the ark, filled with survivors, floating above a dead world. Whatever it was, Noah left the ark a disturbed man. He obliterated his memory with alcohol and his drunkenness, which led to an act of violence.

Rabbi Burt Visotsky wrote a modern *Midrash* a few years ago in *Learning Torah With...5755* (Torah Aura Productions), that painfully unveils the agony of violence begetting violence. In the sixties a novice approached a priest in Warsaw and made a confession that the priest never forgot. Not until the novice died did he tell the story. The novice told him that he was born a Jew. During the war, his father, a brewmaster, made a deal with a few Nazi officers to have his son apprentice as a bottle-filler; he thought that he would save his son's life.

The boy never knew if his father had any idea of what the apprenticeship entailed, but he, pretty and slim, was used for the officers' pleasure. Accustomed to this life after the war, he continued his trade in Poland, with anti-Semitic clients who liked the idea of his being a Jew. He grew wealthy and drank away his pain. One night, an older client was particularly abusive and the young man took out a knife expressly for this purpose, and slashed "the very tool with which he was abusing me." The old man bled profusely and he turned him over. He was astonished that the client was, like him, circumcised. Then he saw the numbers on his arm. He died, and the novice fled to a nearby monastery to hide. It was there that he decided to become a priest, abandoning his Judaism forever.

Noah used alcohol and the survivor used self-loathing to cover pain. Addiction comes in many forms. For many years we Jews prided ourselves on such healthy family

lives that we didn't need the emotional anesthetic of general society. We were slow to discover that as our families fell, our pain rose. Like Noah and the survivor, when we stuff the pain, the truth of our lives, instead of crying out, we are ripe for addiction.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Noah:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the Shabbat candles during the week of **Parashat Noah**, that You hear our cries of pain. Our world as we imagined it, no longer exists, and we need to be cleansed from living in the shadow of death. We pray that this holy Shabbat be a safe harbor for this family away from guilt and shame. May it be your Will G-d to shine your countenance on us and to move us out of troubled waters.*

Cen y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Lech Lecha:

By Dr. Dawn Robinson Rose

“The Lord said to Abraham, “Go forth from your native land and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”

The first thing an addict or alcoholic in beginning recovery is told to do is to leave--people, places and things—which constitutes almost their entire lives. And more,

they are told they must leave huge parts of themselves behind: the way they think, the resentments they keep, their old behaviors, preconceived notions about the whole world, G-d, their lives, even their families.

Any family watching a loved one undergoing this process might feel a hundred different ways about the changes and leave-takings made by the family member in recovery. Of course, there may be hope and excitement at the prospect of a new life together. Sometimes there are other feelings as well, such as fear (how much is she going to change, Will she love us?); insecurity (Is she going to leave us behind as well?) anger (How dare she feel so great after she ruined our lives for so long!)

In this *parasha*, Abraham makes the great leaps of faith. He leaves a land and a life that he knows intimately and travels to an uncharted desert. Like Abram, we are told that for our act of faith, this leap into nothingness, we can expect blessings—which seem idyllic and outrageous at the same time.

Once again like Abram, we may not go forward with our loved one in recovery because of the promises we are told lie in front of us—rather we go because of the idols lying shattered behind us. We go because like an amoeba, a little pain is still less than horrible pain. We go forward with our loved one in recovery because the alternative is to stay behind.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Lech Lecha:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the Shabbat candles during the week of **Parashat Lech Lecha**, that You give us the courage to move forward*

with our destiny. May we be strong enough to leave behind that which is no longer needed to find that which is a blessing. We pray that this holy Shabbat be a refuge for our family living in the fear of the unknown. May it be Your Will G-d, to shine Your countenance on us, to guide us toward uncharted territory in peace.

Cen y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Vayera:

By Rabbi Nahum Simon, PhD.

Parashat Vayera presents the modern thinker with a perplexing problem. Does G-d really expect us to do that which is so contrary to our instincts? Is it really necessary to let go of everything we believe we know in order to accomplish that which is right? After a lifetime of awaiting the birth of a child, the Matriarch, Sarah, at the age of eighty-nine conceives a child. At the age of ninety, she gives birth to a son whom she calls Isaac. One can only imagine the joy that the parents experienced. All the hopes and dreams of the parents were now focused on this infant. Isaac, after all, is to be heir to the monotheistic teaching of Father Abraham, as promised by G-d.

The Torah tells us that Abraham had been tested by G-d ten times in his life, beginning with being told to blindly follow an unseen G-d to a land that was both distant and foreign. None of these tests prepared Abraham for the final test. Abraham is commanded to take this beloved son, bind him on an altar and sacrifice him before G-d. What thoughts must have been going through Abraham's mind?

