

LEND ME YOUR HAND AND I WILL RAISE YOU:
HEALING AND THE JOURNEY TOWARD *REFUAH*
SH'LEIMAH

A GUIDE TO JEWISH HEALING FOR LAY PASTORAL
CAREGIVERS

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RATIONALE:

The Talmud tells of a well-known healer and rabbi who fell ill, and his friend arrived and raises him back to health. The Talmud asked why the sick healer was not able to ‘raise’ himself. The answer came in the form of an adage: “A prisoner does not release himself from jail.” From this we learn that all healing occurs in relationship: everyone -- even the most skilled healers among us -- will need a helping hand.

Healing is an expansive concept and one we should distinguish from that of curing. A doctor can cure a person’s body of a disease, but that same person may suffer from emotional or spiritual devastation long after the physical ailment. A doctor may diagnose a person with an incurable disease, but the diagnosis does not preclude the individual from living with a sense of health and wholeness. In this case, healing is defined expansively as encompassing *refuat ha-guf* (healing of the body), *refuat ha-nefesh* (healing of the spirit), *aveilut* (mourning), and *teshuvah* (repentance).

A perfect state of healing is an aspirational state, and at best any moment in this condition is fleeting. Thus, our Jewish communities are full of people who need a helping hand: some are sick physically, some mentally, some spiritually; some are mourning a loss, some are stressed, some are confronting inner challenges on their journey to better themselves. There are myriad reasons why someone would need healing, and they might turn to their congregational community or its clergy as appropriate institutions or individuals to ‘hold’ them through difficult times. In the Reform movement, clergy shoulder the pastoral mantle when they offer wisdom, pose questions, and provide silent presence to those who are sick, in mourning, or just in their office.

And yet, through much of the Jewish past, the community shouldered much of the pastoral responsibility, especially through tight-knit social bonds, which demanded the divine obligation to visit the sick and console the bereaved. In contrast, modern Reform communities expect their clergy to provide primary pastoral support, and the Reform seminary responds to this expectation accordingly. This curriculum is intended as a corrective, to shift the responsibility for communal care back to community members. To begin this transformation, the course is designed for those community members who feel called more than most to fulfill the obligation to serve others during these raw moments of need.

This curriculum is designed for a group of lay leaders who wish to serve their community through some sort of caring committee. Couched within the larger vision of augmenting “care” within the community, ideal participants are those who already demonstrate a level of care, warmth, and discretion. Many who seek this involvement have their heart in the “right place,” yet don’t know the fullness of Judaism’s “language” of healing with respect

to its values, insights, texts and customs for the Jewish communities within which they will act in a pastoral, healing capacity. As human beings, they too are each on a lifelong journey of healing, and will explore the notion that although imperfect themselves, all healers can heal perfectly. Each learner will work to uncover their own moments of healing and identify areas for their continued growth as a means of developing empathy for those in need.

This curriculum acknowledges that before ever sitting down to learn, each participant will have experienced or witnessed loss, sickness, and pain and the subsequent healing journey. Drawing upon and honoring this individual experience and wisdom, this course will explore a particular Jewish language surrounding the phenomena, emotions, and customs surrounding sickness, health, and healing. It will examine the traditional practices of visiting the sick and consoling the bereaved through various legal codes, which mandate the minutia of these encounters with a sensitivity toward grief, suffering, and pain belied by their technical language. The course will look toward biblical and rabbinic paradigms for the act of healing, and uncover the critical role that community and connection play in reintegrating individuals who, due to pain, embarrassment, or social stigma, became separated from that community.

The curriculum also introduces learners to paradigms in Jewish thought that provide a language to define the notions of sickness and health, appropriate methods and amounts with which to offer healing, and accompanying views of God, the place of suffering, and responses to theodicy. Learners should begin to engage these paradigms in relation to their own experience -- if not for their own growth, then so as not to be caught off-guard during their work when someone asks, "How God could let this happen?"

Critically, this curriculum is designed to apply the Judaic content knowledge in learners' own capacities as healers in their various communities. This course will not include direct instruction in how to execute specific lay-chaplaincy skills including active listening, cultivating an empathetic non-anxious presence, normalizing and affirming experiences, asking open-ended questions, and working through a guided assessment of a patient's sources of support. However, much of the Judaic content will point toward the importance and power of these basic skills and concepts in addition to illuminating potential emotions that participants may encounter. Recognizing the overlaps between lay-chaplaincy's Judaic content and skills is encouraged, even if the educator teaching lay-chaplaincy skills is different from this curriculum's educator. If possible, the lay-chaplaincy educator might participate in the learning to better complement overall learning.

Finally, this curriculum can be utilized to enrich meaning for members in an established caring community, or as part of a training for a new group of communal leaders. The final unit is designed to reflect upon their healing work done in the community, synthesize the Judaic knowledge they found relevant in that work, and explore ways to improve and

deepen the holy work they perform for their community. This work of reflection is also aligned with the deeply personal healing work associated with “Elul work” and *teshuvah*; the continuing act of self repair and returning to the self will help the participant to better serve the individuals and families as healers. Ultimately, I hope the learners will gain deeper insight into their important communal roles and to imagine the possibility to positively impact lives and connect to souls in each encounter.

CURRICULAR ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:

1. For both healers and those in process of healing, the journey toward *refuah sh’leimah* (complete healing) extends over a lifetime.
2. Healing encompasses *refuat ha-guf*, *refuat ha-nefesh*, *aveilut*, and *teshuvah*.
3. Healing occurs in relationship.
4. Although imperfect themselves, all healers can heal perfectly.

NOTE TO TEACHER

Dear Educator,

I am honored that you are thinking about utilizing this curriculum in your institution. This curriculum is designed for a group of lay leaders who wish to serve their community through some sort of caring committee. Through 26 90-minute sessions, this curriculum provides a particularly Jewish “language” to describe the universal phenomena of healing with the larger aim of augmenting a culture of caring within your community.

Many who seek this involvement have their heart in the “right place,” but ideal participants are those who already demonstrate a level of care, warmth, and discretion. This adult learner should also be open to reflecting upon their own work, and willing to extend that openness to his/her colleagues. Under the assumption that these learners will use this course to prepare them to represent their community as lay-pastoral caregivers, you may want to screen the learners for these qualities through some sort of interview or conversation protocol.

The educator should be skilled in teaching adult learners, and adept at facilitating conversation that honors the learners’ experience, knowledge, and skill sets to draw connection with the curricular content. The educator should also be skilled in text learning, if not the specific content area of Jewish healing. If possible, the educator should have experience and skill as a pastoral caregiver. If this is not the case, then this educator should find ways to integrate the individual in the organization who is responsible for pastoral care and this caring committee.

Importantly, the class space must be established as a safe place for learners to open themselves to challenge and growth. Much of this curriculum asks learners to engage with each other in exploring their own experiences and emotions surrounding pain and healing. The educator should take care to manage the group dynamics and foster an atmosphere of comfort and trust.

It is highly advised that the educator set up 1-to-1 conversations with the learners at periodic intervals throughout the curricular process. These conversations will be a perfect opportunity for learners to reflect upon their personal growth and upon the challenges they face in the course learning, or in the communal healing work.

Finally, this course is not exhaustive, and only scratches the surface in the area of Judaism and healing. Some basic skills of pastoral care are imbedded the curriculum, particularly in the ways that learning in partnership, sharing, and listening build the social-emotional skills needed for pastoral encounters. However, this curriculum mostly focuses on

content. It does not make explicit a number of skills and/or concepts: empathetic and active listening, non-anxious presence, open-ended questioning, reflecting back, reframing, self-differentiation and healthy boundaries, confidentiality, ethical issues, etc. You may want to explicate these ideas in the course of these learners' preparations to act as healers for their communities. To that end, I highly suggest you invite a mental health professional into the class to offer their insights and knowledge for the learners with respect to these skills and best practices.

I hope that the learning journey you embark upon leads your learners to grow in their capacity to heal others and in their own sense of healing and wholeness, and leads to a burgeoning sense of care and mutual responsibility within your institutional community.

B'shalom,

Eric Rosenstein

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SCOPE AND SEQUENCE:

Unit 1: Introduction to Healing

This unit will introduce the field of healing and point toward an expansive definition of what constitutes healing and who serves as healer in our communities. Participants will begin by examining the stakes for healing in their own lives before imagining their own roles in healing others. This unit will introduce key concepts and questions that will follow learners through the whole course: Are we commanded to heal? What are the relationships at play in healing? How am I healing and how do I heal? Finally, this unit will introduce some “cautionary tales” from which we learn proper practices by another’s failure or bad example.

- **Pre-assessment:** Learners will articulate their perceived strengths, weaknesses, and fears with respect to engaging in communal healing work. They will repeat this reflection in the final lesson, thereby receiving a written indicator of their growth throughout the course.

Unit 2: Bikkur Cholim (Scripted Unit)

This unit will examine biblical paradigms for visiting and rehabilitating the sick, Talmudic parables, and Jewish legal codes to uncover a Jewish framework for serving as healer for the sick. Learners will uncover the values and ethos behind effective healing through the details of Jewish law and text. Learners will also wonder about the role prayer might play in the healing process.

- **Memorable Moment:** Learners will engage in techniques of Active Listening and share a current personal struggle with a partner to simulate the listening stance required of the visitor and the vulnerability of the *choleh*.
- **Authentic Assessment:** Learners will work together to create a “Ten Commandments of *Bikkur Cholim*” which they can take with them during any *bikkur cholim* visit as reminders and rules of thumb.

Unit 3: Nichum Avelim

This unit will focus on mourners as individuals undergoing a healing journey after loss. We will study biblical, rabbinic, and legal sources to understand the process of mourning - from the mandated communal obligation to the mourner’s scripted journey from death to life. This unit will then conclude by understanding how they, and other community members can walk with and support the mourner on this healing journey.

- **Memorable Moments:** Visiting a Mortuary; Attending *Shiva*
- **Authentic Assessment:** Learners will write an article for the congregational bulletin on any of a number of prompts. Responses should be based in Jewish sources and sensibilities, account for traditional views, and reflect modern sensibilities:

Unit 4: A Personal Journey toward Refuah Sh'leimah: Teshuvah and Tikkun Atzmi

This unit reframes and broadens the concept of healing by applying it to situations where brokenness is less readily apparent as it is with *bikkur cholim* and *nichum aveilim*. The term *refuah sh'leimah* modifies *refuah* (healing) with *sh'leimah* - the term for wholeness or completeness. *Sh'leimut* (wholeness) is a state of completeness or perfection that is both unattainable for human beings, and also the holy paradigm toward which a human might strive. Beyond healing from acute tragedies of sickness and death, this unit suggests that healing constitutes any journey toward *shleimut* that requires different types of personal work: *teshuvah* and the healing of broken relationships with others and God; a process of *tikkun atzmi* (personal growth) that seeks balance in our individual blend of dispositions; and/or a process of *tikkun atzmi* that fosters a greater sense of personal authenticity and clarifies a sense of personal, God-given mission or core internal truths.

Unit 5: Spiritual And Ethical Questions in Healing

Having steeped themselves in Jewish paradigms of healing, this unit will ask learners to set down language describing their current understanding of essential concepts: the nature of sickness, death, and healing, God's place in those processes; their role in the healing process; the obligation to engage in healing work even when difficult, the limitations upon healing. To provide Jewish models of thinking, this unit will expose the learners to different questions and paradigms of thought relevant to healing: predeterminism, suffering, commandedness, radical obligation, and relational healing.

- **Assessment:** Learners will keep a journal where, after each lesson, they will record how the lesson gave voice to, or challenged their conceptions surrounding the spiritual and ethical questions in healing.

Unit 6: A Healing Self-Assessment

This single session repeats two of the activities from the initial class and asks the learners to reflect upon their journey and growth throughout the course.

- **Assessment:** Learners will return to the same reflective questions they were asked during the first class and compare their responses as a sign of each learner's growth.

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO HEALING

This unit will introduce the field of healing and point toward an expansive definition of what constitutes healing and who serves as healer in our communities. Participants will begin by examining the stakes for healing in their own lives before imagining their own roles in healing others. This unit will introduce key concepts and questions that will follow learners through the whole course: Are we commanded to heal? What are the relationships at play in healing? How am I healing and how do I heal? Finally, this unit will introduce some “cautionary tales” from which we learn proper practices by another’s failure or bad example.

UNIT SUMMARY

Unit Enduring Understandings

- For both healers and those in process of healing, the journey toward *refuah sh’leimah* (complete healing) extends over a lifetime.
- Healing encompasses *refuat ha-guf*, *refuat ha-nefesh*, *aveilut*, and *teshuvah*.
- Healing occurs in relationship.
- Although imperfect themselves, all healers can heal perfectly.

Unit Essential Questions

- What commands us to heal others?
- How am I healing and how do I heal?
- What are the relationships at play in healing?

Objectives:

- Learners should be able to recall moments they experienced healing.
- Learners should be able to describe moments they served as healers.
- Learners should be able to analyze texts and apply them to their coming experiences as healers.

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION TO EACH OTHER AND THE COURSE

Essential Questions

- What does *refuah sh'leimah* look like?
- Who am I as a healer?

Goals

- To build rapport among the learners.
- To allow learners to self-assess who they are as healers.
- To stimulate learners' thinking about what healing can look like.

Objectives

- Learners should be able to define healing and *refuah sh'leimah*.
- Learners should be able to differentiate between healing and curing.
- Learners will have the opportunity to share of their own healing journey.
- Learners will have the opportunity to evaluate their strengths, weaknesses, and fears regarding the coming learning experience.

Activities:

Introduction:

- Learners should introduce themselves by telling a story about a moment when they experienced healing in their own life.

Images of Healing:

- Instructor should print ~20 images that represent healing in some way (however directly or abstractly).
 - Note: Try to find images that reflect the curriculum's expansive definition of healing: *refuat ha-guf*, *refuat ha-nefesh*, *aveilut*, and *teshuvah*. (See attached Resource Sheet for examples)
 - Note: Save these images for the final conclusion/assessment lesson.
- Place those images around the room in a "gallery" and allow learners the opportunity to view the images. Instruct them to choose one "that encapsulates the idea of healing" and reconvene as a group. Ask each learner to share:
 - Why did you choose to learn about healing (and/or to join the caring committee)?
 - What about your picture encapsulates healing?

What is healing?

- Defining *Refuah Sh'leimah*
 - Using answers from the above activity, construct a class definition of *refuah sh'leimah*. Use the Hebrew Root *sh.l.m* (ש.ל.מ) to add the connotations of completeness, wholeness, and peace.
- **Ask: What does *refuah sh'leimah* look like after:**
 - Getting the flu
 - Breaking your arm
 - A sports star who tears their ACL
 - Broken relationship (betraying trust? infidelity?)
 - Diagnosis of curable cancer?
 - Diagnosis of incurable/terminal disease?

Self-Assessment:

This self-assessment (along with the “Images of Healing” activity) will also comprise the final assessment lesson in this curriculum. Learners who will work up toward acting as healers for the community will bring their personal strengths and weaknesses to the work, along with various fears. Articulating them at the outset will allow the instructor and any clergy to help support the learners through class time and any one-to-one conversations. By completing this assessment at the beginning and end of the course, learners will have written indicators of their growth and an understanding of the growth they can make into the future.

- **Questions to consider:**
 - What strengths do you bring to this work?
 - Where do you hope to grow in this work?
 - What fears do you have?
- **Optional:**
 - Learners can share with the group where they stand on any of these three questions.
- Note: Collect their self-assessments for redistribution in the final lesson.

Lesson 1: Resource Sheet

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LESSON 2: WHO HEALS?

Essential Questions

- How am I healing and how do I heal?
- What are the relationships at play in healing?

Goals

- To present the relational nature of healing to learners.
- To allow learners to share about times they've felt like empowered healers.

Objectives

- Learners should be able to describe moments they served as healers.
- Learners should be able to analyze texts and apply them to their coming experiences as healers.
- Learners should be able to propose a list of ways they can be present, and in relationship with others through their healing.

Activities:

Introduction:

- Ask learners to share with a partner a story about a time they helped someone heal.
- Reconvene the class and ask each person to describe what made their partner feel like they were an effective healer.

Set Induction: (See Worksheet 1)

- Show the clip from "The West Wing" when Leo tells Josh the "man in the hole" story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQJ6yqQRAQs>
- Text of the clip:

"This guy's walking down the street when he falls in a hole. The walls are so steep he can't get out. A doctor passes by and the guy shouts up, 'Hey you. Can you help me out?' The doctor writes a prescription, throws it down in the hole and moves on. Then a priest comes along and the guy shouts up, 'Father, I'm down in this hole can you help me out?' The priest writes out a prayer, throws it down in the hole and moves on. Then a friend walks by, 'Hey, Joe, it's me can you help me out?' And the friend jumps in the hole. Our guy says, 'Are you stupid? Now we're both down here.' The friend says, 'Yeah, but I've been down here before and I know the way out.'"

- Group learners in their pairs: Distribute the worksheet with clip text and discussion questions.
 - For the man in the hole, what did healing look like?
 - Why didn't the doctor's or priest's notes help the man?
 - What did he receive from the friend?
- Apply the metaphor of the man in the hole to anyone who is sick/in need of healing:
- How are most people like the doctor and priest?
 - How is the friend acting as a healer?
- Come back together and ask the learners the final two questions.

Guided Text Study: "A prisoner cannot free himself from jail." -- Berachot 5b (See Worksheet 2)

- Read Part 1:
 - Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba fell ill. Rabbi Yochanan entered to visit him and asked: "Are your sufferings dear to you?" Hiyya replied: "Neither them nor their reward." Yochanan said to him: "Lend me your hand." Hiyya gave him his hand and Yochanan raised him to health.
- Points to emphasize in the 1st half of the story:
 - Visiting and "checking in" can be a healing act. In fact, the text does not make clear that Yochanan does anything to heal besides provide his presence and support.
 - Yochanan the healer required Hiyya to give his hand in order for the healing to work (i.e. Yochanan could not have compelled Hiyya to heal).
- Read Part 2:
 - Rabbi Yochanan fell ill. Rabbi Hanina entered to visit him and asked: "Are your sufferings dear to you?" Yochanan replied: "Neither them nor their reward." Hanina said to him: "Lend me your hand." Yochanan gave him his hand and Hanina raised him to health. Why does he need a healer? Let Rabbi Yochanan raise himself to health! They say, "A prisoner cannot free himself from prison."
- Points to emphasize in the 2nd half of the story:
 - Notice that sick Yochanan in this half of the story is the same healer Yochanan in the previous half of the story.
 - **Ask: What does the aphorism at the end mean? (important)**
 - *A healer cannot heal themselves*
 - *Everyone, even the most skilled healer, needs help in healing*
 - *Healing occurs in relationship*

Relationships Web:

- **Ask: What are the relationships at play in healing?**
- Write “*choleh/avel*” in the center of a board and create a web of relationships
 - Doctors, professional care
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Clergy
 - God
 - Dead relative (*met*)
 - Synagogue family
 - Strangers
- **Ask: Whether you are the *choleh/avel* or someone else in this relationship web, what do you notice changes about these relationships after news of serious illness, or loss?**
 - *Probably noticing that the person withdraws into themselves and people withdraw from them because they don't know what to say, can't handle the emotion, etc.*
- Important to stress: Very often, it's these relationships that help sustain a person through their healing journey.

Closure

- **Ask: What are ways that you can be present to people in need of healing? How can you “jump into the hole”? What is important to keep in mind?**
- Note: Record this list: next week, the learners will review this list and use it to look at some success stories and cautionary tales about healing from our tradition.

Lesson 2 Worksheet 1

The Parable of the “Man in the Hole”

“The West Wing,” Season 2, Episode 10 (“Noel”)

Leo McGarry, a recovering alcoholic waits for his deputy, Josh Lyman, after hours. Josh, who is suffering from PTSD after a shooting, has been lashing out at work and hurting himself. He encounters Leo after leaving an intense therapy session.

Leo: "This guy's walking down the street when he falls in a hole. The walls are so steep he can't get out. A doctor passes by and the guy shouts up, 'Hey you. Can you help me out?' The doctor writes a prescription, throws it down in the hole and moves on. Then a priest comes along and the guy shouts up, 'Father, I'm down in this hole can you help me out?' The priest writes out a prayer, throws it down in the hole and moves on. Then a friend walks by, 'Hey, Joe, it's me can you help me out?' And the friend jumps in the hole. Our guy says, 'Are you stupid? Now we're both down here.' The friend says, 'Yeah, but I've been down here before and I know the way out.'"

Questions for Discussion:

1. For the man in the hole, what did healing look like?
2. Why didn't the doctor or priest notes help the man?
3. What did he receive from the friend?

Apply the metaphor of the man in the hole to anyone who is sick/in need of healing:

4. How are most people like the doctor and priest?
5. How is the friend acting as a healer?

Lesson 2 Worksheet 2

“Lend Me Your Hand”

--Adapted from Berakhot 5b

Part 1:

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba fell ill. Rabbi Yochanan entered to visit him and asked: “Are your sufferings dear to you?” Hiyya replied: “Neither them nor their reward.” Yochanan said to him: “Lend me your hand.” Hiyya gave him his hand and Yochanan raised him to health.

Part 2:

Rabbi Yochanan fell ill. Rabbi Hanina entered to visit him and asked: “Are your sufferings dear to you?” Yochanan replied: “Neither them nor their reward.” Hanina said to him: “Lend me your hand.” Yochanan gave him his hand and Hanina raised him to health. Why does he need a healer? Let Rabbi Yochanan raise himself to health! They say, “A prisoner cannot free himself from prison.”

LESSON 3: HEALING'S PITFALLS AND POWER

Essential Questions

- What commands us to heal others?
- How am I healing and how do I heal?
- How are relationships at play in healing?

Goals

- To present healing as a *mitzvah*, and an action that imitates God.
- To ask learners to consider success and failure in healing.

Objectives

- Learners should be able to recall a list of ways they can be present, and in relationship with others through their healing.
- Learners should be able to analyze texts and apply them to their coming experiences as healers.
- Learners should be able to modify stories in text that portray suboptimal examples of healing others.

Activities

Set Induction: Recalling the list from last lesson's closure

- **Ask: What are ways that you can be present to people in need of healing? What is important to keep in mind?**
- **Note:** Keep the list handy, on the board or with each learner.

God's Response to the Needy:

- Use Sotah 14a as a basis to make the case that acts of healing (especially the acts of visiting the sick and consoling the mourners) are important *mitzvot* because they are concrete ways that humans can imitate or emulate God.

Job and his Friends

- Use the story of Job and his friends as an example of what not to do as healers or comforters.
- Chapters 1 and 2 set the scene for Job's righteousness and the depth of his suffering.
- The description at the end of Chapter 2 of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are often used as descriptions of proper practice to greet someone in mourning.

- Use Eliphaz's subsequent questions to illuminate what not to do in relation to a mourner:
 - Victim blaming: "Think now, what innocent man ever perished? Where have the upright been destroyed? As I have seen, those who plow evil and sow mischief reap them. They perish by a blast from God, Are gone at the breath of His nostrils. The lion may roar, the cub may howl, but the teeth of the king of beasts are broken." (Job 4: 7-10)

The Power of Listening:

- Use another story from Berachot 5a to describe the healing power of listening, and not assuming things about the other:
 - "Rabbi Elazar fell ill. Rabbi Yochanan entered to visit him, and saw that he was lying in a dark room. Yochanan exposed his arm and light radiated from it. He saw that Rabbi Elazar was crying and said to him: "Why are you crying? Is it because you did not study much Torah? We learned that the one who brings much and little are the same, as long as they direct their hearts toward Heaven! Is it because of your lack of sustenance? Not everyone merits the two tables of Torah and food! Is it because of your children who have died? This is the bone of my tenth son to have died!" Rabbi Elazar said to Rabbi Yochanan: "I'm crying over this beauty of yours that will decay into dust!" Yochanan said to Elazar: "Over this, of course you weep!" Both cried.
- For much of the conversation, Yochanan assumed the reason why Elazar was crying-- because he worried that he had reached the end of his life and not learned enough Torah, or because he hadn't earned enough to support his family, or because he had outlived too many children-- and tried to give his own trite, tone-deaf explanations why Elazar shouldn't be sad for these reasons (including that Yochanan had lost even more children than Elazar!).
- Only after listening to Elazar and his (possibly homoerotic) comment about beauty, do the two men reach a healing moment of catharsis.

Closure:

- **Ask: What from what we've learned today can you add to our list of ways we can be present to others in need of healing?**

Lesson 3 Worksheet 1

Walking in the Ways of God:

Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, says: What is the meaning of: "After the Lord your God shall you walk, and Him shall you fear, and His commandments shall you keep, and unto His voice shall you hearken, and Him shall you serve, and unto Him shall you cleave" (Deuteronomy 10:12)? ...

The meaning is that one should follow the attributes of the Holy One, Blessed be He: Just as He clothes the naked, as it is written: "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21), so too, should you clothe the naked.

Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, visits the sick, as it is written with regard to God's appearing to Abraham following his circumcision: "*And the Lord appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre*" (Genesis 18:1), so too, should you visit the sick.

Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, consoles mourners, as it is written: "*And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son*" (Genesis 25:11), so too, should you console mourners.

Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, buried the dead, as it is written: "*And he was buried in the valley in the land of Moab*" (Deuteronomy 34:6), so too, should you bury the dead.

--adapted from Babylonian Talmud: Sotah 14

UNIT 2: *BIKKUR CHOLIM* (SCRIPTED UNIT)

This unit will examine biblical paradigms for visiting and rehabilitating the sick, Talmudic parables, and Jewish legal codes to uncover a Jewish framework for serving as healer for the sick. Learners will uncover the values and ethos behind effective healing through the details of Jewish law and text. Learners will also wonder about the role prayer might play in the healing process.

Assessment: Ten Commandments of Bikkur Cholim-- communal exercise to be placed into the folders learners will use in hospital/home

UNIT SUMMARY

Unit Enduring Understandings

- For both healers and those in process of healing, the journey toward *refuah sh'leimah* (complete healing) extends over a lifetime.
- Healing occurs in relationship.
- The act of *bikkur cholim* addresses a primary fear of the sick: loneliness
- Our fulfillment of the two parts of the *bikkur cholim* mitzvah --a visit and prayer-- must account for the *choleh's* needs and must not impede healing.

Unit Essential Questions

- What is expected of me when I visit the sick?
- How is “visiting” an act of healing?

Objectives

- Learners will be able to describe the major responsibilities that community members discharge in *bikkur cholim*.
- Learners will be able to analyze biblical, rabbinic, and legal texts.
- Learners will have the opportunity to practice the important skills of active listening with a partner.
- Learners will create a list of values and rules of thumb that will guide their future *bikkur cholim* visits.

LESSON 1: WHAT IS THE MITZVAH OF *BIKKUR CHOLIM*?

Materials Needed:

- Blackboard/Whiteboard and chalk/markers
- Text Sheets
- Pens

Timeline:

0:00 - 0:15	Set Induction
0:15 - 0:20	Defining Terms
0:20 - 0:30	Text Study Text 1
0:30 - 0:40	Text Study Text 2
0:40 - 1:10	Text Study Text 3
1:10 - 1:15	Looking Forward
1:15 - 1:20	Closure

Enduring Understandings:

- For both healers and those in process of healing, the journey toward *refuah sh'leimah* (complete healing) extends over a lifetime.
- Healing occurs in relationship.
- Although imperfect themselves, all healers can heal perfectly.
- Our fulfillment of the two parts of the *bikkur cholim* mitzvah --a visit and prayer-- must account for the *choleh's* needs and not impede healing.

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to “visit” or “inquire after” the sick?
- What do I do? What is my role? Does what I do help?
- What is at stake when we practice *bikkur cholim*?
- Where does prayer fit?

Objectives:

- Learners should be able to identify the two major components to the mitzvah of *bikkur cholim*.
- Learners should be able to describe the import Jewish tradition places upon *bikkur cholim*.

- Learners should be able to imagine how they will implement a *bikkur cholim* practice.

Activities

Set Induction: (Think, Pair, Share) (15 min.)

- **Say:** We're beginning a new unit this session, where we'll be focusing on the *mitzvah* of visiting the sick - or *bikkur cholim*. Before we dive in, I'd like you to think about a time you experienced someone visiting you when you were sick. What did they do during their visit? How did you feel as a result?
 - Allow some wait time.
 - NOTE: "sick" could be defined loosely for the purposes of this discussion, and need not be limited to physical sickness.
- **Say:** Turn to a partner and share with each other what you were thinking about. Then we'll come back together and you'll share your partner's experience with us.
 - Allow some wait time.
- **Say:** Let's come back together. **Ask:** What was powerful about your partner's experience?

Defining Terms: (5 min.)

- **Say:** Before we go further, I think it's important to define the few Hebrew terms we'll be using throughout.
 - NOTE: Write each term in Hebrew, transliteration, and English on a board/projector; consider leaving them up for the duration of the lesson.
 - ***Choleh*** (חולה) is the general term we use for a sick person, and it will come up a lot in our discussions.
 - The plural of *choleh* is *cholim* (חולים).
 - Write on the board: *bikkur cholim* / ביקור חולים / _____ the sick
 - **Say:** *Bikkur cholim* is the term for the *mitzvah* we'll be looking at together. We know that *cholim* is a general term for sick people, but the word *bikkur* is more difficult to translate.
 - **Ask:** Based on what we've already talked about in pairs, what words would you use to translate *bikkur*? We don't have to be exact, rather we're looking for a range of meanings.
 - *Visiting*
 - *Taking care of/caring for*
 - *Checking up on*
 - *Asking about*

- **Say:** In fact, *bikkur* has a range of meanings, including to visit, investigate, examine, inquire, and attend to. So instead of trying to say in English: “visiting the sick”, “investigating the sick”, “inquiring after the sick”, “attending to the sick” and so on, we’ll just say *bikkur cholim*, and you’ll know it has this range of meanings.

Text Study: (50 min.)

- **Say:** Now that we’ve defined our terms, me might ask: Where does this mitzvah come from? For that, let’s turn to our text sheet and look at the first text:
- Pass out text sheet.
- **Text 1:** (10min.)

בראשית י"ז / י"ח

(כו) בַּעֲצֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה נִמּוֹל אֶבְרָהָם וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּנוֹ: (כז) וְכָל-אֲנָשֵׁי בֵּיתוֹ יִלְדוּ בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה וּמִקְנֵת-בֵּסֶרֶף מֵאֵת בְּוֶנְכָר נִמּוּלוּ אֹתוֹ: (פ)

(א) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאַלְנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב בְּפֶתַח-הָאֵהָל כְּהֵם הַיּוֹם: (ב) וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּרֶץ לִקְרֹאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה:

Genesis 17:26-18:2

(17:26) Thus Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on that very day (27) and all his household, his homeborn slaves and those that had been bought from outsiders, were circumcised with him.

(18:1) The LORD appeared to him [Abraham] by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. (2) Looking up, he saw three men standing near him.[§] As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground...

[§] The proximity of "The Lord appeared" and "three men" leads the tradition to consider these travelers as angels.

רש"י על בראשית י"ח:א'

(א) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו לְבַקֵּר אֶת הַחֹלָה אָמַר רַבִּי חָמָא בַּר חֲנִינָא, יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי לְמִילְתּוֹ הָיָה, וּבָא הַקֹּב"ה וַיִּשְׂאֵל בְּשִׁלּוּמוֹ

Rashi on Genesis 18:1

(1) **The LORD appeared to him** in order to visit the sick. Rabbi Hama the son of Hanina said: it was the third day after his circumcision and the Holy One, blessed be He, came and enquired after his welfare.

- Read the Genesis text and the footnote aloud.
- **Say:** Our tradition holds this text up to demonstrate the importance of welcoming the stranger and giving them a meal. Ask: How might the rabbis use this text to show the first instance of *bikkur cholim*?
 - *The juxtaposition of circumcision at the end of Chapter 17 with God/angels visiting Abraham shows God visiting Abraham.*

- NOTE: No matter whether they answer successfully or not, move on to the Rashi
- Say: Let's take a look at what Rashi has to say about these verses. Remember, Rashi is the 12th century French rabbi who is one of the most important commentators on the Bible.
 - Read Rashi comment.
 - Say: Rashi clarifies for us that God appears to Abraham because God is doing *bikkur cholim*. He reports a tradition from Rabbi Hama the son of Hanina who wondered why God appeared to Abraham, and used the context from a few verses before.
Ask: What is Rabbi Hama's answer?
 - Abraham had just been circumcised in the last chapter, and he must have still been in pain, so God went to check up on Abraham.
- Ask: If God does *bikkur cholim*, what might that imply about our responsibility to do the same?
 - If God does it, it must be important.
 - We should emulate God.
- Text 2 (10 min.)
 - Say: We know our rabbis gave *bikkur cholim* importance by attributing it to God. Let's see what else they have to say about the mitzvah.
 - Say: Read this text with a partner and answer the questions below.

נדרים ל"ט ב:

תניא ביקור חולים אין לה שיעור מאי אין לה שיעור
סבר רב יוסף למימר אין שיעור למתן שכרה...
אמר אביי אפילו גדול אצל קטן
רבא אמר אפילו מאה פעמים ביום
אמר רבי אחא בר חנינא כל המבקר חולה נוטל אחד משישים בצערו

Nedarim 39b:

It was taught: *bikkur cholim* [is a mitzvah that] has no measure. What does this mean?

-Rav Yosef was known to say: It has no limit for gaining [heavenly] merit...

-Abaye said: even [a person of] great [stature can visit] the home of [a person of] low [stature].

-Rava said: [one can complete the mitzvah] 100 times in a day.

-R. Aḥa bar Ḥanina said: all who visit the sick take away 1/60 of their pain.

- Ask: How does each rabbi respond to the statement that *bikkur cholim* cannot be measured (quantified or qualified)?
 - Rav Yosef: the merit one receives from cannot be limited in quantity.

- *Abaye*: there are no qualifications placed upon the mitzvah due to class or social standing.
- *Rava*: One can perform it innumerable.
- *R. Aḥa bar Ḥanina*: the mitzvah can alleviate the tiniest amount of someone's pain (1/60 is the rabbis' way of describing "a tiny piece").
- Ask: Based on your own experience, what is so important about this mitzvah?

• **Text 3** (30 min.)

- **Say: Just when you thought the rabbis of the Talmud were setting the stakes for *bikkur cholim*, they set it higher by telling the next story. As we read it, we're also going to keep track of what we think the text is telling us about what happens during a *bikkur cholim* visit. You can write your thoughts down in the table below the text. We'll work our way through the texts slowly. I encourage you not to read ahead!**

נדרים מ' א:

- A. כך היה מעשה בתלמיד אחד מתלמידי ר' עקיבא שחלה לא נכנסו חכמים לבקרו ונכנס ר' עקיבא לבקרו ובשביל שכיבדו וריבצו לפניו חיה א"ל רבי החייתני
- B. יצא ר' עקיבא ודרש כל מי שאין מבקר חולים כאילו שופך דמים
- C. כי אתא רב דימי אמר כל המבקר את החולה גורם לו שיחיה וכל שאינו מבקר את החולה גורם לו שימות
- D. מאי גרמא
1. אילימא כל המבקר את החולה מבקש עליו רחמים שיחיה וכל שאין מבקר את החולה מבקש עליו רחמים שימות ש"ד
2. אלא כל שאין מבקר חולה אין מבקש עליו רחמים לא שיחיה ולא שימות

Nedarim 40a

- A. There is a story about one of Rabbi Akiva's students who became sick. The sages did not come to visit him. Rabbi Akiva came in to visit him, and because he cleaned and sprinkled water [to keep the dust down] before him, the student lived. He told him, "Rabbi, you brought me back to life!"
- B. Rabbi Akiva left and taught, "He who does not visit the sick, it is as though he murders (lit.: spills blood)."
- C. Rav Dimi said about this: "He who visits the sick causes him to live, and he who does not visit the sick causes him to die."
- D. [The Talmud asks] How does that work?
1. Is it that he who visits the sick prays for mercy that they should live, and he who doesn't visit the sick prays for mercy that they should die? Don't think that!
 2. The reason is: he who does not visit the sick does not pray for mercy for them, neither that they should live, nor that they should die.

- Read A section together.

- **Ask: The text holds up Rabbi Akiva for visiting this individual when other sages don't. What reasons can you think of for this?**
 - *Status reasons: sages do not visit students*
 - *He was Akiva's student, so perhaps the sages thought the responsibility fell on him to visit.*
- **Ask: So if we're taking Akiva as an example for our own *bikkur cholim*, what actions does he take during his visit that lead to the student's healing?**
 - *He does physical chores around the house.*
 - NOTE: This should go into the graphic organizer at the bottom of the text sheet.
- **Ask: What does it suggest for us that the great Akiva is caring for the mundane physical needs of his student?**
 - *Bikkur cholim is an action independent of class. All people need the help, and you should provide that help regardless of any disparities of rank or social status.*
- Read B section together.
 - **Ask: Rabbi Akiva was clearly moved by this encounter to make this bold statement. What is the logic by which he can call anyone who does not visit the sick a would-be murderer?**
 - *Akiva visited and caused the man to live (be healed)*
 - *No one else was visiting, and had Akiva not visited, the man would have died alone.*
 - *Thus Akiva infers he could have been a murderer.*
 - **Ask: What larger point is Akiva trying to make about the power of *bikkur cholim*.**
 - *Can save a life.*
 - *It is a collective responsibility.*
 - *Although it is an action one can easily say "no" to, the stakes are high when everyone makes that choice.*
- Read C section together.
 - **Ask: How does Rav Dimi's statement differ from that of Akiva?**
 - *It places the stakes for visiting the sick in the positive: that one can save a life and not just be a would-be murderer.*
 - *He removes the inflammatory "murder" language for the simpler, "causes him to die."*
- Teacher Read D section: **Say: In response to Rav Dimi's statement, the editorial voice of the Talmud asks itself to explain how Rav Dimi's statement works-- by what means would someone who visits the sick**

cause health and life, and someone who doesn't visit the sick cause their death? Let's read D1.

- Read D1 section.
 - **Ask:** In exclaiming “Don’t think that!” the Talmud is telling us to dismiss its first explanation out of hand. Why should we disregard this first theory?
 - *Although we might pray to God for life regarding those we visit, it is impossible for us to pray to God that every person we don’t visit should die.*
- Read D2 section.
 - **Ask:** The Talmud accepts this theory. How does it differ from the first?
 - *It’s not that those who don’t visit pray for another’s death, but that they don’t pray on the choleh’s behalf at all / one way or another.*
 - **Ask:** Where do the two theories agree? What do both theories assume that someone who visits the sick will do?
 - *Someone who visits the sick should pray for them to live (or for their healing).*
 - NOTE: This should go into the graphic organizer at the bottom of the text sheet.
- **Ask:** Let’s review this complicated little text: What are two major things that someone who visits the sick should do?
 - *Care for physical needs*
 - *Prayer*
- **Reflection Question-- Ask:** The rabbis seem to think that the stakes for *bikkur cholim* are life and death. What do you think connects care for physical needs and prayer in this critical mitzvah? Why are both essential?

Looking Ahead (5 min.)

- **Say:** We will devote the next several sessions to the mitzvah of *bikkur cholim*. Next week we’ll look at how the Book of Leviticus addresses sickness and healing, before moving onto learning how our tradition wants us to enact *bikkur cholim*.
- **Say:** At the end of this unit, we will be creating a “Ten Commandments of *Bikkur Cholim*” that you’ll be able to put inside your caring committee folder. This way, you’ll have important rules of thumb available to you before entering the space of someone sick and in need.

Closure (10 min.)

- **Say: We'll start brainstorming for that "Ten Commandments" project now. Based on our conversation today and what you know already, write down three things you think are important to remember about *bikkur cholim*. Take a few moments, and we'll go around the room and share our answers. We'll make sure to save them and bring them back for the project.**
- Give wait time
- Whip around the room to each participant. You can go around multiple times until everyone has shared all their ideas.
- Note to Teacher: Make sure to save their answers for use in the unit assessment.

Lesson 1, Text 1:

בראשית י"ז / י"ח

(כז) וְכָל־אֲנָשֵׁי בֵּיתוֹ יָלִיד בְּיָמָיו וּמִקְנֵת־בְּסָף מֵאֵת בְּוֶגֶר נִמְלֹוּ אִתּוֹ: (פ)
(א) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאַלְגֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב בְּפֶתַח־הָאֵהָל בְּחֹם הַיּוֹם: (ב) וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא
וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה:

Genesis 17:26-18:2

(17:26) Thus Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on that very day (27) and all his household, his homeborn slaves and those that had been bought from outsiders, were circumcised with him.

(18:1) The LORD appeared to him [Abraham] by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. (2) Looking up, he saw three men standing near him.[§] As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground...

[§] The proximity of "The Lord appeared" and "three men" leads the tradition to consider these travelers as angels.