The agony he must have faced. The choice of following this final command of a G-d he had pursued for so long. Had not G-d fulfilled all previous promises? Would G-d

replace this son of his old age with another who would carry on the message of monotheism? How can another child replace this one I am about to sacrifice? Can one child ever replace one who is lost?

G-d does not want Abraham to actually slaughter Isaac. The real test is the extent to which Abraham would adhere to the dictates of his G-d. The real test was one of willingness. How willing would Abraham be to do those things necessary for the growth and the legacy of the Jewish people?

I am often approached by parents and other family members of active addicts and alcoholics wanting to know what they can do to help their loved one. They are somewhat surprised by the first question I ask. What are you willing to do? The truth is that we are limited only by our willingness. If a family replies with "Whatever it takes," I can begin to help.

It is as abhorrent to us to "let go" of a child, as it must have been for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. For me as a parent, the thought of letting go of a child was extremely difficult. When it became necessary to ask my eighteen year-old son to get professional help or leave the house, I experienced the pain, guilt and turmoil that I can only imagine Abraham felt. I had no idea where my son would go, what he would do. Would he sink further into the world of drugs or would he find the recovery that I found for myself? The words of the "Tough Love" groups resounded in my head, "I cannot prevent you from killing yourself, but I will not help you do it." I let go and turned both my life and that of my son to G-d.

I thank G-d every day that my prayers were answered. We were fortunate, for my son straightened out his life within a year of running and, at times, living on the streets. It

was the willingness to do that which was the opposite of my instincts that made it possible.

Meditation for Candle lighting for Shabbat Vayera:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the Shabbat candles during the week of **Parashat Vayera**, that You give us the faith to release and let go. May we be able to be free enough to make difficult choices, and to face our decisions without guilt. We pray that this holy Shabbat be a sanctuary of liberation for the members of our family who have turned their lives over to You for Your protective care. May it be Your Will G-d, to shine Your countenance on us and to free us from the fear of release.*

Cen y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Chayei Sarah:
By Rabbi James Goodman

We began the study of *Chayei Sarah* (the life of Sarah) with the death of Sarah. She seems to be alone and it seems as if Abraham has to travel to an unfamiliar place to deal for her burial spot. We check the end of the last *sedra*: Abraham returned to the young men, and Abraham dwelt at *Beer Sheva*.

Sarah dies at *Kiryat Arba*, which is *Hevron*, and Abraham comes to bury Sarah and to cry for her (*Genesis 23:2*). What constitutes that cry? What has separated them? Abraham prepares to do business with the children of *Het*, who occupy this land where he has gone to bury his wife. He offers them everything, and plays the give and take of Middle Eastern business. It is gamesmanship. Abraham ends up paying everything; it seems as if he is not after a better price. He wants the land. What is this land? Why is it so important to Abraham?

There is incipient conflict in this story. There is something Abraham is working out over Sarah in her death that is the residue of their lives. *Chayei Sarah*, the life of Sarah, opens with the death of Sarah. There was something unfinished in the living that Abraham is left alone to work through in the dying. He doesn't care about the money, about the give and take of doing business, he pays the price because it's not about the land, it's about something unfinished with his wife.

Something unfinished. The implication is that Sarah died alone, separated from her husband, her family. What separated them is written in the white fire, not the black fire. It has to be supplied. The previous incident is the celebrated three day trip to the mountain, Abraham and Isaac, Sarah conspicuous in her absence. Where is Sarah? Where is her voice in that story? Again, in the white fire, it has to be supplied.

What we have here is a family destabilized by a trauma, not a family operating with any sort of concerted strategy or plan or goal. Not a duplication of strategies, but independent responses over difficult problems. That is what happens when you do not have a strategy and when you are not together as a family in facing a trauma, you have a lot of patching up to do.

That is certainly what happens when a family is destabilized by different strategies, when a husband acts alone, when a wife is not present, when a child is sacrificed to the inability of the parents to make peace between themselves. There is no hope of resolution without a unified strategy.

What I read in the story of the death of Sarah is a *remez*, a hint of the sadness of a family that is not working together over the welfare of a child. This is a common problem for families where drug abuse has intruded.

Abraham comes alone to deal for a grave to bury his wife, to cry for her, and I feel the hint of a thousand tears in the white fire of this story, tears over something left unfinished, unresolved, unreconciled.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Chayei Sarah:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the Shabbat candles during the week of **Parashat Chayei Sarah**, that you bestow upon us the hope for resolution. May we be united in our strategy of resolving unfinished business. We pray that this holy Shabbat be a safe haven from tension and strife for our family who is struggling with competing instincts. May it be Your Will G-d to shine Your countenance on us, and infuse us with the power of togetherness of spirit.*

Cen y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Toldot:
By Rabbi Sara O'Donnell Adler

Compared to other patriarchs and matriarchs, our forefather, Isaac, is a silent and passive character in the Biblical narrative. Whereas Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, are dramatic actors in the history of the Israelite people, Isaac seems to live mainly in the shadow of his father, Abraham.