רש"י על בראשית י"ח:א'

(א) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו לְבַקֵּר אֶת הַחוּלָה אָמַר רַבִּי חָמָא בְּרַחֲמֵינָא, יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי לְמִילְתּוֹ הָיָה, וּבֵא הַקֹּדֶם"ה וַיִּשְׁאַל בְּשָׁלוֹמוֹ

Rashi on Genesis 18:1

(1) **The LORD appeared to him** in order to visit the sick. Rabbi Hama the son of Hanina said: it was the third day after his circumcision and the Holy One, blessed be He, came and enquired after his welfare.

Lesson 1, Text 2

נדרים ל"ט ב:

-תנא ביקור חולים אין לה שיעור מאי אין לה שיעור
-סבר רב יוסף למימר אין שיעור למתן שכרה...
-אמר אביי אפילו גדול אצל קטן
-רבא אמר אפילו מאה פעמים ביום
-אמר רבי אחא בר חנינא כל המבקר חולה נוטל אחד משישים בצערו

Nedarim 39b:

It was taught: *bikkur cholim* [is a mitzvah that] has no measure. What does this mean?

-Rav Yosef was known to say: It has no limit for gaining [heavenly] merit...

-Abaye said: even [a person of] great [stature can visit] the home of [a person of] low [stature].

-Rava said: [one can complete the mitzvah] 100 times in a day.

-R. Aḥa bar Ḥanina said: all who visit the sick take away 1/60 of their pain.

- **How does each rabbi respond to the statement that *bikkur cholim* cannot be measured (quantified or qualified)?**
 - Rav Yosef:
 - Abaye:
 - Rava:
 - R. Aḥa bar Ḥanina:
- **Ask: Based on your own experience, what is so important about this mitzvah?**

Lesson 1, Text 3

נדרים מ' א:

- A. כך היה מעשה בתלמיד אחד מתלמידי ר' עקיבא שחלה לא נכנסו חכמים לבקרו ונכנס ר' עקיבא לבקרו ובשביל שכיבדו וריבצו לפניו חיה א"ל רבי החייתני
- B. יצא ר' עקיבא ודרש כל מי שאין מבקר חולים כאילו שופך דמים
- C. כי אתא רב דימי אמר כל המבקר את החולה גורם לו שיחיה וכל שאינו מבקר את החולה גורם לו שימות
- D. מאי גרמא
1. אילימא כל המבקר את החולה מבקש עליו רחמים שיחיה וכל שאין מבקר את החולה מבקש עליו רחמים שימות שימות ס"ד
2. אלא כל שאין מבקר חולה אין מבקש עליו רחמים לא שיחיה ולא שימות

Nedarim 40a

- A. There is a story about one of Rabbi Akiva's students who became sick. The sages did not come to visit him. Rabbi Akiva came in to visit him, and because he cleaned and sprinkled water [to keep the dust down] before him, the student lived. He told him, "Rabbi, you brought me back to life!"
- B. Rabbi Akiva left and taught, "He who does not visit the sick, it is as though he murders (lit.: spills blood)."
- C. Rav Dimi said about this: "He who visits the sick causes him to live, and he who does not visit the sick causes him to die."
- D. [The Talmud asks] How does that work?
1. Is it that he who visits the sick prays for mercy that they should live, and he who doesn't visit the sick prays for mercy that they should die? Don't think that!
 2. The reason is: he who does not visit the sick does not pray for mercy for them, neither that they should live, nor that they should die.

Notes

What does the text expect me to do during a <i>bikkur cholim</i> visit?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.
Why is <i>bikkur cholim</i> such an important mitzvah?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

LESSON 2: THE METZORAH - SOCIAL RAMIFICATIONS OF ILLNESS

Materials Needed:

- Text study sheets, notes sheet and pens

Timeline:

0:00 - 0:05:	Set Induction
0:05 - 0:10:	Guided Text Study: Introduction
0:10 - 0:40:	Guided Text Study: Text 1
0:40 - 0:55:	Guided Text Study: Text 2
0:55 - 1:20:	Guided Text Study: Text 3
1:20 - 1:30:	Assessment/Closure

Enduring Understanding:

- The act of *bikkur cholim* addresses a primary fear of the sick: loneliness

Essential Questions:

- How do sickness and a transition to health affect a person socially? In what ways might the sick or community members react to this process?
- What are ways I help a person overcome stigma during or after illness?
- What does the healer risk in *bikkur cholim*?

Objectives:

- Learners should be able to describe their past emotional reactions to illness-- both as sick and as observers.
- Learners should be able to compare the stigma, ostracism, and rehabilitation of the biblical *metzora* with the needs and concerns of the sick in our communities.
- Learners should be able to contrast the ancient role of priest with the contemporary role of community care-giver.

Performance Task

Summative writing assignment: brainstorm to the following prompt, then share with other learners:

- When we compare our work to the work the priests did in ancient Israel, what concerns do you imagine will arise for our sick congregants, and what are ways to think about addressing those needs?

Activities

Set Induction

- **Ask: Think back to any recent outbreak of disease-- it can be the latest flu, or something more serious like Ebola or HIV/AIDS. Describe your or others reactions to person(s) who were sick?**
- As a follow up, you may **Ask: How might the sick person feel during their illness?**

Guided Text Study

Introduction:

- **Say: We're going to look to the Book of Leviticus for an example of how the Torah understands sickness and, specifically someone with contagious ritual impurity (leprosy). We'll understand the leper as a sick person in our community, and see ourselves as analogous to priests.**
- Context: The Israelite religious practice existed around sacrifices to God. An Israelite could only bring a sacrifice to the Temple when they were in a state of complete ritual purity. Priests also had to maintain this ritual purity when they served the Temple and ate sanctified food. The "leper" - meaning the individual with an unknown skin affliction - had an immense ability to convey a virulent ritual impurity upon people and objects, through physical touch or mere proximity. Second only to a dead body as a source of impurity, the leper posed a danger to anyone who wanted to maintain ritual purity and serve or sacrifice in the Temple, as bringing impurity into the holiest spaces was a grave sin. Thus the leper was exiled outside the community in order to protect it.
- **Say: Let's look to the priests and see what we can learn from them for our practice of *bikkur cholim*.**

Text 1:

- **Instructions: Gather with a partner, read the following texts, and answer the Guiding Questions. You'll use your answers to fill out a notes sheet that I'll pass out separately.**
- Pass out Text Sheets and Notes sheets.

Lev. 13:1-8

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: (2) When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling, a rash, or a discoloration, and it develops into a scaly affection on the skin of his body, it shall be reported to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons, the

priests. (3) The priest shall examine the affection on the skin of his body: if hair in the affected patch has turned white and the affection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous affection; when the priest sees it, he shall pronounce him unclean. (4) But if it is a white discoloration on the skin of his body which does not appear to be deeper than the skin and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall isolate the affected person for seven days. (5) On the seventh day the priest shall examine him, and if the affection has remained unchanged in color and the disease has not spread on the skin, the priest shall isolate him for another seven days. (6) On the seventh day the priest shall examine him again: if the affection has faded and has not spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean. It is a rash; he shall wash his clothes, and he shall be clean. (7) But if the rash should spread on the skin after he has presented himself to the priest and been pronounced clean, he shall present himself again to the priest. (8) And if the priest sees that the rash has spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is leprosy.

Guiding Questions

- In assessing leprosy, what modern-day role does the priest play?
 - *Doctor*
- What danger does leprosy pose to the people, the priest, and their continued access to the sacrificial system?
 - *If lepers spread the contagion of ritual impurity, then the ritual impurity might spread to the Temple if left unchecked.*

Notes

(Blanks filled with italicized possible answers)

Priest's responsibility in the face of leprosy

Responsibility toward priestly position	The priest had to maintain ritual purity to do his job for God/the people
Responsibility toward people	<i>Ensure that the leper is isolated from the people so as not to transmit impurity "contagion", lest the Temple become corrupted.</i> <i>Demonstrate to the community that the cleansed leper is no longer a "danger" for them</i>
Responsibility toward leper	<i>Served as the doctor for the disease. Required to check on their progress.</i> <i>They are responsible for the process of ritual purification after the leprosy has gone away-- they are the ones to welcome back the person as full members into the community.</i>

- **Review the answers to the notes sheet that each group completed.**
- **Ask: Where do the priest's responsibilities conflict? Does he have risk?**
 - *Priest must check in on the leper to assess the progression of their disease, but they risk ritual impurity every time they leave their home base within the holy temple and check on those who had been isolated from their community.*
 - *Risks temporary impurity, and a brief time when he cannot enter the Temple district until he returns to a state of ritual purity.*
- **Ask: Using the analogy of ourselves as priests, what physical, spiritual, and emotional risks do we take when visiting the sick?**
 - *Sometimes we risk getting sick from the other person.*
 - *It can be difficult to see another person suffering and in pain.*
 - *In visiting, we can become the receptacle for another person's emotions, and it is important to not take those emotions as our own.*
 - *We bear witness to mortality-- a scary prospect.*

Text 2:

- **Say: So now, let's turn to the other side: What does isolation mean for the leper? As you think of things to add to your Notes sheet, please feel free.**
- Read aloud and answer guiding questions together:

Lev. 13:45-46

(45) As for the person with a leprous affection, his clothes shall be torn, his head shall be left uncovered, and he shall cover over his upper lip; and he shall call out, "Unclean! Unclean!" (46) He shall be unclean as long as the disease is on him. Being unclean, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Guiding Questions

- What are the ways the leper is isolated from the community?
 - *living outside camp, calling out unclean, physical differentiation*
- What toll might this take on the leper?
 - *anger, depression, feeling of otherness, isolation*
- What role does isolation play for our sick congregants?
 - *Isolation can compound the pain of illness*

Text 3:

- **Say: Let's turn our attention to how the leper who is free of the disease returns from this place of isolation and loneliness outside the camp, and to a place of ritual purity. Where before we saw the priest as doctors diagnosing disease, now we'll see them as a different kind of healer:**
- Work through the text slowly as a group

Lev. 14:1-12, 14-20

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (2) This shall be the ritual for a leper at the time that he is to be cleansed.

[Step 1:]

When it has been reported to the priest, (3) the priest shall go outside the camp. If the priest sees that the leper has been healed of his scaly affection, (4) the priest shall order two live clean birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop to be brought for him who is to be cleansed. (5) The priest shall order one of the birds slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel; (6) and he shall take the live bird, along with the cedar wood, the crimson stuff, and the hyssop, and dip them together with the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. (7) He shall then sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the eruption and cleanse him; and he shall set the live bird free in the open country. (8) The one to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe in water; then he shall be clean.

[Step 2:]

After that he may enter the camp, but he must remain outside his tent seven days. (9) On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair—of head, beard, and eyebrows. When he has shaved off all his hair, he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; then he shall be clean.

[Step 3a:]

(10) On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish, three-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a meal offering, and one log of oil. (11) These shall be presented before the LORD, with the man to be cleansed, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, by the priest who performs the cleansing. (12) The priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it with the log of oil as a guilt offering, and he shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD....

[Step 3b:]

(14) The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put it on the ridge of the right ear of him who is being cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. (15) The priest shall then take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. (16) And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in the palm of his left hand and sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. (17) Some of the oil left in his palm shall be put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one being cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot—over the blood of the guilt offering. (18) The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one being cleansed. Thus the priest shall make expiation for him before the LORD.

[Step 3c:]

(19) The priest shall then offer the sin offering and make expiation for the one being

cleansed of his uncleanness. Last, the burnt offering shall be slaughtered, (20) and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meal offering on the altar, and the priest shall make expiation for him. Then he shall be clean.

Guiding Questions

- Look at the locations for each of the steps in the leper's purification process. What pattern do you notice about how the leper re-enters the community from steps 1-3(a-c)?
- For step 3b-- the ceremony placing blood, then oil upon the ridge of the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe-- what symbolic significance do blood and oil have?
- Interestingly, placing blood on the right ear, right thumb, and right big toe is the exact same action that the text used to induct the priests into service. (Leviticus 8:22-24) This ceremony marked the priests for special access to the holy, and now we see the exact same action used to help rehabilitate the most isolated member of society.
What statement might the Torah be making by using the same ritual action in two wildly different situations?

- **Ask: (based on the Guiding Questions)**
 - **Look at the locations for each of the steps in the leper's purification process. What pattern do you notice about how the leper re-enters the community from steps 1-3(a-c)?**
 - *Noticing a progression of slowly bringing the leper from outside the camp, to in the camp but not in the home, and finally to the Temple for the cleansing/purifying ritual. Moving from the most isolated to the least isolated*
 - *Being singled out for this grand ceremony might also be isolating in its own right, and the person may not want the attention*
 - *Process of welcoming the sick back into our community.*
 - **For step 3b-- the ceremony placing blood, then oil upon the ridge of the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe-- what symbolic significance do blood and oil have?**
 - *Blood symbolizes life (Leviticus 17:11), kashrut laws forbid Jews to eat blood.*
 - *Oil symbolizes things that have been made holy: used in anointing kings, ordaining High Priests, menorah*
 - NOTE: The teacher can provide this information if the learners do not have enough background in Jewish symbols to answer the question.
- **Interestingly, placing blood on the right ear, right thumb, and right big toe is the exact same action that the text used to induct the priests into service.**

(Leviticus 8:22-24) This ceremony marked the priests for special access to the holy, and now we see the exact same action used to help rehabilitate the most isolated member of society.

What social statements might the Torah be making by using the same ritual action in two wildly different situations?

- *The leper, when coming back as a person free from illness might come back into the community with some measure of stigma:*
 - *Sociologically, this power ritual typically reserved for priests signals to the community that this individual is completely worthy to re-enter the community.*
 - *Personally, the cleansed individual might feel a huge power from God or within themselves that signals the freedom from isolation and a return to normal patterns of life.*

Wrap-up

- **Say:**
 - **We've seen the contagious leper exiled from their families and their community to a place outside the camp-- with only the company of other lepers. The priest bridges the gap between the leper and community by temporarily losing their own pure status to check on them. But mostly, these lepers are lonely and isolated. One is finally cured of their disease and must undergo a communally visible, intense ritual before returning to normal life.**
- **Ask:**
 - **Imagine the modern scenario: a cancer survivor returns to services or a community event after an isolating, difficult treatment that weakened their body and spirit. What might concern them as they walk through the doors?**
 - **What can we do to ease their transition back into the community?**

Closure/Assessment:

Write, then share:

- **When we compare our work to the work the priests did in ancient Israel, what concerns do you imagine will arise for our sick congregants, and what are ways to think about addressing those needs?**

Lesson 2 Text Study

Text 1: Lev. 13:1-8

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: (2) When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling, a rash, or a discoloration, and it develops into a scaly affection on the skin of his body, it shall be reported to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons, the priests. (3) The priest shall examine the affection on the skin of his body: if hair in the affected patch has turned white and the affection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous affection; when the priest sees it, he shall pronounce him unclean. (4) But if it is a white discoloration on the skin of his body which does not appear to be deeper than the skin and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall isolate the affected person for seven days. (5) On the seventh day the priest shall examine him, and if the affection has remained unchanged in color and the disease has not spread on the skin, the priest shall isolate him for another seven days. (6) On the seventh day the priest shall examine him again: if the affection has faded and has not spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean. It is a rash; he shall wash his clothes, and he shall be clean. (7) But if the rash should spread on the skin after he has presented himself to the priest and been pronounced clean, he shall present himself again to the priest. (8) And if the priest sees that the rash has spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is leprosy.

Guiding Questions

- In assessing leprosy, what modern-day role does the priest play?
 - What danger does leprosy pose to the people, the priest, and their continued access to the sacrificial system?
-

Text 2: Lev. 13:45-46

(45) As for the person with a leprous affection, his clothes shall be torn, his head shall be left uncovered, and he shall cover over his upper lip; and he shall call out, "Unclean! Unclean!" (46) He shall be unclean as long as the disease is on him. Being unclean, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Guiding Questions

- What are the ways the leper is isolated from the community?
 - What toll might this take on the leper?
 - What role does isolation play for our sick congregants?
-

Text 3: Lev. 14:1-12, 14-20

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (2) This shall be the ritual for a leper at the time that he is to be cleansed.

[Step 1:]

When it has been reported to the priest, (3) the priest shall go outside the camp. If the priest sees that the leper has been healed of his scaly affection, (4) the priest shall order two live clean birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop to be brought for him who is to be cleansed. (5) The priest shall order one of the birds slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel; (6) and he shall take

the live bird, along with the cedar wood, the crimson stuff, and the hyssop, and dip them together with the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. (7) He shall then sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the eruption and cleanse him; and he shall set the live bird free in the open country. (8) The one to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe in water; then he shall be clean.

[Step 2:]

After that he may enter the camp, but he must remain outside his tent seven days. (9) On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair—of head, beard, and eyebrows. When he has shaved off all his hair, he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; then he shall be clean.

[Step 3a:]

(10) On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish, three-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a meal offering, and one log of oil. (11) These shall be presented before the LORD, with the man to be cleansed, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, by the priest who performs the cleansing. (12) The priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it with the log of oil as a guilt offering, and he shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD....

[Step 3b:]

(14) The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put it on the ridge of the right ear of him who is being cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. (15) The priest shall then take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. (16) And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in the palm of his left hand and sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. (17) Some of the oil left in his palm shall be put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one being cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot—over the blood of the guilt offering. (18) The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one being cleansed. Thus the priest shall make expiation for him before the LORD.

[Step 3c:]

(19) The priest shall then offer the sin offering and make expiation for the one being cleansed of his uncleanness. Last, the burnt offering shall be slaughtered, (20) and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meal offering on the altar, and the priest shall make expiation for him. Then he shall be clean.

Guiding Questions

- What do you notice about how the leper re-enters the community from steps 1-3(a-c)?
- What do you make of Step 3b-- the ceremony placing blood, then oil upon the ridge of the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe? What symbolic significance do blood and oil have?
- Interestingly, placing blood on the right ear, right thumb, and right big toe is the exact same action that the text used to induct the priests into service. (Leviticus 8:22-24) This ceremony marked the priests for special access to the holy, and now we see the exact same action used to help rehabilitate the most isolated member of society. What statement might the Torah be making by using the same ritual action in two wildly different situations?

Lesson 2 Text Study

Notes Sheet:

Priest's responsibilities in the face of leprosy

Responsibility toward priestly position	The priest had to maintain ritual purity to do his job for God/the people
Responsibility toward people	
Responsibility toward leper	

LESSON 3: LAWS OF *BIKKUR CHOLIM* AND THEIR UNDERLYING VALUES

Materials Needed:

- Text Study sheets
- Blank paper for recording learner conclusions
- Pens/Pencils

Timeline:

0:00 - 0:05	Set Induction
0:05 - 0:10	Text Study: Introduction
0:10 - 0:20	Text Study: Do Together
0:20 - 0:50	Text Study: Jigsaw Part 1
0:50 - 1:20	Text Study: Jigsaw Part 2
1:20 - 1:30	Closure

Enduring Understandings:

- The act of *bikkur cholim* addresses a primary fear of the sick: loneliness
- The visitor, although externally obligated in *bikkur cholim*, must take cues from the individual *choleh* how to discharge that obligation.

Essential Questions:

- What are underlying values and concerns surrounding *bikkur cholim*?
- How do sickness and a transition to health affect a person socially? In what ways might the sick or community members react to this process?

Objectives:

- Learners should be able to closely read a text in translation
- Learners should be able to analyze the texts for the various implicit/explicit concerns they hold about the *choleh*.
- Learners should be able to formulate ways to translate *bikkur cholim* into a modern context.

Performance Task

- Through the course of the guided text study and partner work, the learners will generalize values, practices, or rules of thumb for use in their practice of visiting the sick. During the closing activity, the learners will write their ideas down, then

share them with each other. The teacher will record their responses for use during the unit assessment.

Activities

Set induction: (5 min.)

- **Ask: Think back to a time you were sick -- the severity does not matter. What were the kinds of things you desired, expected, or wish you received from the community of people around you?**
- After some wait time, whip around the room and gather responses.

Text Study Introduction (5 min)

- **Say: We're going to begin our study of *bikkur cholim* laws found in our Jewish tradition. The law code we'll look at most frequently is the Shulchan Arukh - which serves as a baseline authority for the majority of the Jewish community. Rabbi Joseph Karo, a Sefardic Jew, created this text by simplifying a longer legal code of his that included discussions of precedent and dissenting opinions, but they do not concern us. What makes this authoritative across the Jewish community is that Rabbi Moses Isserles was working on a similar law code from the Ashkenazi point of view when he found out about Karo's project. So he adapted his work as a commentary to Karo's that presented the Ashkenazi perspective when it differed from the Sefardic. Ever since the late 1500s, they've been published together, and we'll see an example of when Isserles injects his voice into Karo's discussion.**
- Pass out text study sheets

Text Study Do Together: (10 min.)