In the Torah portion of *Toldot*, we see that Isaac marries Rebecca, whom his father, Abraham, had chosen to be his wife. Whenever God speaks to Isaac, God identifies as being the God of his father, Abraham. Because Abraham hearkened to God's voice and obeyed his commandments, God will bless Isaac. God does not appear to be a protective presence to Isaac out of any merit of his own, but simply by virtue of being the son of Abraham.

This pattern continues throughout our Torah portion. At one point, upon fearing that his life may be in danger, Isaac remarks to his wife Rebecca that she should say that she is his sister, rather than his wife. If this story sounds all too familiar, it is because it mimics an interaction that played out previously between Abraham, Sarah and Pharaoh.

Furthermore, we learn that Isaac digs wells. "And Isaac dug again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham." (*Genesis 26:18*) Once more, we see that although Isaac labors to do something, it is in the shadow of his father, Abraham. The wells he digs are the very same wells that his father dug before him.

As I consider what our tradition has to tell us about Isaac, I find myself thinking about the ways in which families are affected by addiction, particularly children of alcoholics. *Adult Children of Alcoholics*, or for that matter any children who grow up in dysfunctional households, may handle their experiences in a couple of ways. One is that this child may become an over-achiever, trying to please others while not trying to rock the boat and draw attention to his or her self. Another possibility is that the child acts out, demonstrates behavior that builds an impenetrable wall around him or her by not doing well in school or by debunking rules. Like Isaac, we may see children of alcoholics repeating the same behavior as their parents.

Children of alcoholics are at risk of becoming alcoholics themselves. They learn behaviors from their parents, and if parents do not demonstrate healthy ways of being in relationship and managing emotions, these lessons are passed on and internalized by the children. Studies show that children who grow up in abusive households either become abusers or abused in adulthood. Children of alcoholics often live in the shadow of their alcoholic parent.

So what are we to learn from the life of Isaac who dug his father's wells and stayed in the shadow of Abraham? We learn that in spite of his limits, Isaac had a strong relationship with God. Although God identifies God's self to Isaac based upon the merits of his father, it is clear that God cares about Isaac's well being. Isaac does become the father of two very strong children: Esau and Jacob. He has the opportunity to bless his sons, although he does so with eyes that are dimmed.

My prayer is that adult children of alcoholics connect with their own unique sense of the Divine and find the courage to live outside of the shadows of our parent's actions. With clear vision, determination, and the help of Twelve Step programs, each of us has the chance to dig wells that are uniquely our own and to give our innermost blessings to others with open eyes.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Toldot:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the Shabbat candles during the week of **Parashat Toldot**, that each member be discharged from the darkness of the shadow of addiction. May we be blessed with the discernment of our own uniqueness and extraordinary purpose by being in relationship with You. We pray that this Shabbat be an asylum for connecting To You. May it be Your Will G-d to shine Your*

countenance upon each of our family members, offering the power of healthy individuality in the continuity of promising generations.

Cen Y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Vayeitze:
by Rabbi Yonah

I left, running from my brother. It's easy for some to have sympathy for him. I used to, but no more. Now, I see it differently. From the moment he fought his way out of our mother's womb, he caused chaos wherever he went. A violent man, a man of great appetites, of addictions, a man of the hunt – it is not hard to believe that he would have hunted me down, too, given the chance. My mother saw it, but not my father. My father wanted to give him every blessing in the world. He couldn't see the darkness that my brother left in his wake.

I left, running from my brother. It's easy for some to condemn me. How could I treat my own brother so badly? And then, how could I run away instead of facing him, instead of trying to make peace in our family home? I should have helped him, they say. I should have made him go to anger management classes or AA, or even just stayed out of his way and not let it bother me. How do you explain what it's like to live in the presence of such disruption and cyclic violence? How do you explain that sometimes, the best thing you can do for everyone is to leave? I knew that if I stayed, it would kill me. *He* would kill me. I had to leave.

“Jacob left *Be'er Sheva*, and set out for *Haran*.” (*Genesis 28:10*) *Itturei Torah* asks: Why does the text tell us about his leaving from *Be'er Sheva*, since the point is to know where he is going?” The commentators answer:

“When a person goes from one place to another, it is possible that he has two aims. The first is to leave the place where he was staying, and the second, which is the essential one, is to reach the other place. Behold, here the two aims were like one for Jacob – the two paths converged.”

And in truth, Jacob needed both paths: one that led *away* from Esau, and one that led *towards* a new future. He couldn't attain a life for himself in *Haran* until he had escaped from Esau in *Be'er Sheva*. As long as his brother's shadow hung over him, he could not live his own life. It is for this reason that when Jacob lies down on the first night of his journey, God appears to him in a dream and gives him the following blessing: “Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (*Genesis 28:15*)

This is the first time that anyone ever tells Jacob that he will be protected. For those of us who suffer in the maelstrom of a loved one's substance abuse, even the promise of protection can seem like a dream. When Jacob replies that he will accept *Adonai* as his God if these promises are kept, he is taking the first step on the path to trusting God, and living his own life outside his brother's shadow.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Yayeitze:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the holy Shabbat candles during the week of **Parashat Vayetzi**, that the inclination to run departs from our midst. May our family be blessed with the ability to trust in the Divine, as it takes a first step towards the acceptance of powerlessness over a family member's addiction. We pray that this Shabbat our family can find comfort under Your sheltering wings to seek a new course of action. May it be Your Will G-d to turn Your countenance upon us, offering reconciliation and the possibility of a brave new dream.*

Cen y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Vayishlach:

The Thirteenth Anniversary of a Yahrzeit—A Quest for What Was Lost

By Rabbi Freddie Cooper

Sibling relationship and all that it has been is a force that shapes each of us into who we will be as adults...sometimes forming the entire contour of our lives and the decisions that will lay out a life's pathway. As I read words of Torah today, I do so with the years of my childhood still ever with me.

We were not twins, my brother and I—he being the oldest and I being the youngest. Yet it seemed in many ways, that he and I were so like Jacob and Esau. We were that kind of family where the style and preference of each parent gravitated toward one child. I was Jacob, the good, quiet, sweet one. I was a child that passed my childhood with dolls, and books and paper and pencil. I was Daddy's girl, always good for a hug and

never one who would cause him to lose his temper. He could count on me to feed his need for peace and quiet and to sit at his side.

My brother was like Esau. He was cunning and cleaver—always spinning some scheme...always hunting for some angle to win without doing the work. He looked rough and brash, even as a child. He was in constant pursuit of smashing the middle class mold of the nice Jewish boy. He was my mother's favorite—her confidante—her support. She claimed to love him in a special way because he was always different and often in trouble.

She said that he needed her love more than I did or than my sister did. Her love, she believed, was a way of possibly steering him away from his troubling ways---“his hunting out in the field (like Esau) for game.” My brother's wild game was often a shady business deal. His final hunt for game leading him to illegally import marijuana into the country over thirty years ago. So my brother and I, probably because of our differences in how we were loved as children, took paths to very different lands as adults.

Like Jacob, my concerns were with finding love in my life and in starting a family. Esau, my brother, went off to his own land, one that was foreign to our family. He estranged himself from us as he dealt with drug dealers and mobsters. The family could not begin to understand all that he was “dealing” with in his life. We did not even know how to travel to him to gain some understanding. While I could receive the blessing from my parents for all that I did, Esau, my brother, knew that there would be no blessing for him in life. Esau could wail and scream but because of his foreign ways we were all hurt and there was no way to make amends.

In our Biblical account, it is Jacob that was sent away from the family. My brother left in the safety of our family and he encountered increasing levels of danger in the

foreign land in which he sojourned. It was not Jacob that had to fear for his life in my family story. It was my brother, my Esau. How could we (our Jewish family) comprehend that he had gotten himself into such a situation that he lived in fear of losing his life. He could not tell us and we could not understand. It was in his hunt—his pursuit of his own validation of his prowess and strength—that he lost his life. It was thirty years ago.

As I mark this thirtieth anniversary of his death, I hold the scene of Jacob and Esau reuniting, in my heart. His absence from my life has been like an angel wrestling with me in the night. It has caused me to journey without him in search of wholeness in my own life. How I miss his face, and its absence has left its mark on me. Without Esau in my life, I have found myself limping a bit, from absence. It is this limp that has led me to my Judaism, and it has helped me to fill my life with all that I love because of that limp. When I picture him in my life, I believe that his face has been for me, like seeing the face of G-d--that face of G-d, shaping me over and over again in my life. Thoughts of him will always smolder in me—Esau, my brother—how I yearn to tell all that has happened in these years without him. How I wish that I could run to meet him today with greater understanding of who we both were. In my embrace of all that my brother was, I would tell him how he made me struggle with the Divine. It has been in that struggle that I have found a way to live “*shalem*,” whole, without him.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Vayishlach:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the holy Shabbat candles during the week of **Parashat Vayishlach**, that we embrace our struggles as a path to*

serenity. May our family's wounds of brokenness transcend into healing by turning its face in Your Direction. May it be Your Will G-d to turn Your countenance upon us, so that our search for shalem, wholeness, and shalom, peace, be reconciled through Divine mercy.

Cen y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Vayeshev:
By Rabbi Anonymous

The pit. A well of darkness from which there is no escape within sight. Walls closing in. No air to breathe. No room to move. No light to see with. Alone. Only your fear. Only your horrible imagination. Alone in the pit.