- The learners will read the "Do Together" section with the teacher. They should read the law in English aloud, and answer the guiding question in the bullet point(s) underneath.

<p style="text-align: right;">יורה דעה של"ה: א'</p> <p>(א) מצוה לבקר חולים. הקרובים והחברים נכנסים מיד; והרחוקים, אחר ג' ימים. ואם קפץ עליו החלי, אלו ואלו נכנסים מיד.</p> <p>Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:1</p> <p>(1) It is a <i>mitzvah</i> to visit the sick. Relatives and close friends may visit immediately and others after three days. But if the sickness arises upon the person suddenly, all may visit immediately.</p>

- **Ask: What reasons can you think of to justify the delay in *bikkur cholim* for all but the closest people?**
 - No need to worry the community if the sickness isn't serious.

- *Don't want to embarrass the sick person if the sickness lasts fewer than 3 days; maintain privacy if the situation isn't serious.*
- *A 3-day sickness might begin to warrant the services and prayers of the community.*
- **Ask: Why might the rule change when the sickness is sudden or dire?**
 - *A dire or sudden illness requires all the support the community can muster; the need for extra help in the home and prayers for healing supersedes the concerns for privacy or embarrassment - especially if the choleh is close to death.*

Jigsaw: (60 minutes-- 30 minutes for each half of activity)

- The learners will divide in half. Each half will gather in groups of 2-4 and study the texts in either "Group 1" or "Group 2". They will become experts on the texts by reading them texts aloud and answer the guiding questions while the teacher circulates to hear the discussion and answer any clarifying questions.
 - Group 1's texts focus on what not to do during a *bikkur cholim* visit. Students should attempt to uncover what is the overriding concern behind all the prohibitions.
 - Group 2's texts focus on the interpersonal and communal issues that might come up in a *bikkur cholim* visit. Students should attempt to uncover the overriding value presented in the laws by giving voice to those potential issues or tensions.
- Students will then form new, mixed groups of 2-4: half from Group 1 and half from Group 2. The Group 1 learners will teach their texts to Group 2 and answer questions and vice versa.

Group 1

יורה דעה של"ה: ג'

(ג) המבקר את החולה, לא יושב על גבי מטה, ולא על גבי כסא, ולא על גבי ספסל, אלא מתעטף ויושב לפניו, ששכינה למעלה מראשיותיו. הגה: ודוקא פשהחולה שוכב על הארץ, דהיושב גבוה ממנו, אבל פשוטב על המטה מתר לישב על כסא וספסל (בית יוסף בשם הר"ן, וכן נוהגין).

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:3

(3) The visitor should not sit on a bed, nor on a chair nor on a bench but rather wrap himself in a tallit and sit in front of him [but not at/above his head] because the Divine Presence rests above his head.

Isserles: Definitely when the sick person is lying on the ground because the one sitting would be higher than him. But when he is laying on a bed it is permitted to sit on a chair or bench.

- How might the *choleh* feel in the interaction were the visitor to not follow this rule?
- What is a practical reason for sitting "below", and not next to the head of the *choleh*?
- What does it mean for the Divine Presence to reside in the *choleh's* room?

משנה תורה, הלכות אבל י"ד:ה'

(ה) ... ואין מבקרין את החולה לא בשלש שעות ראשונות ביום. ולא בשלש אחרונות. מפני שהן מתעסקין בצרכי החולה. ואין מבקרין לא חולי מעים ולא חולי העין. ולא מחושי הראש. מפני שהבקר קשה להן:

Mishneh Torah, Mourning 14:5

(5b) We do not visit the sick during the first three hours of the day, nor in the last three hours because [his attendants] are tending to the sick person's needs. We do not visit patients with stomach illnesses, eye illnesses, or headaches because the visits are difficult for them.

יורה דעה של"ה: ח'

(ח) אין מבקרין לא לחלי מעים ולא לחלי העין ולא לחלי הראש. וכן כל חלי דתקיף ליה עלמא וקשה ליה דבורא אין מבקרין אותו בפניו, אלא נכנסין בבית החיצון ושואלין ודורשין בו אם צריכין לכבד ולרביץ לפניו, וכיוצא בו, ושומעין צערו ומבקשים עליו רחמים.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:8

(8) Don't visit people with intestinal maladies, eye disorders, or head sickness.¹ Same with those for whom the world is heavy for them and it is difficult to speak. Don't visit them in person-- rather, enter the outer rooms of their house, ask and inquire of them whether they need [you] to sweep or sprinkle the floor (i.e. to complete chores), we listen to the suffering of the patient ² and we pray for mercy upon them.

¹ **Or head sickness:** Because talking is difficult for them. (Implied head pain, and not necessarily mental difficulty) להם: שהדיבור קשה להם -- Sifte Cohen to YD 335:8

² **Suffering of the patient:** Given that in this circumstance we don't actually see the *choleh*, we might ask the caregiver about physical needs. Additionally, the Hebrew is ambiguous enough to suggest that we listen to the pain of the caregiver in addition to/instead of that of the *choleh*.

- Why would these particular illnesses prevent a person from seeing a sick person?
- How do the Shulchan Arukh and the Mishneh Torah differ with respect to particular categories of sick people? What effect does this difference have upon the visitor's responsibility toward them?

Group 2

יורה דעה של"ה: ב'

(ב) אפלו הגדול ילך לבקר הקטן, ואפלו כמה פעמים ביום, ואפלו בן גילו. וכל המוסיף הרי זה משבח, ובלבד שלא יטריח לו. הנה: יש אומרים דשונא יכול לילך לבקר חולה (מהרי"ל קצ"ז), ולא נראה לי, אלא לא יבקר חולה, ולא ינחם האבל שהוא שונאו, שלא יחשב שישמח לאידו, ואינו לו אלא צער, בן נראה לי (ש"ס פ' כ"ג).

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:2

(2) A person of high status should visit even a person of modest status, [one can visit] several times a day, and [one should also visit] one's peer. Anyone who exceeds this

standard is to be praised, so long as they do not burden [the *choleh*]. Isserles: There are those who maintain that even an enemy should visit the sick individual. This does not seem correct to me, rather one should not visit a patient or comfort a mourner who is one's enemy lest the [suffering person] think that [the enemy] is rejoicing in his misfortune, which will only cause more suffering. This seems correct to me.

- How is the text sensitive to social dynamics at play in *bikkur cholim*?
- What does each party receive from the encounter?
- In what ways might a visit burden the patient? When might a *choleh* reject a visit?
 - Gives power to someone who might feel powerless
 - *Choleh* needs time to rest, recuperate; not visit with a person who makes things about themselves, is a negative presence.

יורה דעה של"ה: ז'

(ז) אומרים לו שיתן דעתו על עניניו, אם הלזה או הפקיד אצל אחרים, או אחרים הלזו או הפקידו אצלו, ואל
יפחד מפני זה מהמנות.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:7

(7) Tell the *choleh* that he should attend to his affairs (e.g. if he owes or is owed money), however he should not take this inquiry as evidence that he is dying and become afraid.

(i.e. it's just a practical consideration)

- If you've had this conversation, how did the sick person react?
- Could you imagine having this conversation? Who might be a more appropriate messenger than others?

יורה דעה של"ה: ט'

(ט) מבקרין חולי עובדי כוכבים, מפני דרכי שלום.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:9

(9) We visit the non-Jewish sick because of the ways of peace.

- Does this law surprise you? Why do you think the rabbis included it here?

Closure: (10 min.)

- Ask: What are the values or rules of thumb you've gathered so far, that we can apply to our work visiting those in our community. Take a moment to write a few down, and we'll go around the room and share our answers.

We'll make sure to save your answers because they'll become important when we create our "Ten Commandments for visiting the sick"

- Give wait time
- Whip around the room to each participant. You can go around multiple times until everyone has shared all their ideas.
- Note to Teacher: Make sure to save their answers for use in the unit assessment.

Lesson 3 Text Sheet

Do Together

יורה דעה של"ה: א'

(א) מצוה לבקר חולים. הקרובים והחברים נכנסים מיד; והרחוקים, אחר ג' ימים. ואם קפץ עליו החלי, אלו ואלו נכנסים מיד.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:1

(1) It is a *mitzvah* to visit the sick. Relatives and close friends may visit immediately and others after three days. But if the sickness arises upon the person suddenly, all may visit immediately.

- What reasons can you think of to justify the delay in *bikkur cholim* for all but the closest people?
- Why might the rule change when the sickness is sudden or dire?

Group 1

יורה דעה של"ה: ג'

(ג) המבקר את החולה, לא ישב על גבי מטה, ולא על גבי כסא, ולא על גבי ספסל, אלא מתעטף ויושב לפניו, ששכינה למעלה מראשותיו. הגה: ודוקא כשהחולה שוכב על הארץ, דהיושב גבוה ממנו, אבל כששוכב על המטה מתר לישב על כסא וספסל (בית יוסף בשם הר"ן, וכן נוהגין).

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:3

(3) The visitor should not sit on a bed, nor on a chair nor on a bench but rather wrap himself in a tallit and sit in front of him [but not at/above his head] because the Divine Presence rests above his head.

Isserles: Definitely when the sick person is lying on the ground because the one sitting would be higher than him. But when he is laying on a bed it is permitted to sit on a chair or bench.

- How might the *choleh* feel in the interaction were the visitor to not follow this rule?
- What is a practical reason for sitting “below”, and not next to the head of the *choleh*?
- What does it mean for the Divine Presence to reside in the *choleh*'s room?

Lesson 3 Text Sheet (cont.)

Group 1 (cont.)

משנה תורה, הלכות אבל "די:ה'

(ה) ... ואין מבקרין את החולה לא בשלש שעות ראשונות ביום. ולא בשלש אחרונות. מפני שהן מתעסקין בצרכי החולה. ואין מבקרין לא חולי מעים ולא חולי העין. ולא מחושי הראש. מפני שהבקור קשה להן:

Mishneh Torah, Mourning 14:5

(5b) We do not visit the sick during the first three hours of the day, nor in the last three hours because [his attendants] are tending to the sick person's needs. We do not visit patients with stomach illnesses, eye illnesses, or headaches because the visits are difficult for them.

יורה דעה של"ה: ח'

(ח) אין מבקרין לא לחלי מעים ולא לחלי העין ולא לחלי הראש. וכן כל חלי דתקיף ליה עלמא וקשה ליה דבורא אין מבקרין אותו בפניו, אלא נכנסין בבית החיצון ושואלין ודורשין בו אם צריכין לכבד ולרבץ לפניו, וכיוצא בו, ושומעין צערו ומבקשים עליו רחמים.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:8

(8) Don't visit people with intestinal maladies, eye disorders, or head sickness.¹ Same with those for whom the world is heavy for them and it is difficult to speak. Don't visit them in person-- rather, enter the outer rooms of their house, ask and inquire of them whether they need [you] to sweep or sprinkle the floor (i.e. to complete chores), we listen to the suffering of the patient ² and we pray for mercy upon them.

¹ **Or head sickness:** Because talking is difficult for them. (Implying head pain, and not necessarily mental difficulty) -- Siftei Cohen to YD 335:8

² **Suffering of the patient:** Given that in this circumstance we don't actually see the *choleh*, we might ask the caregiver about physical needs. Additionally, the Hebrew is ambiguous enough to suggest that we listen to the pain of the caregiver in addition to/instead of that of the *choleh*.

- Why would these particular illnesses prevent a person from seeing a sick person?
- How do the Shulchan Arukh and the Mishneh Torah differ with respect to particular categories of sick people? What effect does this difference have upon the visitor's responsibility toward them?

Lesson 3 Text Sheet (cont.)

Group 2 (cont.)

יורה דעה של"ה: ב'

(ב) אָפּלוּ הַגָּדוֹל יֵלֵךְ לְבַקֵּר הַקָּטָן, וְאָפּלוּ כְּמָה פְּעָמִים בַּיּוֹם, וְאָפּלוּ בֶּן גִּילּוֹ. וְכָל הַמּוֹסִיף הֵרִי זֶה מִשְׁבַּח, וּבִלְבָּד שְׂלֵא יִטְרִיחַ לוֹ. הִגָּה: יֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים דְּשׁוֹנָא יָכוֹל לֵילֵךְ לְבַקֵּר חוֹלָה (מִהֲרִי"ל קצ"ז), וְלֹא נִרְאָה לִי, אֲלֵא לֹא יִבְקֵר חוֹלָה, וְלֹא יִנָּחֵם הָאָבֵל שֶׁהוּא שׁוֹנָא, שְׂלֵא יִחְשַׁב שֶׁשָּׁמַח לְאִידוֹ, וְאִינוּ לוֹ אֲלֵא צָעַר, כֵּן נִרְאָה לִי (ש"ס פ' כ"ג).

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:2

(2) A person of high status should visit even a person of modest status, [one can visit] several times a day, and [one should also visit] one's peer. Anyone who exceeds this standard is to be praised, so long as they do not burden [the *choleh*]. Isserles: There are those who maintain that even an enemy should visit the sick individual. This does not seem correct to me, rather one should not visit a patient or comfort a mourner who is one's enemy lest the [suffering person] think that [the enemy] is rejoicing in his misfortune, which will only cause more suffering. This seems correct to me.

- How is the text sensitive to social dynamics at play in *bikkur cholim*?
- What does each party receive from the encounter?
- In what ways might a visit burden the patient? When might a *choleh* reject a visit?

יורה דעה של"ה: ז'

(ז) אוֹמְרִים לוֹ שִׁיתֵּן דַּעְתּוֹ עַל עֲנִינָיו, אִם הִלּוּהּ אוֹ הִפְקִיד אֶצֶל אַחֲרִים, אוֹ אַחֲרִים הִלּוּ אוֹ הִפְקִידוּ אֶצְלוֹ, וְאֵל יִפְחַד מִפְּנֵי זֶה מִהֲמָוֶת.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:7

(7) Tell the *choleh* that he should attend to his affairs (e.g. if he owes or is owed money), however he should not take this inquiry as evidence that he is dying and become afraid.

(i.e. it's just a practical consideration)

- If you've had this conversation, how did the sick person react?
- Could you imagine having this conversation? Who might be a more appropriate messenger than others?

יורה דעה של"ה: ט'

(ט) מְבַקְרִין חוֹלֵי עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים, מִפְּנֵי דִרְכֵי שְׁלוֹם.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:9

(9) We visit the non-Jewish sick because of the ways of peace.

- Does this law surprise you? Why do you think the rabbis included it here?

LESSON 4: CARING FOR PHYSICAL NEEDS

Materials Needed:

- Laptop (recommended)
- Projector (recommended)
- Whiteboard/pens (if no laptop/projector)
- Paper
- Pens
- Post-it notes (optional)

Timeline:

0:00 - 0:15	Set Induction
0:15 - 0:25	Text Study
0:25 - 0:35	Brainstorm Pt. 1
0:35 - 1:05	Discussion
1:05 - 1:20	Brainstorm Pt. 2
1:20 - 1:30	Closure

Enduring Understandings:

- The visitor, although externally obligated in *bikkur cholim*, must take cues from the individual *choleh* in discharging that obligation.
- Our fulfillment of the two parts of the *bikkur cholim* mitzvah --a visit and prayer-- must not impede healing.

Essential/Inquiry Question(s):

- What are ways to determine a sick person's needs?
- What are appropriate ways to provide for a sick person's needs?

Objectives:

- Learners should be able to identify the physical needs that sick people may have.
- Learners should be able to contrast the benefits of “asking how” vs. “offering ways” they can help.
- Learners should be able to express the healing power of “chores.”

Performance Task

- Develop a list of appropriate ways we can address the physical needs of sick in our community.

Note to Teacher:

- The study of text 2 (Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:8) in this section will set up the following two lessons with respect to normal obligations upon the one who visits the sick

Activities

Set Induction: Think, Pair, Share (15 min)

- **Say: Think about a situation when your physical environment affected your physical or emotional health, and perhaps how the situation was resolved.**
 - You can provide examples: allergies, working next to a sick co-worker, depressed sitting in a cubicle, etc.
 - Give a minute wait time
- **Say: Find a partner and take a few minutes to share your stories with each other. When we come back together, you will share your partner's story with the group.**
 - Students should pair, tell their stories, and the partner should tell the other's story when they reconvene as a group.
- **Ask: What are some common themes you hear in these situations about what people need from their environment?**

Text Study on Caring for Physical Needs (10 min.)

- **Say: These are all examples of the power of the physical environment on a person's health. If you think back to our first week in this unit, we read the story in Talmud of Rabbi Akiva who visited a student that none of the other rabbis did. Let's look at that story again together.**
- Pass out text sheet, read the Text 1: Nedarim 40a

Text 1:

נדרים מ' א:

כך היה מעשה בתלמיד אחד מתלמידי ר' עקיבא שחלה לא נכנסו חכמים לבקרו ונכנס ר' עקיבא לבקרו ובשביל שכיבדו וריבצו לפניו חיה א"ל רבי החייתני

Nedarim 40a

There is a story about one of Rabbi Avika's students who became sick. The sages did not come to visit him. Rabbi Akiva came in to visit him, and because he cleaned and sprinkled water [to keep the dust down] before him, the student lived. The man told him, "Rabbi, you brought me back to life!"

שיטה מקובצת על נדרים מ' א:

ראה רבי עקיבא שהמקום מעופש והיה המקום מקולקל ומזיק לחולה וצוה לפנות המקום ההוא ולכבדו ולרבצו ונזדכך אורו ועל כן נתרפא החולה

Shitah Mekubetzet to Nedarim 40a:

Rabbi Akiva saw that the place was moldy, and that the dirty environment was afflicting the sick man. He commanded [himself?] to upturn the whole place: to clean it, to sprinkle water on the floor [to keep the dust down], and to purify its air. Thus the sick man was healed.

- **Say:** A 16th century commentator to this passage in the Talmud tried to figure out exactly how Akiva's cleaning and dusting caused the student to return to life and be healed.
 - Read Shitah Mekubetzet to Nedarim 40a
 - Adapted from Bezalel ben Abraham Ashkenazi, the 16th century author of the Talmudic commentary, *Shitah Mekubetzet* on Nedarim 40a
- **Ask:** What does this commentator suggest about the power of household chores?
 - *The person who visits the sick and does household chores can cure as well as any doctor.*
 - *Cleanliness can prevent sickness.*
- **Say:** Let's look at Text 2 and see the same language about household chores - this time not in the Talmud, but in the legal code of the Shulchan Arukh that came many centuries later.
 - NOTE: the learners can look to the underlined text on their text sheet to find the same verbs used for household chores in both Talmud and Shulchan Arukh.

Text 2:

יורה דעה שלי"ה: ח'

(ח) אין מבקרין לא לחלי מעים ולא לחלי העין ולא לחלי הראש. וכן כל חלי דתקופה ליה עלמא וקשה ליה דבורא אין מבקרין אותו בפניו, אלא נכנסין בבית החיצון ושואלין ודורשין בו אם צריכין לכבד ולרבץ לפניו, וכיוצא בו, ושומעין צערו ומבקשים עליו רחמים.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:8

(8) Don't visit people with intestinal maladies, eye disorders, or head sickness. Same with those for whom the world is heavy for them and it is difficult to speak. Don't visit them in person-- rather, enter the outer rooms of their house, ask and inquire of them whether they need [you] to clean or sprinkle the floor (i.e. to complete chores), we listen to the suffering of the patient and we pray for mercy upon them.

- **Say:** We saw Text 2 last session. It starts out mentioning the kinds of people we don't visit because we don't want to cause them embarrassment or undue trouble by having us in their space. It then talks about what we should do when visiting those homes, but I think the text provides a model

for what we could do for every type of *choleh*. Can someone read for us Text 2?

- **Ask: What are the three things we can do for this *choleh*?**
 - *Inquire of them whether they need you to sweep/complete chores.*
 - *Listen to the suffering of the patient*
 - *Pray*
- **Say: We'll be talking today about caring for the *choleh*'s physical needs, but the next two sessions will address the other two things we can do for a *choleh*: listening to suffering, and praying on their behalf.**

Brainstorm Pt. I: Ways to care for the *choleh*'s needs: (10 min.)

- **Explain: On a piece of paper or your laptops, please take 5 minutes and write down as many ways you can think of to care for the needs of a *choleh*.**
- Go around the room and ask people to share their ideas one at a time. It may take multiple passes around the room to exhaust all original suggestions.
- The teacher should write this list down so the learners can see it.

- Preferably, the teacher will type the learner suggestions into a word processor on a laptop that is projected onto a screen. NOTE: We will be manipulating this list later in the lesson, and being able to click and drag suggestions into various categories will make this lesson run smoothly.
- The teacher can also use post-it notes to make the list visual, and can even ask learners to post their suggestions rather than relying on the teacher alone.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • <i>Sweep/Swiffer</i> | • <i>Vacuum</i> | • <i>Pray</i> |
| • <i>Wash Dishes</i> | • <i>Clean the bathroom</i> | • <i>Keep them</i> |
| • <i>Do Laundry</i> | • <i>Help take to the</i> | • <i>company in silence</i> |
| • <i>Cook</i> | • <i>bathroom</i> | • <i>Stay overnight,</i> |
| • <i>Bring in food</i> | • <i>Have a conversation</i> | • <i>give caregivers the</i> |
| • <i>Drive around on</i> | • <i>Kibbitz for an hour</i> | • <i>night off</i> |
| • <i>errands</i> | | |

- *NOTE: if learners miss something from this (non-exhaustive) list, add the suggestions. We will return to the learner-generated list and these suggestions later in the lesson, and the more provocative ones (stay overnight, clean the bathroom, take to the bathroom, kibbitz) will be important later.*

Discussion: How to Offer Care to the *Choleh*: (30 min.)

- **Say:** This is a wonderful list you've generated, and we'll come back to it in a little bit.
- **Ask:** Imagine you are visiting a sick person and want to take care of their physical needs-- maybe to bring them food or cook for them. What kind of interaction would you need to have with the sick person before bringing them the meal?
 - *Student responses will probably fall under three major categories:*
 - *No interaction: just show up with the meal*
 - *Asking "if": Open-ended question asking what they can do (e.g. "Can I bring you a meal?")*
 - *Asking "how": Asking the person "when is the best time to bring food": (e.g.: "I want to make you a casserole. Can I bring it by tomorrow around 4:30?")*
- **Discussion prompts:**
 - **What are the pros and cons of each type of interaction?**
 - **Do the texts on our sheet suggest one interaction type over another?**
 - **Which would you prefer if you were the *choleh*?**
 - NOTE: you may want to display the discussion prompt and the three interaction types on the projector screen for ease of conversation
 - NOTE: This discussion that you will facilitate will be naturally fluid. Possible answers to the questions are provided below:
- **Guidelines to Discussion**
 - Pros and Cons to Interaction Types (using food example)
 - **No Interaction:**
 - *Pro: a particularly intuitive visitor might understand what the *choleh* needs;*
 - *Con: a visitor who performs an unwanted action may cause conflict in the course of the healing process.*
 - **Asking "if" they can bring food:**
 - *Pro: allows the most input from the *choleh* and their family. This method will work particularly well for someone who is comfortable accepting help and being direct about what they need.*
 - *Con: many are not comfortable accepting help, or when they are working through crisis or illness, they may not be adept at thinking through what they need from individuals. Asking "if I can help" is also non-committal, and may not convey to the *choleh* that you particularly want to help in a way that might inconvenience you.*
 - **Asking "how" they can deliver food:**

- Pro: Asking to bring a casserole the next day at 4:30 contains more specific details of what you plan to do. While it might be more direct, it gives a *choleh* and their family a concrete need that you will fulfill for them, rather than offering vague promises of help and requiring the *choleh* to figure out what they need. It removes potential embarrassment in the *choleh* feeling the need to ask for help by stating categorically-- I will do "X" for you, does that work? If the offer of help does not fit the *choleh's* needs, they can easily respond with a "counter": please bring the dish at 3:00; I am vegetarian; I have a lot of food-- can you bring something next week; etc.
- Con: may be seen as "pushy."
- FOR TEACHER: Evidence from Text Sheet that support different positions.
 - **Nedarim 40a:** Rabbi Akiva walks into the home and immediately takes care of the physical need without being asked.
 - **Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:8:** "ask and inquire of them whether they need [you] to sweep or sprinkle the floor (i.e. to complete chores)." Here, the text requires the visitor to ask if they need you to perform specific tasks. It is not as specific as finding out the best time to bring a certain meal, but not as vague as a general "what can I do?" In other words, the *choleh* and their family don't have to ask me to wash the dishes-- I can offer and they only need to say yes.

Brainstorm Part 2: What are appropriate ways to care for needs: (15 min.)

- Return the Brainstorming session to the screen.
- **Say:** For our final exploration today, I'd like us to wonder about how our relationship to the sick person might affect the things we can do for them when we care for them. What are things that I can do for a sick person as their family member or close friend that I can't do as a community member with less of an established relationship with them?

For example, if one of your suggestions was to assist the *choleh* in the restroom, perhaps only a close relative would assist in that way, whereas a friend or community member might be appropriate to bring food or help drive the *choleh* around.

I'm going to bring our brainstorming session back to the screen, and next to each suggestion, let's determine how close our relationship to the *choleh* must be in order to be appropriate.

- NOTE: the teacher can let the categories of relationship develop organically. Students may choose to mention: community members, friends, close friends, family, immediate family, spouse, or not appropriate for anyone. The learners may disagree, and that is ok.

- **Ask: Do you notice any patterns in your choices? What are the types of activities you might do for family that you wouldn't for a congregant you're visiting?**

Closure/Assessment (10 min.)

- **Ask: What are the rules of thumb you've gathered so far, that we can apply to our work visiting those in our community. Take a moment to write a few down, and we'll go around the room and share our answers. We'll make sure to save your answers because they'll become important when we create our "Ten Commandments for visiting the sick"**
- Give wait time
- Whip around the room to each participant. You can go around multiple times until everyone has shared all their ideas.
- Note to Teacher: Make sure to save their answers for use in the unit assessment.

Lesson 4: Text Study

Text 1:

נדרים מ' א:

כך היה מעשה בתלמיד אחד מתלמידי ר' עקיבא שחלה לא נכנסו חכמים לבקרו ונכנס ר' עקיבא לבקרו ובשביל שכיבדו וריבצו לפניו חיה א"ל רבי החייתני

Nedarim 40a

There is a story about one of Rabbi Avika's students who became sick. The sages did not come to visit him. Rabbi Akiva came in to visit him, and because he cleaned and sprinkled water [to keep the dust down] before him, the student lived. The man told him, "Rabbi, you brought me back to life!"

שיטה מקובצת על נדרים מ' א:

ראה רבי עקיבא שהמקום מעופש והיה המקום מקולקל ומזיק לחולה וצוה לפנות המקום ההוא ולכבדו ולרבצו ונזדכך אוירו ועל כן נתרפא החולה

Shitah Mekubetzet to Nedarim 40a:

Rabbi Akiva saw that the place was moldy, and that the dirty environment was afflicting the sick man. He commanded [himself?] to upturn the whole place: to clean it, to sprinkle water on the floor [to keep the dust down], and to purify its air. Thus the sick man was healed.

Text 2:

יורה דעה של"ה: ח'

(ח) אין מבקרין לא לחלי מעים ולא לחלי העין ולא לחלי הראש. וכן כל חלי דתקופה ליה עלמא וקשה ליה דבורא אין מבקרין אותו בפניו, אלא נכנסין בבית החיצון ושואלין ודורשין בו אם צריכין לכבד ולרבצ ולפניו, וכיוצא בו, ושומעין צערו ומבקשים עליו רחמים.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:8

(8) Don't visit people with intestinal maladies, eye disorders, or head sickness. Same with those for whom the world is heavy for them and it is difficult to speak. Don't visit them in person-- rather, enter the outer rooms of their house, ask and inquire of them whether they need [you] to clean or sprinkle the floor (i.e. to complete chores), we listen to the suffering of the patient and we pray for mercy upon them.

LESSON 5: LISTENING TO PAIN (MEMORABLE MOMENT)

Materials Needed:

- Board/dry-erase pens for set-induction brainstorm

Timeline:

0:00 - 0:10	Set Induction
0:10 - 0:20	Instructions for Listening Exercise
0:25 - 0:55	Listening Exercise
1:00 - 1:30	Debrief (w/Closure question)

Enduring Understandings:

- For both healers and those in process of healing, the journey toward *refuah sh'leimah* (complete healing) extends over a lifetime.
- Healing occurs in relationship.
- Although imperfect themselves, all healers can heal perfectly.

Essential Questions:

- How do we listen to pain?
- When we visit the sick, whose pain are we listening to?

Objectives:

- Learners will have the opportunity to work with a partner as each shares a moment of pain or vulnerability.
- Learners will have the opportunity to practice listening, curiosity, non-judgment, and holding emotional space.

Activities

Set Induction:

- **Say:** As we explored last week, there are many components that go into the act of *bikkur cholim*. We learned from Shulchan Arukh that we should “ask and inquire of them whether they need you to clean or sprinkle the floor (i.e. to complete chores), we listen to the suffering of the patient and we pray for mercy upon them. [Yoreh De’ah 335:8] Last session we focused on caring for those physical needs. Next session we’ll focus on prayer. But today, we’ll spend some time exploring this mandate to listen to suffering or pain-- either of the *choleh* or their families and caregivers.

- **Ask: Based on your lifetime of experiences sharing your life story with others in varying ways, describe your feelings when you know someone is truly listening to you.**
 - NOTE: Although some learners may express emotions like vulnerability, safety, trust, validation, gratitude, or relief, some learners may not be able to identify a moment when someone truly listened to them.
- **Ask: I'll ask kind of an opposing question-- what does it look or feel like when you know someone is not listening to you?**

Listening Exercise:

- **Say: We are now going to practice what it means to listen to another person's story - and particularly to a difficult moment in their lives. I'm going to group you into pairs [with one group of three if necessary]. As a pair, you will take turns in listening to the other as one shares something that is currently painful or difficult.**
- **Say: We spent the first few minutes together discussing the power of listening, and the ease with which it can go wrong. Before we split up, I'd like us to talk about the ground rules that create the potential for a successful conversation.**
 - NOTE: Depending on the group, the teacher can ask learners to provide a definition for major concepts of therapeutic listening [active listening, open-ended questions, empathy, non-anxious presence, confidentiality], by inquiring what they think each term means. Additionally, the class can talk through the "Listening Tools" sheet that each pair will review before beginning their conversation sessions.
 - NOTE: The following skills/qualities will serve them in this exercise and in congregant encounters, but they are by no means exhaustive; this is not a counseling skills course.
 - **Active listening:** *Listening to the other person fully and with complete curiosity. The active listener comes without a set agenda for the conversation, allowing their questions to flow from the other's response. The active listener listens with full engagement, and does not formulate questions while the other speaks. The listener may restate the other's words to ensure they understood and/or ask the other to reiterate something that was unclear.*
 - **Asking open-ended questions:** *The listener is curious and asks questions [not "yes or no" questions] that allow the other to respond fully.*
 - **Empathy:** *This listener seeks to understand where the other is coming from. They refrain from judging the other person's emotions, reactions, and accept them. Additionally, this listener does not seek to solve the other's problems or offer explanations (psychological, theological, etc.) to help alleviate the other's suffering. [E.g.: "She's in a better place" is not a good statement to make in the face of death.]*

- ***Calm, non-anxious presence:*** *The listener is inviting and calming, helping to alleviate anxiety through their very presence.*
- ***Confidentiality:*** *In order to share vulnerable feelings and moment, most people must know that what they share is kept in confidence. This basis of trust underlies the whole enterprise of empathetic listening.*
- **Before we go any further, I want to reiterate the most important listening tool: that the space we've created as a class and the space that each pair creates must remain safe and confidential-- with the same confidence you will bring to any congregant encounter in your service to the community. The one listening should use this opportunity to work on the skills and qualities we mentioned a few minutes ago: listen fully and with curiosity, without thinking of the next thing to say; ask open-ended questions; seek clarity when you don't understand; listen with empathy and resist the urge to "fix."**
- Instruct the learners to split into pairs, preferably with someone they don't know as well, and to find a private, comfortable space to converse. Give the learners the "listening tools" sheet [if they haven't received it yet] and instruct the pairs to review it before they begin.
 - NOTE: Students who would rather partner with someone they know should be encouraged to seek a different partner they know less well. Although by this point the participants will have been learning together for a couple of months and had the opportunity to share stories, feelings, and reactions during the various lessons, pairing with someone less familiar might help familiarize themselves with the experience of the sick in the community, who may not know the person visiting them on behalf of the congregation, and feels vulnerable in that position.
 - Each person will have 15 minutes to listen and 15 minutes to be listened to. These sessions might have the tendency to continue for longer than the allotted time, so encourage learners to set a timer for 10 minutes. Encourage the one talking to discuss something "live" that causes pain/suffering (does not need to be a physical pain).
- Make sure you give the learners a break before return to debrief.

Debrief:

Facilitate a discussion around the following questions:

- *Describe the experience of being vulnerable and having someone listen to you.*
- *Describe the experience of holding the space for another person to be vulnerable.*
- *When you were either in the speaker or listener role, what kinds of emotions rose up for you?*
- *How do you feel after having shared of yourself?*
- *How do you feel after having listened to your partner?*

- *How do these conversations compare to a deep conversation we might have with a spouse or close friend?*
- ****Final question-- serves as Closure: What have you learned during this experience that you could use in you work in the community?***
 - NOTE: Make sure to write down the answers to this final question for use during the Authentic Assessment at the end of the unit.

Lesson 5: Listening Tools

- **Active listening:** Listening to the other person fully and with complete curiosity. The active listener comes without a set agenda for the conversation, allowing their questions to flow from the other's response. The active listener listens with full engagement, and does not formulate questions while the other speaks. The listener may restate the other's words to ensure they understood and/or ask the other to reiterate something that was unclear.
- **Asking open-ended questions:** The listener is curious and asks questions [not "yes or no" questions] that allow the other to respond fully.
- **Empathy:** This listener seeks to understand where the other is coming from. They refrain from judging the other person's emotions, reactions, and accept them. Additionally, this listener does not seek to solve the other's problems or offer explanations (psychological, theological, etc.) to help alleviate the other's suffering. [E.g.: "She's in a better place" is not a good statement to make in the face of death.]
- **Calm, non-anxious presence:** The listener is inviting and calming, helping to alleviate anxiety through their very presence.
- **Confidentiality:** In order to share vulnerable feelings and moment, most people must know that what they share is kept in confidence. This basis of trust underlies the whole enterprise of empathetic listening.

LESSON 6: PRAYER

Materials Needed:

Text Study Sheets

- Pens
- Large sticky post-its with one of the prayer gallery texts written on each

Timeline:

0:00 - 0:15	Set Induction
0:15 - 1:00	Text Study/Discussion
1:00 - 1:25	Prayer Gallery
1:25 - 1:30	Closure

Enduring Understanding:

- Our fulfillment of the two parts of the *bikkur cholim* mitzvah --a visit and prayer-- must not impede healing.

Essential Questions:

- What does it look like to pray for healing?
- To what extent does prayer effect healing? Is Hebrew prayer required?
- What if I (or the *choleh*) don't believe in God?

Objectives:

- Learners will be able to articulate the texts' assumptions that God brings sickness and healing, and that human prayer has intercessory power.
- Learners will be able to assess prayer resources for potential use with *cholim*.
- Learners will be able to evaluate whether prayer remains a required component to *bikkur cholim*.

Activities

Set Induction: (15min.)

- **Say:** The text from Shulchan Arukh we've been working with suggested three things to do in fulfilling the mitzvah of *bikkur cholim*. Two sessions ago we looked at the ways we can fulfill physical needs of the *choleh*. Last session we practiced what it meant to listen to another's pain. Today, we'll be delving into prayer on behalf of the *choleh*. As a way of starting out, I'd love to hear your initial reactions about what it would mean for you to pray

for or pray with the *choleh* during a visit? What would you find easy? What would challenge you?

- Allow each participant time to share their impressions about prayer and *bikkur cholim*.

Text Study and Discussion: (45 min.)

- **Say:** To start out, we will take a look at three laws from the *Shulchan Arukh* that address the place of prayer in connection to *bikkur cholim*. Please split into three groups, read each law, and summarize its major point. Take 5 minutes to read and summarize, and we'll come back together.

Texts

יורה דעה של"ה: ד'

(ד) אין מבקרים החולה בג' שעות ראשונות של יום, מפני שפול חולה, מקל עליו חליו בבקר, ולא יחוש לבקש עליו רחמים. ולא בג' שעות אחרונות של יום, שאז מכביד עליו חליו, ויחיצא מלבקש עליו רחמים. וכל שבקר ולא בקש עליו רחמים, לא קיים המצוה (בית יוסף בשם הרמב"ן).

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:4

(4) We do not visit a sick person during the first three hours of the day because the illness is less pronounced in the morning, and one might not feel a need to pray for him; nor during the last three hours of the day because the illness is more severe, and one might despair of praying for him.

Isserles: And anyone who visits the sick and doesn't pray for mercy on his behalf has not fulfilled the *mitzvah*.

יורה דעה של"ה: ה'

(ה) בשמבקש עליו רחמים, אם מבקש לפניו, יכול לבקש בכל לשון שירצה. ואם מבקש שלא בפניו, לא יבקש אלא בלשון הקודש.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:5

(5) When one prays for mercy for the patient, if in the patient's presence,¹ one may pray in any language he desires, but if not in the patient's presence,² one must only pray in the Holy Tongue [Hebrew].

¹ **If in the patient's presence:** This is praying - so to speak - before the *Shechinah* herself, who is above the head of the sick person. (Sifte Cohen to Yoreh De'ah 335:5)

² **Not in the patient's presence:** the ministering angels do not understand every language, [only Hebrew]. (Sifte Cohen to Yoreh De'ah 335:5)

- NOTE: this text implies that God is present with the sick person through the *Shechinah* and that prayers of any language uttered in her presence go directly to God. At all other times, the ministering angels hear prayers as intercessors between God and humanity, and according to tradition, they can only understand prayers uttered in the holy language of Hebrew.

יורה דעה של"ה: ו'

(ו) יכלול אותו בתוך חולי ישראל, ויאמר: המקום ירחם עליך בתוך חולי ישראל.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:6

(6a) [When one prays for the *choleh*] one should include him within the "sick of Israel" ¹ saying, "May the Source have mercy upon you among the sick in Israel."

¹ **Within "the sick of Israel":** when a person includes a *choleh*'s name among other people, his prayer is better heard. (Siftei Cohen to Yoreh De'ah 335:6)

- **What is the major point that each law makes about prayer and *bikkur cholim*?**

- Bring the groups together after 5 minutes.
 - **Ask: What is the major point that each law makes about prayer and *bikkur cholim*?**
 - 335:4-- *It is an integral part of the mitzvah.*
 - 335:5-- *Prayer can be recited in any language in choleh's presence, but otherwise Hebrew has a healing power.*
 - 335:6-- *We should include all who are sick in the prayer for an individual's recovery.*
 - Answer any clarifying questions.
- **Say: This text has a clear understanding about the need for and power of prayer during *bikkur cholim*. I wonder how our modern age affects those understandings. I'm going to send you off in your groups to discuss a potentially thorny question. Then we'll come back together and you'll report to the other groups what you discussed, and how you approached the question.**
- Students will split into their three groups and the teacher will assign one of the following questions to each group (all questions are on the text sheet)
 1. The Hebrew for prayer in this case is *בְּקֹשׁ עָלָיו רַחֲמִים* (requesting mercy on his behalf). What does this particular language imply about God's role in healing the sick? Does this implication change if you understand illness as stemming from nature or from God?
 2. What effect do our prayers have upon the *choleh*? Do we agree that Hebrew prayer is better/more efficacious? Why or why not?
 3. Do we agree with Isserles' emphasis that any instance of true *bikkur cholim* must include a prayer? What if the *choleh* doesn't believe in God? What if the visitor doesn't believe in God?
 - NOTE: Teacher should rotate amongst the groups to help answer questions and keep track of time. Allow 15 minutes for their discussion.

- Students will come back together. Each group will report out their question, the discussion, and how they approached the question. Then the other learners will have a chance to ask questions or offer different approaches to the question. (15 min.)

Prayer Gallery (25 min.)