In the *Parashat Vayeshev*, it is Joseph who is in the pit. The hated brother, the beloved son. In a family where addiction dwells, everyone is in a pit. Sometimes together as a family yet separated from the rest of the community. Often each member of the family is alone, captive to the dread, pain, helplessness and isolation of addiction.

I've been in that pit. I married my first husband when I was very young and desperate for love. He was kind and loving. And he "used" heroin. I was too naive to understand that his use of heroin was an addiction. I soon learned.

I soon learned that I would be in fear every time he was out of sight, sure he would never return alive. *A savage beast devoured him! Joseph has surely been torn to bits! Then Jacob rent his garments and placed sackcloth on his loins; he mourned for his son many days (Gen. 37:33-34).* Such is Jacob's cry upon finding the "evidence" of Joseph's death. I needed only my wild imagination to "know" that my husband was lying

dead on the floor of some tenement, a needle in his arm. I cried out into the emptiness, sick with fear.

I soon learned that I would tremble in fear alone in the pit. *All his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him... Genesis 37: 35.* However, there was no one to comfort me. I was alone in the stinking pit of shame and fear. I felt I could tell no one about this. No one. Not a friend, no one in my family. No soul could know. I was so ashamed! Shame is a complicated, entangling net. One's sense of self is obscured by the negative reflections of society, real or imagined. Not only is the addict an object of scorn by society, but, often the family and friends of the addict are also objects of scorn and pity. How could any sensible person willingly get entrapped in the cycle of deceit that frames addiction? How could any self-respecting person love an addict, live with an addict. Protect an addict.

...but he refused to comfort himself, and said, "For I will go down to the grave mourning for my son. And his father bewailed him. Genesis 37:35-36. The reality of loss - loss of the person you thought you knew, loss of your dream about a meaningful relationship, loss of friends, loss of security, loss of hope. Only the awful, gaping wail of emptiness.

And guilt. Guilt. I hated him. I needed him. I loved him. I pitied him. I despised him. I wanted him always in sight. I wanted him gone.

I was caught in a co-dependent relationship, without knowing the term! My sense of self was so low I believed I deserved to be in this nightmare. So many "ifs" were operating: I believed - if I acted as if he was "OK," he'd be "OK." If I was stronger, kinder, more loving, etc., he would stop "using." If I begged him to stop, he'd stop. If he

stopped, we'd be fine. Money disappeared. *I should have known!* He lost job after job. *I should have known the reason!* I should have known how to get us out of the pit!

For a long time I did not have the wisdom to know that I needed to change myself, not try to change him. But I did need to change. I was caught in the pit, and while Hashem might help me get out, I needed to free myself from the captivity of shame and step forward into the light, claiming my own life. But as horrific as the pit was, it was known. The world out there was not. Could I find my way through an unknown territory? Could I venture out alone? Would that be abandoning my husband? What was my responsibility to him?

What was his responsibility to me? What was his responsibility to himself? That was many years ago. We both climbed out and went our separate ways. Hashem has been protecting and guiding us.

My former husband has been in recovery for many years. I have built a life I am happy with and proud of. Shame has faded. I no longer mourn the loss of the person I thought he was - or I was. I live a meaningful, honest life--without him. Sometimes love cannot endure; ours did not. We share the responsibility. Neither of us will fall or be tossed in that same pit again. Yet some guilt remains- - I could have been kinder.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Vayeishev:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the holy Shabbat candles during the week of **Parashat Vayeshev**, that we be freed from the pit of emptiness and*

despair. May Your sacred presence enable our family to replace the feelings of abandonment with Your endless source of love and compassion. Please transform our dark memories into the light of the present. May it be Your Will G-d to turn Your countenance upon us, so that we can continue our recovery without shame, isolation or remorse over what we can't control. Cen y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Miketz/ The Hero and the Addict:
by Rabbi Shohama Harris Wiener

I don't think it's just coincidence that my chosen Hebrew name, Shohama, from Shoham, onyx, is the stone of the tribe of Joseph. There is something in the heroic tale of our forefather that speaks to me of the life I lived during the three decades that I was married into a family plagued by multiple addictions and multiple addicts.

In the beginning, Joseph is riding high. He is a shining star, the favorite of his father. His early years prepare him to be a leader, and a man of stature. This plan is seemingly thwarted when his brothers, filled with jealousy, throw him into a pit, then sell him into slavery.

He is bought by a man named Potiphar, who soon assesses Joseph's great abilities and promotes him to be his overseer. Again he is riding high. But Potiphar's wife has her eyes on Joseph, and when he refuses her temptations, she accuses him of attempted rape, and he is thrown into jail.

For the second time Joseph goes from riches to rags. But his winning personality charms the jail-keeper and he becomes the head of the prisoners. When he

interprets the dreams of the baker and the butler correctly, and then of Pharaoh, he is promoted to a position of power as Pharaoh's minister and right hand man. He is able to guide Pharaoh into storing grain during the years of plenty so there is enough food to feed all during the years of famine.

For the third cycle in his life, Joseph is riding high. It is in this phase that he gets to reunite with his brothers, and to forgive them for the wrong they had done to him. Why was he put in such a dysfunctional family and made to endure such extremes of success and misery?

Decades after his initial descent Joseph has clarity about the trajectory of his life, and says to his brothers "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years has the famine been in the land; and there are yet five years, in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to give you a remnant on the earth, and to save you alive for a great plan." (*Genesis 45:4-7*) He sees that his suffering has allowed him to be used to save many others from suffering and famine.

With hindsight, I can see that my suffering forced me to reach out to God for help, and find solace and comfort in my Jewish heritage. More than that, it propelled me into learning how to help others in similar circumstances.

How did Joseph make it through all those tumultuous years? Torah gives us an insight when he says to Pharaoh, "*Elohim ya'aneh et sh'lom Paroah.*" God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace. (*Genesis 41:16*)

How did I make it through all those painful years with a loving heart and a sense of *shalom*, inner peace? It was only with the help of my rabbis, teachers and friends, the strength and joy I found in the Jewish tradition, and my deep, loving relationship with God.

Joseph represents the suffering hero in all of us. With God's help, we all can make meaning of our trials, and find inspiration in our heritage. The addicts in our lives need not make us slaves to their addictions. Though their lives, like Joseph's, may careen like a roller coaster ride of downs and ups, our Judaism can keep us balanced and hopeful. May this come to be.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Miketz:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the holy Shabbat candles during **Parashat Miketz**, that we as individuals continue to celebrate our triumph of loving hearts over abysmal pain. May our former suffering continue to reside in the inner peace that we have learned to embrace. May it be Your Will G-d to turn Your countenance upon our family, so that we can continue to reach out to others in empathy and support, as You have reached out to us.*

Cen y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Vayigash:
by Rabbi Joui Hessel

Imagine it, really think about this one. You think that you truly know this person, after all this is someone with whom you have shared everything; a

home, parents, pets, even DNA. Years and years go by, always thinking that the two of you have similar interests, until one day it becomes revealed to you that some of your interests are indeed not similar at all.

In *Parshat Vayigash*, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and asks them to bring their father back to Egypt, and at long last, the family is reunited.

The scene in which Joseph reveals himself to his brothers is a touching one.

Overcome with emotion, Joseph says to his brothers, "I am Joseph: does my father still live?" (*Genesis 45:3*) His brothers are completely surprised and say nothing. Joseph then continues by saying, "I am your brother Joseph..." (*Genesis 45:4*)

The concept of revelation is difficult to grasp, especially when the revealer is someone whom you once thought you had known. Revelation occurs when the true identity of a person is shown to another. This can be done publicly, or as in the case of Joseph and his brothers, in private. Modern commentator, Pinchas Peli believes that Joseph acted wisely in asking everyone to leave the court so that he and his brothers could be alone when he revealed his identity to them.

Likewise, this can be compared to the private family counseling sessions that take place at addiction rehabilitation centers throughout the world. In these sessions, families begin to explore the true identity of the addict, the actions they have committed, the drugs they have abused, and the raw feelings and emotions within them. The true identity of the addict is never what had been presented to the family or others in the outside world. This true identity

has instead been kept secret, hidden from the very people who desire to truly know the addict.

The process of revelation is hard; it hits at the very core of the family structure, bringing out the most broken parts of it, in order to repair the family unit so that it may one day soon work in a healthy and constructive manner that leads to relationships of trust and communication and love, instead of lies, manipulation and false identity.

When Joseph reveals his true identity to his brothers, he says, "I am your brother Joseph." He emphasizes the words "your brother," making certain that they understood that their family bond made it possible for him to be honest with them and to forgive them.

When a family member gets to the point of revealing who they truly are - an addict, may we, the family members who love this person, remember that it is "family first." Familial love and connections have made it possible for this person to become honest with himself or herself and with us. Only then can everyone begin the process of *teshuvah*, of repentance and forgiveness.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, She'asani ben/bat chorin.
Blessed are You *Adonai* our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has made me to be free.

May each of us become free to truly know each other and ourselves so that we may one day soon reveal ourselves to those we love, including ourselves.

Amen.

Meditation for Candle Lighting for Shabbat Vayigash:

Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the holy Shabbat candles during the week of Parashat Vayigash, they we connect to you in the truth of Your continual revelation. Please help our family become free by assisting them in identifying and knowing what is real and enduring. May it be your will G-d to reach out to us in forgiveness as we complete the steps of tikkun and teshuvah.

Cen y'hi ratzon.