- Here, learners will have the opportunity to “view” different types of prayers they might be able to offer when visiting the sick. The texts can be found below at the end of the lesson.
- Texts should be arrayed around the room, displayed in some fashion so that all can view it.
- **Say: We’re going to take a tour around some prayers that you might consider using in your visits. Some come from the Torah and from Psalms - an ancient prayer book. Others come from our Reform tradition. Take a few moments now to go around the room and peruse our prayer gallery!**
- After people have had a chance to see them all, **say: Please select a “favorite”-- either one that you might appreciate hearing during your own illness, one that you could see using with a *choleh*, or one that just called to you.**
- Allow learners to position themselves.
- **Say: Partner up with the person/people standing at the prayer text next to you. Ask each other: “What drew you to this particular text? And how is it important to the work of *bikkur cholim*?”**
- Allow wait time for conversation. Then gather the group back together.
- **Ask: What are some ways you could use your favorite text or others in a *bikkur cholim* setting? What are some risks?**

Closure (5min.)

- Whip around the room:
- **Ask: After all we’ve seen and explored today, how might these prayer texts add meaning and depth to our *bikkur cholim* visits?**

Lesson 6: Text Study:

יורה דעה שלי"ה: ד'

(ד) אין מבקרים החולה בג' שעות ראשונות של יום, מפני שכל חולה, מקל עליו תליו בבקר, ולא יחוש לבקש עליו רחמים. ולא בג' שעות אחרונות של יום, שאז מכביד עליו תליו, ויתאש מלבקש עליו רחמים. וכל שבקר ולא בקש עליו רחמים, לא קנים המצוה (בית יוסף בשם הרמב"ן).

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(4) We do not visit a sick person during the first three hours of the day because the illness is less pronounced in the morning, and one might not feel a need to pray for him; nor during the last three hours of the day because the illness is more severe, and one might despair of praying for him.

Isserles: And anyone who visits the sick and doesn't pray for mercy on his behalf has not fulfilled the *mitzvah*.

יורה דעה שלי"ה: ה'

(ה) בשמבקש עליו רחמים, אם מבקש לפניו, יכול לבקש בכל לשון שיירצה. ואם מבקש שלא בפניו, לא יבקש אלא בלשון הקדש.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:5

(5) When one prays for mercy for the patient, if in the patient's presence,¹ one may pray in any language he desires, but if not in the patient's presence,² one must only pray in the Holy Tongue [Hebrew].

¹**If in the patient's presence:** This is praying - so to speak - before the *Shechinah* herself, who is above the head of the sick person. (Siftei Cohen to Yoreh De'ah 335:5)

²**Not in the patient's presence:** the ministering angels do not understand every language, [only Hebrew]. (Siftei Cohen to Yoreh De'ah 335:5)

- NOTE: this text implies that God is present with the sick person through the *Shechinah* and that prayers of any language uttered in her presence go directly to God. At all other times, the ministering angels hear prayers as intercessors between God and humanity, and according to tradition, they can only understand prayers uttered in the holy language of Hebrew.

יורה דעה שלי"ה: ו'

(ו) יכלול אותו בתוך חולי ישראל, שיאמר: המקום ירחם עליה בתוך חולי ישראל.

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(6a) [When one prays for the *choleh*] one should include him within the "sick of Israel" ¹ saying, "May the Source have mercy upon you among the sick in Israel."

¹**Within "the sick of Israel":** when a person includes a *choleh*'s name among other people, his prayer is better heard. (Siftei Cohen to Yoreh De'ah 335:6)

- What is the major point that each law makes about prayer and *bikkur cholim*?
- Answer one of the following questions:
 - The Hebrew for prayer in this case is בקש עליו רחמים (requesting mercy on his behalf). What does this particular language imply about God's role in healing the sick? Does this implication change if you understand illness as stemming from nature or from God?
 - What effect do our prayers have upon the *choleh*? Do we agree that Hebrew prayer is better/more efficacious?
 - Do we agree with Isserles' emphasis that any instance of true *bikkur cholim* must include a prayer? What if the *choleh* doesn't believe in God? What if the visitor doesn't believe in God?

Lesson 6 Appendix: Prayer Texts:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Shema Yisrael! Adonai Eloheinu- Adonai Echad

Baruch Shem K'vod Malchuto L'olam Va'ed

Hear O Israel, the Eternal is Our God, the Eternal is One
Blessed be the name of God's glorious kingdom, forever and ever

Mishebeirach: Debbie Friedman

Mi shebeirach avoteinu

M'kor hab'racha l'imoteinu

May the source of strength,

Who blessed the ones before us,

Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing,

and let us say, Amen.

Mi shebeirach imoteinu

M'kor hab'rachah l'avoteinu

Bless those in need of healing with refuah sh'leimah,

The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,

And let us say, Amen

Moses's plea to God to heal his sister, Miriam (Numbers 12:13)

אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ

El na, r'fa na lah. (change "lah" to "lo" for a male)

Please God, please heal her!

הַמָּקוֹם יְרַחֵם עָלֶיךָ בְּתוֹךְ חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

HaMakom y'ra-chem ale-cha (f. ala-yich) b'toch cholei Yisrael.

"May the Source have mercy/compassion upon you among the sick in Israel."

Lesson 6 Appendix: Prayer Texts:

A Reform MiShebeirach

משברך אבותינו ואמותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקוב שרה רבקה רחל ולאה, הוא יברך את _____. הקדוש ברוך
הוא ימלא רחמים עליוֹה להחלימוֹה ולרפאותוֹה ולהחזיקוֹה וישלח לוֹה מהרה רפואה רפואה שלימה מן השמים:
רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף. השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב ונאמר: אמן.

May the One who blessed our fathers and our mothers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, bless _____. May the Holy Blessed One be filled with compassion on his/her behalf: to cause him/her to recuperate, to heal him/her, and to strengthen him/her, and may God send him/her a speedy healing-- a complete healing from heaven: healing of soul and healing of body. Soon, swiftly, in the coming days! And let us say, Amen.

One thing I ask of God

One thing I seek:

To dwell in the house of the Eternal

All my days,

To behold God's pleasantness

And to be reflective in His sanctuary

--Ps. 27:4

To you, Lord, I call

And to God I appeal:

Hear, Lord, and have compassion on me,

O God—be my Help

--Ps. 30:9, 11

Create for me a pure heart, God;

And renew within me the right spirit.

Don't cast me away from Your presence,

Don't take Your **holy spirit** away from me.

--Ps. 51:12-13

O Eternal One, hear my prayer.

Let my cry come before You

Do not hide Your face from me

In my time of trouble;

Turn Your ear to me;

Lesson 6 Appendix: Prayer Texts:

When I cry, answer me quickly

--Ps. 102:2-3

God forgives all your sins,

Heals all your diseases

--Ps. 103:3

Psalm 16:

1. A *Miktam* of David. Preserve me, O God; for in you I put my trust.
 2. I have said to the Lord, You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you;
 3. As for the holy ones who are in the earth, they are the excellent, in whom is all my delight.
 4. And for those who choose another god, their sorrows shall be multiplied; their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, nor take up their names upon my lips.
 5. The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; you maintain my lot.
 6. The lines are fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.
 7. I will bless the Lord, who has given me counsel; my insides also instruct me in the night seasons.
 8. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
 9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.
 10. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will you suffer your pious one to see the pit.
 11. You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore.
-

Psalm 121

1. A Song of Ascents. I lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come?
2. My help comes from God, Maker of Heaven and Earth
3. He will not allow your foot to falter, your Guardian shall not sleep.
4. Behold—the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.
5. The Lord is your Protector, your shade on your right side.
6. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night
7. The Lord shall keep you safe from all evil and protect your soul
8. May the Eternal One guard your coming and going from now until forever.

LESSON 7: UNIT ASSESSMENT

Materials Needed:

- Student folders with all notes and text sheets
- Paper
- Pens
- Computer and Projector (if desired)

Timeline:

- This project should not take more than the allotted 90 minutes.

Enduring Understandings:

- For both healers and those in process of healing, the journey toward *refuah sh'leimah* (complete healing) extends over a lifetime.
- Healing occurs in relationship.
- Although imperfect themselves, all healers can heal perfectly.
- Our fulfillment of the two parts of the *bikkur cholim* mitzvah --a visit and prayer-- must account for the *choleh's* needs and not impede healing.

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to “visit” or “inquire after” the sick?
- What do I do? What is my role? Do I help?
- What is at stake when we practice *bikkur cholim*?
- What where does prayer fit?

Objectives:

- Learners will be able to synthesize their learning over the unit to produce a list of rules, guidelines, and expectations for their *bikkur cholim* visits in the community.

Performance Task

The Ten Commandments of *Bikkur Cholim*

- Students will work together to produce a list of ten (between 7-12) rules, guidelines, and expectations they wish to place upon themselves when engaging in the work of *bikkur cholim*.

- Present the assignment. Teacher should remain to help answer questions about texts, concepts, and parameters of the assignment, but they should not direct learner work.
- NOTE: The teacher should have printed and/or digital copies of the closure activities that the learners completed for Lessons 1-4. These thoughts will serve as a baseline for the learner's work.

Lesson 7: Unit Assessment

The “Ten Commandments” of *Bikkur Cholim*

We’ve focused this unit on *bikkur cholim* in preparation for the healing work you will soon embark upon for our community. Each of you will receive a *bikkur cholim* folder that you can bring into various caring situations, and in which you can hold notes and resources for ease of access. On the inside cover you will find the “Ten Commandments” of *Bikkur Cholim*, to which you can always refer for expectations of the mitzvah. As a group, you must compose this list.

- Your group list should contain between 7-12 rules, expectations, and guidelines you wish to take upon yourselves when engaging in this healing work. Feel free to use both “Do” and “Do not” language.
- A successful product will address your response to the expected components of the mitzvah (caring for/sensitivity to needs, listening to pain, and prayer), and should remind a reader of the import this mitzvah has for those who benefit from it.
- Your list may also address your limitations as healers.

Possible steps for this project:

1. Think back to the different topics we’ve discussed: (What is the *mitzvah* of *bikkur cholim*; social consequences for the sick; laws of *bikkur cholim* - caring for physical needs, listening to pain, prayer)
2. Look to your notes, texts, and to the rules of thumb you already discussed as a class for help starting this project. **What are the big ideas that it will be important to remind yourself of before walking into an encounter?**
3. Without worrying about wording, give time for each individual to jot down the important content ideas.
4. Share your list (on a whiteboard, projected computer screen, with post-its). The teacher can facilitate this group work, but should not direct or influence language.
5. If you use post-its, learners can then manipulate individuals’ similar ideas and group them. Use the language on the grouped post-its to formulate your commandment(s).
6. Assign small groups to generate commandment language for one or more idea groups.
7. Bring the completed language to the whole group for discussion, edits, and agreement.
8. Agree upon an order for the commandments.

UNIT 3: NICHUM AVELIM

This unit will focus on mourners as individuals undergoing a healing journey after loss. We will study biblical, rabbinic, and legal sources to understand the process of mourning - from the mandated communal obligation to the mourner's scripted journey from death to life. This unit will then conclude by understanding how they, and other community members can walk with and support the mourner on this healing journey.

UNIT SUMMARY

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Jewish expressions of mourning derive from complex and inextricable relationships between the deceased, the mourner, the comforters, God.
- Through the linked processes of burial and mourning, the dead leave this world while the survivors reenter it.
- The community affirms life and anchors mourners during their time of grief.

Unit Essential Questions

- When does the mourning ritual focus on the dead, and when does it focus on the living?
- How does the community interact with the avelim during their private mourning journey?
- What is the dynamic relationship between mourning and grieving?
- What are ways that *nichum avelim* is an act of healing?

Objectives:

- Learners will be able to recall major concepts and actions in the ritual cycle surrounding death and mourning: *Aveilut, Avel(im), Met, Goses, Onen, Tahara, Shmirah, Levaya, Kriyah, Hespel, K'vurah, Shiva, Shloshim, Shanah, Yartzeit, Kaddish*.
- Learners will be able to compare and contrast mourning and grieving.
- Learners will be able to describe ways that comforters help *aveilim* transition through their stages of mourning: *k'vurah--shivah; shivah--shloshim; shloshim--shanah; shanah--yartzeit*.
- Learners will be able to justify *nichum avelim* as an act of healing.

Assessment:

Write an article in the congregational bulletin on any of the following prompts, each of which addresses an anxiety our community members might feel in relationship to another's loss. Responses should be informed by the Jewish tradition while remaining accessible to a community member.

- My friend's mother died and I went to the funeral but didn't know what to say.. OR I missed the funeral and can't bring myself to call them because I don't know what to say. What am I supposed to say?
- I've never been to a *shiva* before-- what am I supposed to do?
- My friend seems depressed after the death of their loved one-- what can I do to help?
- My friend's loved one died about a year ago, and I haven't seen or heard from my friend very much since then. What can I do? Have I lost a friend?

Content Survey

Death and mourning are difficult moments in any person's life, as they remind the mourner and the community of the frailty of life, they constitute a significant emotional (and financial) stress upon the mourners, and they pose the risk that mourners might lose (or reject, or drift away from) the support of their community. Within the Jewish tradition, the community plays a critical role in supporting the deceased in their journey from this world, and stands obligated to walk with and guide mourners from their place of lonely grief toward reintegration with the larger communal whole. Grieving can be a lonely place, as mourners cope with the swirling emotions and tensions surrounding loss, and the Jewish tradition provides a ritual framework for the mourner to step outside the rhythms and obligations of their everyday life, and reclaim those obligations slowly with the passage of time and dulling of grief. In order for mourners to successfully enact this process during *aveilut*, comforters within the community must meet its mourners' physical needs, create an emotionally safe space as witnesses to grief, and -- at the right moment -- gently encourage them to reenter the world.

To this end, the unit aims to familiarize learners with the ritual process of surrounding death and mourning, with specific focus upon the role that they as comforters will play as agents of the community. Learners may not be familiar with all the traditional requirements incumbent upon the comforters, and this may lead conversations about concepts toward the theoretical. To hedge against this possibility, the facilitator should continually find opportunities to connect the possibilities presented in this unit to learners' own experiences as comforters and as mourners. Additionally, activities should provide an opportunity for introspection and reflection, and also provide the chance for learners to practice the important sharing and listening skills we enact through vulnerability and comfort, respectively.

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION

Essential Question:

- What is the dynamic relationship between mourning and grieving?

Goals:

- To introduce basic terms of mourning: *aveilut*, *avel*, *met*.
- To familiarize learners with Jewish mourning ritual, which helps the deceased's immediate relatives through an emotional grieving process.
- To use learners' past experiences to uncover the complex range of emotions in experiencing one's own grief and in witnessing another's grief.

Objectives:

- Learners will be able to recall the circumstances and emotions surrounding their own experiences of grief and/or mourning.
- Learners will be able to remember those helpful, healing interactions with comforters.
- Learners will be able to determine the individuals for whom the learner would mourn.

Possible Activities:

Show a short introductory video about *aveilut*:

- "Jewish Mourning Rituals: An Overview" from Bimbam (formerly G-dcast)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyHvRFkqzmw>

Share an experience of mourning with a partner (Think, Pair, Share)

Mourning Family Tree:

- Ask the learners to draw a family tree. The tree should be fairly detailed, and extend two generations (where possible) from the learner.
- Have the learners highlight in one color the people in a primary relationship for whom they will be *halakhic* mourners (father, mother, paternal sister, paternal brother, son, daughter, spouse)
- Have the learners highlight in a different color those people for whom they would mourn only when in the presence of primary mourners (the primary relations of your primary relations-- i.e. father's mother, son's spouse, brother's child)
 - See Mishneh Torah Hilchot Avel 2:4-5. Rambam states that one only mourns for spouse's father/mother when in their presence, and not for the rest of their primary relations)

- Possible questions to ask:
 - Are there family members included you would have trouble mourning formally?
 - Are there family members not included for whom, because of your grief, you would want to formally mourn?
 - Are there non-family members you would formally mourn?
 - How might we adapt the traditional family relations to include step-families (parents, siblings, children), non-heteronormative couples, etc.

Lesson 1 Source Texts:

Mishneh Torah Hilchot Avel 2:1, 3-5

2:1 These are the [primary] relatives for whom a person is obligated to mourn according to Scriptural Law: mother, father, son, daughter, paternal brother and paternal sister. According to Rabbinic Law, a man should also mourn for his wife if she dies while they are married; a woman should mourn for her husband; similarly, a person should mourn for a maternal brother and sister.

2:3 A person who has a son or a brother born by a maid-servant or a gentile woman should not mourn for them at all. Similarly, when a person and his sons convert, or a person and his mother are freed from slavery, they do not mourn for each other.

Similarly, a person does not observe either the rites of *aninut* [become an *onen*] or the mourning rites for a wife whom he has consecrated, but not married. Similarly, she does not observe either of these rites for him.

2:4 Whenever a person is obligated to mourn for a [primary] relative, he also mourns with that relative in his presence according to Rabbinical Law.

What is implied? If a person's grandson, his son's maternal brother, or son's mother dies, he is obligated to rend his garments in the presence of his son and follow the mourning rites while in his presence. Outside his presence, he is not obligated. Similar laws apply with regard to other relatives.

2:5 With regard to a wife with whom one is married: Although one must mourn for her, he does not mourn together with her for her other relatives with the exception of her father and her mother. He observes the rites of mourning for them in her presence.

When a man's father-in-law or mother-in-law dies, he overturns his bed and observes the mourning rites together with his wife within her presence, but not outside her presence. Similarly, when a woman's father-in-law or mother-in-law dies, she observes the rites of mourning in her husband's presence. With regard to other relatives, by contrast, e.g., the brother of one's wife or her son dies or when the brother of one's husband or his son dies, they do not observe the mourning rites in respect for each other.

Similarly, it appears to me that if the wife of a person's relative dies or the husband of one of his relatives, e.g., the wife of one's son or the husband of one's daughter, one need not observe mourning rites for them. Similar concepts apply in all analogous situations.

LESSON 2: ACCOMPANYING THE DEAD FOR BURIAL

Essential Questions:

- How does the tradition imagine the *met* to transition from the world of the living?
- What assumptions about the *met* inform ritual actions surrounding death?
- To what extent does mourning focus on the dead?
- What obligations does the community have toward the dead?

Goals:

- To uncover traditional assumptions about the dead's journey from life.
- To question our own assumptions about death and their implications on how our society treats the dead.
- To describe the various traditional ways the community can honor its dead.
 - *Tahara, Shmirah, Hespel, K'vurah.*

Objectives:

- Learners will be able to describe the communal obligations toward the deceased.
- Learners will be able to compare traditional assumptions about the *met* with their own.

Possible Activities:

Jigsaw:

- Using texts from the tradition, and secondary sources (some provided below in Resources), divide the learners and instruct them to become experts in one of the five named burial practices: *Tahara, Shmirah, Hespel, K'vurah*. Answer the following questions of the sources: What assumptions does this practice make about the *met*? To what extent do individuals from the community participate in each?

Video on Tahara:

- "Taharah - Jewish Burial Rite" from NAESK Chevrah Kadisha
<https://youtu.be/V4bWpbvhHXw>

Lesson 2 Resources:

Tahara:

- *Tahara* comes from the word for purification, and describes the process to purify the *met* and prepare the body for burial. A specified *chevra kadisha* (lit. holy community), or burial society, who are knowledgeable about Jewish burial customs take responsibility for the important mitzvah of showing respect for the dead. In addition to physically cleansing and preparing the body for burial, they recite prayers asking God to forgive the *met* for sins, and to guard the *met*, and grant the *met* peace. Participation in the *chevra kadisha* is a great communal honor and responsibility in their care and respect for the dead.

--Adapted from Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1969), 6-8.

- (1) These are the customs observed by the Jewish people with regard to corpses and burial. We close the eyes of the deceased. If one's mouth hangs open, we tie the jaw close. After washing the corpse, we stuff close the orifices, anoint it with different fragrances, cut its hair, and dress it in shrouds of white linen which are not expensive. Our Sages followed the custom of using a cloak worth a zuz, so as not to embarrass a person who lacks resources. We cover the faces of the deceased so as not to embarrass the poor whose faces turned black because of hunger. (2) It is forbidden to bury the dead, even a *nasi* among the Jewish people, in silk shrouds or clothes embroidered with gold, for this is an expression of haughtiness, the destruction of useful property, and the emulation of gentile practices.

-- Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Avel 4:1-2

Shmira

- The tradition does not allow the dead to remain unaccompanied until they are finally put to rest in their graves. This would be ignominious, and it would add to the anxiety the living felt about death: that it meant abandonment and excruciating loneliness for the survivors and the deceased....

This role (*shomer*) calls for the recitation of Psalms, whose protective power is seen as warding off the malevolence that surrounds death. For Jews the recitation of Psalms has often served as a religious activity that simultaneously allows persons to feel as if they are actively doing something and makes them feel that they are subject to the superior power of the Creator to whom these Psalms are ultimately addressed. As such, the Psalms capture much of the ambiguity of the funeral, which likewise expresses the effort at human control even as it highlights human helplessness. Not incidentally, this part prayer and part incantation provides a way of handling the otherwise awkward, ambiguous situation of being in the presence of a newly dead person.

--Samuel Heilman, *When a Jew Dies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 42, 79.

Lesson 2 Resources:

Hesped

- It is a great mitzvah to eulogize over a *met* appropriately – to raise the voice to say things about the dead that break the heart in order to increase wailing and memorialize his good deeds. It is forbidden to exaggerate those deeds too much, rather to make mention of good qualities within the *met*, and add to them a little, but do not exaggerate. And if the *met* had no good qualities, do not memorialize over him/her. For a wise person or righteous person, memorialize their wisdom and their righteousness. And anyone who memorializes the *met* who has no [good qualities] or who adds and exaggerates too much about the *met* who does, causes trouble for themselves and for the *met*.

--Shulchan Arukh Yoreh De'ah 344:1

Kevurah

- Placing the dead into the grave is probably the most dramatic moment of every funeral.... By burial...the dead at last become invisible. Once they do so, they enter the domain of mystery, that which is beyond the senses and must be treated exclusively with the language of mystery: ritual and rite. Being invisible, the dead in a sense now become more powerful than they ever were in life or even just after death... But the invisible spirit of the dead, although capable of malevolence, can be, if dealt with in a spiritually positive manner, according to rites prescribed by hallowed tradition and time-honored custom, made altogether holy and pure....

The burial itself remains impressively simple. The scraping of shovels in the earth, the thud of the dirt and stones striking the coffin or falling upon the enshrouded body reverberate with mortality. The sight of the dead buried by a blanket of earth offers a sense of closure. Symbolically, it completes the promise given to mankind in Genesis...: "For dust you are, and to dust shall you return" (3:16)....

The burial is carried out in such a way that no one hands a shovel to the other – so as not to hand misery around... Instead, each person takes the shovel from the ground and returns it thence for the next person to pick up on his or her own. In some places, the custom is to use the back of the shovel for filling the grave. This practice, which makes the actual interment take longer, serves, like so many of the other rituals of burial, to capture much of the ambivalence of the funeral, of the desire to be rid of the dreaded dead body but also to hold on to the life it contained. By shoveling in this way, the mourners symbolically display their reluctance to close the ground over the loved one who has died even as they continue to do so in line with the Jewish law that requires an expeditious burial.

--Samuel Heilman, *When a Jew Dies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 109-113.

LESSON 3: VISITING A MORTUARY

If the community has the access, now would be an appropriate moment to arrange a tour of a Jewish mortuary/cemetery having had an appropriate introduction to the topic.

N.B. The educator should make clear the expectations for what the learners will see, and should provide some forum after the visit to debrief the emotions brought about by the visit (whether by journal, one-on-one conversation, small-group conversation, class discussion, etc.).

Objective:

- Learners will have the opportunity to obtain a behind-the-scenes perspective on the preparation of the dead for burial, to ask questions of an expert, to reflect upon their own experiences with death, and to wonder about mortality.

Questions for Reflection

- What has comforted you in this experience?
- What has troubled you from this experience?
- What questions do you still have?
- In what ways does this experience brought up emotions and memories from your own life?

LESSON 4: JOURNEY TOWARD LIFE

Essential Question:

- To what extent can the stages of *aveilut* and their ritual actions address the complex emotions of a mourner?
- In what ways do the stages of *aveilut* mandate an *avel* to honor death and to re-enter life?
- To what extent does *aveilut* focus on the living?

Goals:

- To chart the stages of ritual mourning and the ritual prohibitions and customs during each: *Onen/Livaya*, *Shiva*, *Shloshim*, *Shanah*, *Yartzeit*.
- To contextualize mourning ritual as a safe, acceptable space to hold grief.
- To explore the power of grief for healing.

Objectives:

- Learners will be able to chart the mourner's stages of ritual actions/prohibitions.
- Learners will be able to discuss the ways that the stages both provide space for grief and encouragement to continue life.
- Learners will be able to identify the extent to which reciting *Kaddish* is for the dead and for the living.
- Learners will have the opportunity to modify the traditional stages of mourning to meet our modern needs.

Activity:

Timeline of mourning

- A significant portion of the lesson should be devoted to a class graphic organizer that will allow learners to fill in a timeline of what a traditional Jewish mourner does (or refrains from doing) during their various stages through *aveilut*.
- Major categories: When the bereaved is an *Onen*, during the funeral (*livaya*), in *Shivah*, in *Shloshim*, in the *Shanah* period, marking a *Yartzeit*.
- There are many resources available for this information. Laws from Mishneh Torah are below, but you can find many other sources to guide your discussion.
- NOTE: This graphic organizer should also leave space for the following lesson. Whereas this lesson charts the journey of the *avel*, the following lesson charts the community's responsibility toward the *avel*, especially as s/he transitions from one phase of *aveilut* to the next.

- Learners should have the opportunity to reimagine the Jewish mourning process such that it responds to the needs of a 21st century, Reform Jewish mourner. What customs would you retain, add, or subtract? Would you change the timeframe for mourning?

Lesson 4 Text Resources

Onen: Mishneh Torah Hilchot Avel 4:6

- When a person's dead is lying before him, he should eat in another house. If he does not have another house, he should construct a partition and eat. If he does not have the materials to make a partition, he should turn away his face and eat. Under no circumstances should he recline and eat or eat meat or drink wine.
- He does not recite the blessing before eating, nor the grace after meals. Others do not recite the blessings for him, nor is he included in a quorum of three for the recitation of grace. He is free from the obligation to recite the Shema, pray, put on tefillin, or observe any of the mitzvot stated in the Torah.
- On the Sabbath, he should recline, eat meat, and drink wine, recite the blessing before eating, and recite grace. Others may recite blessings for him. He is included in a quorum for grace and is obligated in all the mitzvot of the Torah with the exception of sexual relations.
- Once the dead is buried, he is permitted to eat meat and drink a small amount of wine to help digest the food that he has eaten, but not in an unrestrained manner.

Funeral (Keri'ah): Mishneh Torah Hilchot Avel 8:1-3

- (1) A mourner is obligated to rend his garments for his dead, as can be derived from Leviticus 10:6: "Do not rend your garments lest you die." Implied is that others must rend their garments.... Where does one rend his garment? In front. If one rends his garment from the back or from the sides or from the bottom, he does not fulfill the obligation to rend his garments, with the exception of a High Priest who must rend his garment from the bottom.
- (2) What is the required measure for the tear? A handbreadth. It is not necessary to rip apart the border of the garment. One may rend his garments with a utensil. One may rend one's garments inside, not in the presence of others. Therefore he may place his hand inside his garment and tear it modestly. He is only obligated to tear his upper garment.
- (3) For the entire seven days of mourning, he keeps the tear in front of him. If he desires to change his garments, he may. He is not required to rend the second garment, for any tear that is not made at the time of emotional excitement, is not a tear.

When does the above apply? With regard to other deceased persons aside from his father and mother. For his father and mother, by contrast, he must rend his garment until he reveals his heart. He must rip apart the border of the garment; he may not tear it with a utensil, and must tear it outside, in the presence of people at large. He must tear all the garments he is wearing. His underwear - i.e., the garments worn next to his flesh - need not be ripped. If he changes his clothes, he is required to rend them for all seven days....

Lesson 4 Text Resources

Shivah, Shloshim, Shanah: See Mishneh Torah Chps. 4-7

- Focus on the major categories of prohibition and note where they change over time.

Yartzeit/Kaddish

- Kaddish is mentioned in passing as a custom in Shulchan Arukh 376:4, but it has taken on much larger significance in present day.
- More helpful is a narrative description of an *avel's* experience through the year of saying Kaddish for a parent. In particular, see:
Danielle Berrin, "How Jewish ritual helped me find my way through loss," JewishJournal.com, <http://jewishjournal.com/opinion/133754/> (Accessed May 3, 2017).

Other Resources

- A beautiful text to explore a traditional journey through mourning is Samuel Heilman, *When a Jew Dies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001). As both an ethnographer and Orthodox Jew, Heilman describes his experiences in Jewish mourning custom through his lens as a Jew, as an ethnographer offering thick description, and as a mourner himself.

LESSON 5: COMMUNAL POWER TO COMFORT THE LIVING

Essential Question:

- What obligations do I have to comfort the mourner during their journey through *aveilut*?
- How does the community both affirm the mourner's loneliness and encourage their reintegration into the greater world?

Goals:

- To demonstrate the community's power to transition a mourner through their stages of mourning.
- To frame the community's power as witness to death and affirmation of life.

Objectives:

- Learners will be able to generate a list of things s/he can do/say as a comforter in the presence of an *avel*.

Activity:

Video:

- JOG: "Sitting Shiva -- Mourning at home" from United Synagogue:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jIzgoDye3E>

Timeline for Community Members

Learners should be prepared to fill in their timeline of Jewish mourning practices from the perspective of the community members fulfilling the mitzvah of *nichum avelim*.

Below is a starting point for this timeline:

- *Onen* → Burial
 - Responsibility for *tahara*, helping with funeral arrangements, digging grave.
- Burial
 - Easing the mourners into their formal stage of *aveilut* through the standing in rows at graveside and offering: המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים (May the Source comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem)
- Burial → *Shiva*
 - Presence in home for *minyanim*
 - Serving meal of comfort (and providing meals through this time)
- *Shiva* → *Shloshim*

- Helping with the walk around the block at the close of *shiva*.
- Shloshim → Shanah
 - Telling the friend that their beard is too unruly and it is time to shave and change clothing.
 - Awareness and sensitivity for the *avel*: even though their outward signs of mourning may be mostly gone, the process of grief continues.

Resources for Conversation:

- Danielle Berrin, “How Jewish ritual helped me find my way through loss,” JewishJournal.com, <http://jewishjournal.com/opinion/133754/> (Accessed May 3, 2017).
- Samuel Heilman, *When a Jew Dies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

Lesson 5 Text Resources

Mishneh Torah Hilchot Avel 13:1-9

- (1) How are mourners comforted? After the deceased is buried, the mourners gather together and stand at the side of the cemetery. All of those who attended the funeral stand around them, line after line. A line may not be less than ten and the mourners are not included in the reckoning.
- (2) The mourners stand at the left side of the comforters and the comforters pass by the mourners one by one and tell them: "May you be comforted from heaven."
- Afterwards, the mourner goes home. On each of the seven days of mourning, people come to comfort him. Whether new people come or not, the others still comfort him.
- (3) The mourner sits at the head of the company. The comforters are permitted to sit only on the ground, as Job 2:13 states: "And they sat with him on the ground." They are not permitted to say anything until the mourner opens his mouth first, as it is written (ibid.): "And no one spoke anything to him." And it states (ibid. 3:1, 4:1): "And then Job held forth.... And Eliphaz responded."
- Once the mourner shakes his head, the comforters are no longer permitted to sit with him, so that they do not trouble him overly so.
- (4) When a deceased person has no mourners who must be comforted, ten upright men from the community at large come and sit in his place throughout the seven days of mourning. Others gather around them. If there are not ten fixed people who remain throughout the seven days, each day, ten other people are selected and they sit in his place.
- (5) Everyone is obligated to stand in front of a *nasi* except a mourner and sick person. To all who stand in his presence, he says: "Sit," with the exception of a mourner and sick person, for that would imply: "Remain in your mourning," "Remain in your illness."
- (6) We sweep and we mop in a mourner's home. We wash plates, cups, pitchers, and bottles, and light lamps. We do not, however, bring incense or spices.
- (7) We do not bring the food for the meal of comfort to a mourner's home in silver or cork utensils or the like, but wicker-work baskets of planed willow trees or the like so as not to embarrass a person who lacks means. Similarly, beverages are not poured in clear glasses rather than colored ones so as not to embarrass the poor whose wine is not of a high quality.
- (8) No one person should drink more than ten cups of wine in the house of a mourner: three before the meal, three during the meal, and four afterwards. One should not drink more lest he become intoxicated.
- (9) We do not relate teachings of Torah law or homiletic insights in the home of a mourner. Instead, we sit in grief. In the presence of a corpse, we speak only of matters related to the corpse. To be involved in Torah study in the presence of a corpse or in a cemetery is forbidden.

LESSON 6: ATTENDING SHIVA

Depending on the availability and propriety, now would be an appropriate time to enact what it means to comfort the mourner by visiting a *shiva* home. Whether the class attends *shiva* as a group or individually, learners should be encouraged to compare the practices they see around them to the ideas discussed in class. The educator should plan to debrief the experience and allow the learners to share their observations and reflections.

Objective

- Learners will have the opportunity to comfort mourners and discover the healing power of presence and witness hold in the mourner's journey.

Questions for Reflection

- Describe the experience fulfilling the mitzvah of *nichum avelim*.
- What did you notice about the experience that was similar or different from what we've learned?
- What questions do you still have?
- In what ways does has this experience brought up emotions and memories from your own life?

LESSON 7: ASSESSMENT

Write an article for the congregational bulletin on any of the following prompts: Responses should be a Jewish response that accounts for traditional views and modern sensibilities.

- My friend's mother died and I went to the funeral but didn't know what to say. OR I missed the funeral and can't bring myself to call them because I don't know what to say. What am I supposed to say?
- I've never been to a shiva before-- what am I supposed to do?
- My friend seems depressed after the death of their loved one-- what can I do to help?
- My friend's loved one died about a year ago, and I haven't seen or heard from my friend very much since then. What can I do? Have I lost a friend?

UNIT 4: A PERSONAL JOURNEY TOWARD REFUAH SH'LEIMAH: TESHUVAH AND TIKKUN ATZMI

This unit reframes and broadens the concept of healing by applying it to situations where brokenness is less readily apparent as it is with *bikkur cholim* and *nichum aveilim*. The term *refuah sh'leimah* modifies *refuah* (healing) with *sh'leimah* - the term for wholeness or completeness. *Sh'leimut* (wholeness) is a state of completeness or perfection that is both unattainable for human beings, and also the holy paradigm toward which a human might strive. Beyond healing from acute tragedies of sickness and death, **this unit suggests that healing constitutes any journey toward *shleimut* that requires different types of personal work: *teshuvah* and the healing of broken relationships with others and God; a process of *tikkun atzmi* (personal growth) that seeks balance in our individual blend of dispositions; and/or a process of *tikkun atzmi* that fosters a greater sense of personal authenticity and clarifies a sense of personal, God-given mission or core internal truths.**

UNIT SUMMARY

Unit Enduring Understandings

- For both healers and those in process of healing, the journey toward *refuah sh'leimah* (complete healing) extends over a lifetime.
- We cannot help heal others if we are not also engaged in healing of the self.
- *Teshuvah* as an interpersonal processes of forgiveness and *tikkun atzmi*, constitute healing paradigms that return us to core internal truths and repairs brokenness.
- Healing occurs in relationship.

Unit Essential Questions

- How does my own sense of wholeness affect my ability to help others heal?
- What are different ways I can make *teshuvah*?
- What does *tikkun atzmi* look like?
- What support do I need to help myself heal?

Objectives

- Learners will be able to define three different paradigms of personal healing.
- Learners will have the opportunity to apply three paradigms of personal healing to their lives.

- Students will be able to formulate tools and resources to sustain *teshuvah* and *tikkun atzmi* processes in the future.

Content Survey

This unit reframes and broadens the concept of healing by applying it to situations where brokenness is less readily apparent as it is with *bikkur cholim* and *nichum aveilim*. The term *refuah sh'leimah* modifies *refuah* (healing) with *sh'leimah* - the term for wholeness or completeness. *Sh'leimut* (wholeness) is a state of completeness or perfection that is both unattainable for human beings, and also the holy paradigm toward which a human might strive. Beyond healing from acute tragedies of sickness and death, **this unit suggests that healing constitutes any journey toward *shleimut* that requires different types of personal work: *teshuvah* and the healing of broken relationships with others and God; a process of *tikkun atzmi* (personal growth) that seeks balance in our individual blend of dispositions; and/or a process of *tikkun atzmi* that fosters a greater sense of personal authenticity and clarifies a sense of personal, God-given mission or core internal truths.**

The work of a healer is difficult, especially in the contexts of sickness and grief. Constant exposure to such pain has the real potential to wear down the healer and reduce their capacity to create safe space for the other. When we enter another's vulnerable space, we may make mistakes or unintentionally offend. And when we listen to others' sorrows, we may be privy to situations that hit "closer to home" than we were expecting, exposing our own wounds, and highlighting our blind spots and/or spiritual blocks. When these situations inevitably arise, we benefit from having tools and skills to navigate these moments and relationships, and to bring our own healing that restores our equilibrium. Put another way: we cannot help heal others if we are not also engaged in healing of the self.

As stated previously, this unit seeks to broaden the definition of healing to encompass any process that brings a person closer to a state of *sh'leimut*. Through three different models, these learners will explore the importance of healing the self as they engage in the work of healing others. (Lesson 1)

The first model (Lesson 2) is the traditional paradigm of *teshuvah* that is mostly addressed in relation to the High Holy Days. Maimonides sets out in his *Hilkhot Teshuvot* his understanding about healing in a relationship between two individuals. Maimonides explains that the pinnacle of *teshuvah* is returning to a situation that led to sin - the same exact situation with the same individual - but making a different choice. Short of this impossible standard, the learners will be invited to look into the extent to which a person must ask for forgiveness from another.

The second model (Lesson 3) is another paradigm from Maimonides, who believed that the soul, like the body, was subject to diseases and subject to healing. According to his view, soul diseases actually constituted exaggerations or deficiencies in a particular virtue. For example, he defined recklessness and cowardice as the respective exaggeration and deficiency of courage. Maimonides taught that a healthy soul was one that mediated

between the extremes of all their internal virtues and that, with the help of a teacher, an individual could better themselves by moderating those extremes to which one was predisposed. By presenting various virtue spectrums, learners will begin to uncover their personal imbalances and strategize about ways to work toward a position of moderation.

The final model of *teshuvah* (Lesson 4) comes from Martin Buber, who, in contrast to a forgiveness-based paradigm of *teshuvah*, posits a higher order of *teshuvah* that connects to personal authenticity and mission. He asks individuals to investigate three interconnected phenomena within a person: action, speech, and thought. Thoughts, which stem from the innermost parts of a person must inform their speech, which in turn must align with physical actions. A person has achieved this sense of *teshuvah* when thought, speech, and action are in total alignment - that to act differently than we profess, and to profess differently than our thoughts are a sign that we are not whole or complete. Learners will be encouraged to investigate this alignment in their own lives, and think about potential to increase this alignment across thought, speech, and action.

LESSON 1: THE JOURNEY TOWARD REFUAH SH'LEIMAH

Essential Questions

- What are different ways I can work toward *refuah sh'leimah*?
- In what ways are *teshuvah* and healing related?
- Why should healers work toward their own healing

Goals

- To posit that the process of *teshuvah*, the personal journey toward balance, and the individual's greater realization of authenticity and purpose are three paradigms to the journey of personal *refuah sh'leimah* (complete healing).
- To make the case that healers should engage in their own personal healing journey.
- To encourage learners to think about the tools they will need to continue a healing journey.

Objectives

- Learners will be able to define *refuah sh'leimah* expansively to include three paradigms of self-improvement.
- Learners will be able to articulate the wounds they might experience during healing work that would necessitate personal healing.
- Learners will be able to generate a list of possible tools they will need to continue a healing journey.

Activities

Set Induction

- **Ask: We've spent the last couple of units focused on healing others in vulnerable spaces and acute moments of grief. What other kinds of healing do you imagine you or others could benefit from?**

Defining *Refuah Sh'leimah*

- Define each Hebrew word using a word cloud to illuminate the range of meanings. Pay special attention to *Sh'leimah* and its connotations of wholeness, completeness, peace.
- Brainstorm the characteristics of a person who had achieved *refuah sh'leimah*.
- Optional: Draw the outline of a body on a large sheet of paper. Ask learners to write the characteristics they think of on the corresponding body part (e.g. write "viewing all with compassion" near the eyes; write "love for all" near the heart)

- **Important:** Connect the threads of your conversation to the three paradigms of personal healing in this unit:
 - Healing of relationships through *teshuvah*
 - Note: It may be helpful to provisionally define the word *teshuvah* before Lesson 2 (e.g.: repentance, return)
 - Healing of soul: moderating extremes in personality and growing toward virtue
 - Growth toward total authenticity: aligning thoughts, speech, and action

Why should healers be on their own healing journey?