Parashat Vayechi:
by Rabbi Joshua Simon

Vayechi—"He lived"--is the concluding episode of *Bereshit*, Genesis.

It is the end of the entire opening of our collective story of finding the One God. Each reader of Torah meets God while also meeting a single family. It is an odd couple story--a deity and a dysfunctional tribal family. We have seen their hubris, their vitality. There have been noble moments and far more occasions where relatives lied, cheated and stole from one another, where parents almost always did their best to end up with children who went wrong. God is just one more character in the act. As a reality show, it has held our attention through three millennia of viewing. One last time, dying patriarchs favor younger over older, one last time insults are flung directly into faces of next of kin: Jacob tells his oldest son, "Unstable as water, you shall excel no longer...you brought disgrace." I love you too, Dad. Jacob takes apart son after son, favoring only the one he always

avored, Joseph. This is a family that cannot break free of a tradition of parents harming their children by pitting them against one another.

But the next scene is an interesting one. The moment Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers begin flinging themselves at their "elect" baby brother, pleading for mercy and forgiveness. It is an odd scene, coming as it does when the father, who they all sought to please is off being mummified. E.A. Speiser, editor of the Anchor Bible/Genesis, notes that the strand of the Torah's narration that scholars call "E," for "*Elohim*," its preferred epithet for God, has issues with the story of Joseph and his brothers. The *Elohim* author of the Torah is thought by historians to be sharing the Northern, or Israelite, Kingdom's version of the story. According to this version, Joseph's brothers are guilt-stricken over the long-ago crime of selling boy Joseph, in his foppish coat, into slavery, after first plotting to kill him. They fear the worst from Joseph, even as the man Joseph has moved on, first to rise to political power, then to raise his own sons; in fact, his next act is to die himself.

In contrast to the "E" version's need for apologies and dealing with guilt, there is the strand of Torah called "J" by scholars. This text, which is interwoven with "E" in the Torah as we know it, chooses the term Jehovah for the Divine name and is thought to represent the Southern or Judean Kingdom's version of the Torah. "J" was satisfied with a moment a couple of chapters back, when Joseph threatens his baby brother, Benjamin, and the other 10 brothers offer themselves up for punishment in his place. The "J" version doesn't need a final crisis, one last crack at healing the damage incurred between Joseph and his brothers.

Both stories live side by side. We inherit a *Torah* where Joseph's family is forever reliving its multiple final scenes. We are already healed; we are never healed. And while we figure out which is which, we are forever moving away from a particular time and place, when the universal story played out within the confines of our own families.

Meditation for Candle lighting for Shabbat Vayechi:

*Dear G-d, we pray as our family comes together to light the holy candles during the week of **Parashat Vayechi**, that we forgive each other, and that we forgive ourselves for our missteps. May our hurts be soothed by the healing balm of the Schechinah. Please make it possible for us to look backwards and forward at the same time, so that they we can be unified in the confrontations of family life. May it be Your Will G-d to shine Your countenance upon our family that we may live with the reconciliation of opposites.*

Cen y'hi ratzon.

Each Step in Peace
by Rabbi Rami Shapiro

We call upon the Source of Life
the Fountain of all Being—
the Power that binds us to eternity
and fills time and space with holiness,
to guide our every step
that our journey be toward peace.

May we begin our travels in peace:
peace of mind,
peace of heart
peace of body and spirit;
and may our fear of tomorrow
be transformed through such peace
into a curiosity for the new
that each moment of our journey
become for us an opportunity
to learn and to share.

May the peace with which we begin
sustain us in peace throughout the travels
that we might return back home in peace as well.

May our way be free
of accident and danger
from all affliction and strife.

May we bring peace and laughter
to those we meet
that they might count our meeting
as a blessing.

May our deeds be blessed with strength,
guided by justice,

tempered with mercy and
emboldened with wisdom.

May we all meet
greet us with grace,
kindness and compassion,
and may we greet them with the same.

May our prayer be a reminder to us
as the days pass
that we not forget our mission:
to make our lives vehicles of blessing and joy.

Blessed are those who take up the path and greet all beings with kindness.

Glossary of Terms:

Addiction: The physical and psychological craving for a substance that develops into a dependency and continues even though it is causing the addicted person physical, psychological and social harm. The disease of addiction is chronic and progressive, and the craving may apply to behaviors as well as substances. (Drug abuse sciences)

Alcoholism: A primary, chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations. The disease is often progressive and fatal. It is characterized by continuous or periodic impaired control over drinking, preoccupation with the drug alcohol, use of alcohol despite adverse consequences, and distortions in thinking most notably denial. (National Council on Alcoholism and Drug)

ACOA: (Adult Children of Alcoholics) A self-help community for people who struggle and have struggled as the result of the alcoholism of one or both parents.

Al-Anon/ Nar-Anon: A self-help community for people whose lives are affected because they live with a family member or are in a relationship with someone who is drug-dependent.

AA: (Alcoholics Anonymous) is a fellowship group of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for membership; they are self-supporting their own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. The primary purpose is to help people stay sober and to help others achieve sobriety. (AA web site)

Chemical Dependency: A general term to describe a physical or psychological reliance on drugs.

Co-Dependency: The condition in which people allow the behavior of others to effect them, and because of that their lives become unmanageable.

Detoxification: The process of withdrawing from any addictive substances.

Dual Diagnosis: A chemical dependency or substance abuse diagnosis co-existing with a psychiatric disorder.

Enabling: The process whereby a person knowingly or unknowingly perpetuates another person's addiction because of his/her behavior.

Intervention: The process by which a team of addiction professionals and family members confront the addict about how his/her behavior has affected them. It is an attempt to get the addict to accept immediate help.

Recovery: The change of attitudes and behaviors that bring about a life free of the addiction. This is an ongoing process that transpires "one step at a time."

Relapse: Repeating the addicted behavior during treatment.

Sobriety: A life without chemicals or addictions.

Withdrawal: The symptoms experienced by addicts when they stop using/experiencing their addiction.

Resources:

Alcoholics Anonymous
Street Address:
Alcoholics Anonymous
475 Riverside Drive
11th. Floor
New York, NY 10115

Mailing Address:
Alcoholics Anonymous
Grand Central Station
P.O. Box 459
New York, NY 10163
<http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org>

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.
P.O. Box 862 Midtown Station
New York, New York 10018-0862
(212) 302-7240
<http://www.Al-Anon.com>
<http://www.alateen.org>

Narcotics Anonymous
World Services, Inc.
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91049
(818) 773-9999
<http://www.na.org>

Nar-Anon World Service Office
302 W. 5th. Street Suite 301
San Pedro, CA 90731
(310) 547-5800
<http://www.Nar-Anon>

Co-Dependents Anonymous

PO Box 33577
Phoenix, Arizona 86067-3577
(602) 277-7991
<http://www.codependents.org>

Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others (JACS)
850 Seventh Ave.
New York, New York 10019
(212) 397-4197
jacs@jacsworld.org

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of G-d as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to G-d, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have G-d remove these defects in character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to all.
9. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with G-d as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on AA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving G-d as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic that suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside purpose lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. AA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. AA as such, ought never to be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. AA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name never be brought into public controversy
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radios and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all of our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Steps of Co-Dependence Anonymous:

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addictions—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of G-d as we understand G-d.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to G-d, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have G-d remove all these defects of character
7. Humbly asked G-d to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal Inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with G-d as we understand G-d, praying only for knowledge of G-d's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous:

I can expect a miraculous change in my life by working the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. As I make an honest effort to work the Twelve Steps and Follow the Twelve Traditions...

1. I know a new sense of belonging. The feeling of emptiness and loneliness will disappear.
2. I am no longer controlled by my fears. I overcome my fears and act with courage, integrity and dignity.
3. I know a new freedom.
4. I release myself from worry, guilt and regret about my past and present. I am aware enough not to repeat it.

5. I know a new love and acceptance of myself and others. I feel genuinely lovable loving and loved.
6. I learn to see myself as equal to others. My new and renewed relationships are all with equal partners.
7. I am capable of developing and maintaining healthy and loving relationships. The need to control and manipulate others will disappear as I learn to trust those who are trustworthy.
8. I learn that it is possible for me to mend—to become more loving, intimate and supportive. I have the choices of communicating with my family in a way which is safe for me and respectful for them.
9. I acknowledge that I am a unique person and precious creation.
10. I no longer need to rely solely on others to provide my sense of worth.
11. I trust the guidance received from my Higher Power and came to believe in my own capabilities.
12. I gradually experience serenity, strength and spiritual growth in my daily life.

Co-Dependents Anonymous Positive Affirmations:

Just for today, I will respect my own and other's boundaries.

Just for today, I will be vulnerable with someone I trust

Just for today, I will take one compliment and hold it in my heart for more than a fleeting moment. I will let it nurture me.

Just for today, I will act in a way that I would admire in someone else.

I am a child of G-d.

I am a precious person.

I am a worthwhile person.

I am beautiful inside and outside.

I love myself unconditionally.

I can allow myself ample leisure time without feeling guilty.

I deserve to be loved by myself and others.

I am loved because I deserve love.

I am a child of G-d and I deserve love, peace, prosperity and serenity.

I forgive myself for hurting myself and others.

I forgive myself for letting others hurt me.

I forgive myself for accepting sex when I want love.

I am not alone; I am one with G-d and the universe.

I am whole and good.

I am capable of changing.

The pain that I might feel by remembering can't be any worse than the pain I feel by knowing and not remembering.

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