- Show a clip from “Eat, Pray, Love”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xALMfLmgX7M>
- Ask learners to put themselves in Julia Roberts’ shoes: What kind of pain might come up for a healer (Julia Roberts’ character) in listening to the man’s story?
 - *Reactions to having an alcoholic/drug user/abuser in the family*
 - *Reaction to an experience with drunk driving/blacking out*
 - *Reaction to endangering kids*
 - *Feelings of regret for having missed moments in your children’s growing up*
- Note: you can use any clip that depicts a moment of healing that might trigger some countertransference in the healer

Closure

- Describe that at the end of the unit, you will ask learners to generate a list of tools and supports they will need for their own healing journeys.
- Ask the learners to look back at the description of a person who has achieved *refuah sh'leimah*. Ask each learner to generate an initial list of what it would take to go from where they are now to this ideal state of *refuah sh'leimah*.

LESSON 2: *TESHUVAH* AS *REFUAH*

Essential Questions

- How can I heal brokenness in relationships through *teshuvah*?

Goals

- To present *teshuvah* and seeking forgiveness as an act of healing for the self and for the relationship.
- To highlight the personal work and commitment necessary to repair and heal wounds.

Objectives

- Learners will be able to summarize the Jewish process of seeking *teshuvah* and asking for another's forgiveness.
- Learners will be able to differentiate between different degrees of *teshuvah*.
- Learners will be able to analyze the internal processes and interpersonal dynamics behind seeking forgiveness.
- Learners will be able to develop a plan to resolve an unresolved harm you caused another.

Activities

Set Induction Option

- Play some movie/TV clips depicting broken relationships and an attempt at forgiveness and healing.
- Suggestions:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwfuUyTMpVY> ("A Fish Called Wanda," 1988)
 - <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/les-miserables/forgive-yourself> ("Les Miserables," 2012)
 - <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B018V2S51Y/?autoplay=1> ("Transparent," Season 2: Episode 7, Scene 1)
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHqi6ZB_FoU ("Invictus," 2009)
- Ask after each clip: What can we learn about forgiveness and repentance?

Set Induction Option

- Have learners think about a broken relationship or an encounter when they wronged another. Ask: what would have to happen to repair that breach.

Learning:

- Read and discuss selections from Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Teshuvot* in a jigsaw. (See Attached Worksheet)
- Split up the learners into three groups and assign each group to read and study each text together:
 - **Mishneh Torah Hilchot Teshuvot 2:1-3** -- Asks learners to compare different models of repentance and confession with respect to the ways people make *teshuvah* through thought, speech, and action. The highest form of *teshuvah* combines all three.
 - **Mishneh Torah Hilchot Teshuvot 2:4-5** -- Examining the different actions individuals might take in making *teshuvah*. Learners are asked about the efficacy of each, and about the value/efficacy of public confession.
 - **Mishneh Torah Hilchot Teshuvot 2:9** -- Examining the ways that one must ask forgiveness from an aggrieved party as part of the *teshuvah* process.
- Regroup the learners so there is at least one person from each text group in each new group. Learners should summarize their text for the group using the analysis questions provided on the worksheets. Then they should report out the major points of the conversation they had, particularly around each text's final question. After teaching each other, learners should ask the questions listed under Synthesis Questions.
 - Alternative: If the teacher feels that their particular learners will not benefit from the second half of the jigsaw and won't be able to teach each other effectively, then gather the learners as a whole class. Allow each text group to present jointly. Then pose the synthesis questions to the whole group.
- Synthesis Questions:
 - **Ask: What might prevent us from engaging fully in this process of seeking *teshuvah*?**
 - **Ask: Are there "red line" breaches in a relationship that would preclude healing?**

Closure:

- Ask: Think back to the broken relationship or the encounter from which you need to ask forgiveness for *teshuvah*. What concrete steps can you take toward *teshuvah* as inspired by Maimonides' model?

Lesson 2 Worksheet 1

Mishneh Torah, Repentance 2:1-3

(1) What is complete *teshuvah*? When a person has the opportunity to commit the same sin, and he possess the ability to do it, but he distances [himself] and does not commit it due to [his] *teshuvah* and not from his fear nor from lack of ability. What is an example? A person who had illicit sex with a woman, and after some time he is alone with her, and he still loves her and possesses his physical ability and is in the same country where he committed the sin, but he distances himself and does not sin – that person is a complete *ba'al teshuvah* (master of repentance)...

And if a person only does *teshuvah* in the days of old age when he is not physically able to do what he once did, even though this is not the highest *teshuvah*, it is effective and that person is a *ba'al teshuvah*.

Even if a person sinned all his days and did *teshuvah* on the day of his death and died in his *teshuvah*, all his sins are forgiven...

(2) What is *teshuvah*? It is when a person abandons the sin that he sinned, removes it from his thoughts, and commits in his heart that he will not do it again... and also that he regrets sinning... and he must confess verbally and express his internal commitments.

(3) Anyone who confesses verbally and does not commit in his heart to abandon [sin], is like a person who immerses [in a *mikveh*/purity pool] while holding an impure creature in his hand, such that the bath is not effective until he sends away the impure creature...

Place an “X” where applicable in the following chart:

	The individual removes their sin in:		
	Heart/Thought	Speech	Action
Complete <i>Teshuvah</i> (Paragraph 1)			
<i>Teshuvah</i> (Paragraph 2)			
“Lip Service” (Paragraph 3)			

Questions:

1. What differentiates Maimonides’ understanding of “*teshuvah*” and “complete *teshuvah*”?
2. Why might Maimonides look down upon the person in Paragraph 3?
3. Which paragraph’s model does your *teshuvah* most often resemble?

Lesson 2 Worksheet 2

Mishneh Torah: Repentance 2:4-5

(4) Among the ways of *teshuvah* are: [a] for the penitent to constantly shout before God with crying and pleading; [b] to do *tzedakah* according to his ability; [c] to distance himself very far from the thing in which he sinned; [d] to change his name, meaning to say “I am someone else and I am not the same person who did those things”; [e] to change all of his actions for good and onto the straight path; [f] to go into exile, because exile atones for sins since it forces him to bow and to be humble and of low spirit.

(5) It is very praiseworthy for the penitent to confess in public and disclose his sins to them, and reveal interpersonal sins to others and tell them: “I surely sinned against so-and-so and did such-and-such to him; but today, behold, I return and regret.” But anyone who is prideful and does not disclose, but rather hides his sins – his *teshuvah* is not complete... What situation are we talking about? Interpersonal sins.

With regard to sins between a person and God, one need not expose oneself; and it is arrogance if one reveals them. Instead, one should return before God, blessed is He, specify his sins before Him, and confess them in public only generally. And it is better for him that his sins are not revealed....

Fill in the following chart:

Technique of <i>teshuvah</i> (return from sin)	How might each technique for <i>teshuvah</i> help (and/or hinder) the penitent person to <u>return</u> to a righteous path?
A: Constantly shout before God with crying/pleading	
B: Do <i>tzedakah</i>	
C: Distance self from sin	
D: ‘Change your name’	
E: Change all actions	
F: Go into exile	
Publicly confess interpersonal sins	
Publicly confess sins between self and God	

Questions:

- Which methods do you imagine are most effective? Least effective?
- What techniques missing from the list?
- Why might public disclosure be important to a complete repentance?

Lesson 2 Worksheet 3

Mishneh Torah: Repentance 2:9

(9) *Teshuvah* and Yom Kippur only atone for transgression between man and God (e.g. one who eats a forbidden food, has a forbidden sexual relationship). But transgressions between man and his fellow (e.g. hurting his fellow, cursing his fellow, stealing from him) are never forgiven until he gives his fellow what he owes him, and [his fellow] is appeased [and forgives]. Even if he returned the money he owed his [fellow], he must appease him and ask him to forgive him. Even if he only perturbed his fellow verbally, he must make amends and meet with him until he forgives him.

If his fellow does not wish to forgive him, he should bring a line of three people who are friends with him and they will approach him and ask [forgiveness] from him. If he does not give in to them, he must bring people a second and third time. If he still does not give in, they should leave him alone, and that person who did not forgive – he is the sinner. ` But if it was his teacher, he must come and go even a thousand times until he forgives him.

Individually or as a group, create a diagram tracking the process of asking forgiveness from your fellow:

Questions:

1. How many times does Maimonides imagine you ask for forgiveness directly?
2. According to Maimonides, after offering a rejected apology, how many of their friends must you convince of your sincerity to ask for forgiveness on your behalf?
3. What kind of effort does it take to obtain forgiveness in this way?
4. What kind of society do we need to live in to make this model a possibility?

LESSON 3: *TIKKUN ATZMI AND HEALING THE SOUL*

Essential Questions

- When is our soul sick and how can we heal her?
- How can we find healing through personal stability or emotional balance?

Goals

- To present Maimonides' paradigm of moderation and virtues cultivation as a model of *tikkun atzmi* and personal healing.

Objectives (SSBAT)

- Learners will be able to recall character virtues and their related spectrum of internal disposition.
- Learners will be able to identify themselves on various disposition spectra.
- Learners will be able to develop a plan to bring themselves toward moderation in a chosen disposition.

Background:

Read: Maimonides' Eight Chapters (Chapters 3 and 4)¹ and Mishneh Torah: Hilkhot Deot 1-2²

- Maimonides proposed to cure sicknesses of the soul as one cured sickness of the body. The sick would go to a doctor who would prescribe some foul medicine that would end in bodily wellness. The soul-sick “should consult the sages, the moral physicians, who will advise them against indulging in those evils which they (the morally ill) think are good, so that they may be healed...” (Twersky, ed., *Eight Chapters*, 367)
- Maimonides posited the virtuous dispositions as balanced upon a spectrum with a vice at either extreme. At one extreme was a deficiency of the virtue, at the opposite extreme was its exaggeration. Using the example of courage: cowardice is its deficiency and recklessness its exaggeration. For humility: self-abasement is its deficiency and arrogance its exaggeration.

• _____

¹ Moses ben Maimon, “Mishneh Torah: Laws According to Moral Dispositions and Ethical Conduct,” in *A Maimonides Reader*, Isadore Twersky, ed., 51-56 (Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 1972).

² Moses ben Maimon, “Eight Chapters,” in *A Maimonides Reader*, Isadore Twersky, ed., 366-376 (Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 1972).

- Either with help from a teacher/mentor, or of their own volition, a person who acts on one end of the extreme should deliberately perform acts on the other extreme as way toward habituating their action toward the mean.
 - Maimonides suggests that the wrathful person should train themselves to feel no reaction to physical or verbal assault until anger leaves the heart completely.
 - He suggests that the prideful person should experience degradation until arrogance leaves the heart and they can walk a moderate path.
 - “The moral man will constantly examine his characteristics, weigh his deeds, and daily investigate his psychic condition; and if, at any time, he finds his soul deviating to one extreme or the other, he will immediately hasten to apply the proper remedy, and not suffer an evil aptitude to acquire strength...by a constant repetition of that evil action which it occasioned.” (Twersky, ed., *Eight Chapters*, 374)
- Maimonides believed that by directing all actions toward this mediated way, a person can “reach the highest degree of perfection possible to a human being, thereby approaching God, and sharing in His happiness.” (Twersky, ed., *Eight Chapters*, 376)

Activities

Set Induction: Plot yourself on the spectrum:

- Maimonides sets out many virtues that exist in the center of a spectrum ranging from the virtue’s extreme deficiency to its extreme exaggeration (courage: the deficiency of which is cowardice and the exaggeration of which is recklessness).
- Plot out these many spectra on post-its around the room and give each individual a different colored marker. Invite them to identify where they think they lie on each spectrum.
- The learners will have been sharing intimately throughout the curriculum, but if this exercise feels too self-revealing to attempt in public, the exercise can be adapted to create individual worksheet of spectra and the learners can fill in a worksheet privately.

Read and discuss excerpts of Maimonides’s *Eight Chapters* and/or *Mishneh Torah: Hilkhhot Deot 1-2*.

- Alternative: If the educator is familiar and/or comfortable with the practice of *Mussar*, than an introduction to its philosophy of self-betterment and spiritual development is easily substituted as the primary text and guiding framework.

Develop a plan for moderation.

- Before this activity, learners should understand the following concept from Maimonides:

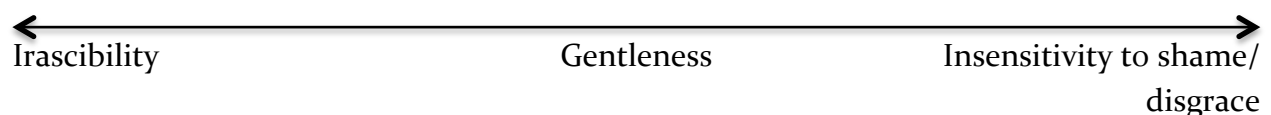
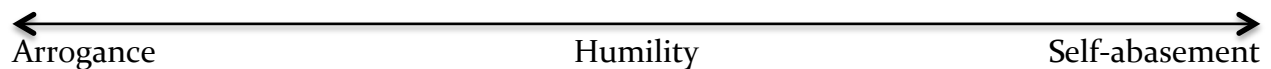
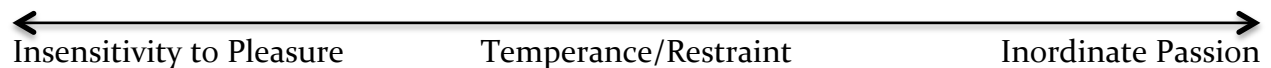
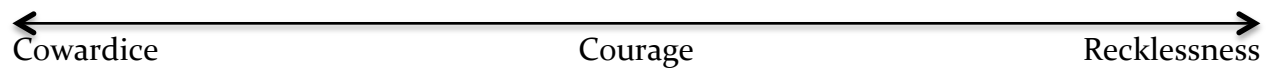
- Maimonides suggests that in order to find a moderated place on a virtue spectrum, one must overcorrect (e.g. If one is reckless, then they must overcorrect by acting with cowardliness until the recklessness is tempered into courage) with the guidance of the righteous person who can guide them on this journey.
- Join with a partner: From the Virtue Spectrums Worksheet, one partner should identify a virtue that appears out of balance, and for which s/he would like to find balance. The pair should then brainstorm actions from the opposite side of the spectrum that s/he can take that would serve as a moderating influence, and bring the individual toward the center of the spectrum. Repeat for the other partner.
 - Over the course of a week following the lesson, these learners should plan to overcorrect in their spectrum. Pairs should communicate with each other about how they feel taking on this assignment to overcorrect, hold each other accountable, and provide support and guidance when necessary through the week.
- Learners should come back in the next session prepared to discuss their experience and if they've noticed any changes in their thought patterns.
 - Optional: Teacher might ask for a formal written reflection to focus learners' thoughts.
 - Possible Questions for Reflection:
 - How did it feel to try to overcorrect in your actions?
 - Did you feel like this experience worked?
 - How do we find the right balance for ourselves? Will we ever find the "right" balance?

Worksheet Lesson 3

Maimonides' Virtue Spectrums

Mark where you perceive your actions fall on the following spectrums:

Ex.: If you perceive your actions as displaying cowardice, mark an X somewhere on the left side of the first spectrum.



LESSON 4: RETURNING TO MYSELF

Essential Questions

- How can I enact the unfolding healing processes of exploring existential purpose and internal authenticity?

Goals

- To review the Virtue Moderation from the previous lesson
- To reframe *teshuvah* beyond a return to proper action, to a coherent sense of purpose, and to an alignment of a person's thought, speech, and action.
- To define this work of self-betterment as a healing process.

Objectives

- Learners will be able to reflect upon their experience of moderating a virtue. (From previous lesson)
- Learners will be able to apply Buber's analysis of thought, speech, and action to an area of their life.

Background:

In his *The Way of Man According to the Teachings of Hasidism*, Martin Buber attempts to concisely communicate his understanding of a Hasidic ideal for living. Two concepts of his stand out as important processes of healing and self-growth.

In Chapter 4, Buber explains that the root of all conflict is that people do not align their thought, speech, and action. Using a hasidic tale to illustrate his point, he exhorts readers to “straighten yourself out” and bring these three aspects of the self into alignment: Say what you mean, mean what you say, and act accordingly.

Chapter 5 posits a “higher-order” form of *teshuvah* as a turning that brings someone fully toward God, by which he means toward fulfilling the particular purpose or mission for which God created that person. He continues to say that this seeking of existential purpose does not ultimately serve personal ends, but rather that fulfilling one's unique, God-given purpose helps to perfect the world.

Activities

Set Induction: Reviewing the Virtues Moderation assignment from the previous week.

- Learners should reflect upon their self-improvement work through the following questions:

- How did it feel to try to overcorrect in your actions?
- Did you feel like this experience worked?
- How do we find the right balance for ourselves? Will we ever find the “right” balance?
- Optionally, learners can prepare for this conversation by responding to these questions in written form prior to class and share this prepared reflection.

Text Exploration: Finding Personal Authenticity and Existential Purpose as a higher-order *teshuvah*.

- Note: This is perhaps the most personal or sensitive work in this unit. The personal exploration exercise should remain confidential, and only shared out into the group if a participant feels comfortable opening up. Even the discussion might remain a conversation that speaks in general terms if learners do not want to be self-disclosing in this space.
- Read and discuss selections from Buber, *The Way of Man According to Chasidism*, Chapter 4.
- Discuss:
 - The implications for alignment of thought, speech, and action.
 - The phenomenon of misaligned thought, speech, and action.
 - E.g. Prejudiced thoughts that one actively dismisses by professing colorblindness (speech) even though they don’t engage with other racial minorities
 - E.g. Lying
 - E.g. Coming out as LGBTQ

Personal exploration

- Learners can identify a place in their lives that feels misaligned between thought, speech, and action. Allow them time to journal or diagram through free-writing each component, explore the reasons for what sustains this lack of alignment, and consider what it might take to effect change.
- Note: Use your discretion-- if learners want to share after this freewriting session, they may, but it is by no means necessary.

Unit Wrap-up

- Remind learners of the personal healing work they’ve engaged in during the unit.
- **Ask: What are the tools they’ve learned, resources they’ve acquired, and self-knowledge they’ve gained for their healing journeys?**
- In what ways can the work of healing the self help their role as healer to others?

Lesson 4 Text

Buber, *The Way of Man According to Chasidism*, Chapter 4

IV. Beginning with oneself

Once when Rabbi Yitzhak of Vorki was playing host to certain prominent men of Israel, they discussed the value to a household of an honest and efficient servant. They said that a good servant made for good management and cited Joseph at whose hands everything prospered. Rabbi Yitzhak objected. "I once thought that too," he said. "But then my teacher showed me that everything depends on the master of the house. You see, in my youth my wife gave me a great deal of trouble, and though I myself put up with her as best I could, I was sorry for the servants. So I went to my teacher, Rabbi David of Lelov, and asked him whether I should oppose my wife. All he said was: 'Why do you speak to me? Speak to yourself!' I thought over these words for quite a while before I understood them. But I did understand them when I recalled a certain saying of the Baal-Shem: 'There is thought, speech and action. Thought corresponds to one's wife, speech to one's children, and action to one's servants. Whoever straightens himself out in regard to all three will find that everything prospers at his hands.' Then I understood what my teacher had meant: everything depended on myself."

This story touches upon one of the deepest and most difficult problems of our life: the true origin of conflict between man and man.

Manifestations of conflict are usually explained either by the motives of which the quarrelling parties are conscious as the occasion of their quarrel, and by the objective situations and processes which underlie these motives and in which both parties are involved; or, proceeding analytically, we try to explore the unconscious complexes to which these motives relate like mere symptoms of an illness to the organic disturbances themselves. Hasidic teaching coincides with this conception in that it, too, derives the problematics of external from that of internal life. But it differs in two essential points, one fundamental and one practical, the latter of which is even more important than the former.

The fundamental difference is that hasidic teaching is not concerned with the exploration of particular psychical complications, but envisages man as a whole. This is, however, by no means a quantitative difference. For the hasidic conception springs from the realization that the isolation of elements and partial processes from the whole hinders the comprehension of the whole, and that real transformation, real restoration, at first of the single person and subsequently of the relationship between him and his fellow-men, can only be achieved by the comprehension of the whole as a whole. (Putting it paradoxically: the search for the centre of gravity shifts it and thereby frustrates the whole attempt at overcoming the problematics involved.) This is not to say that there is no need to consider all the phenomena of the soul; but no one of them should be made so much the centre of attention as if everything else could be derived from it; rather, they should all be made starting-points — not singly but in their vital connection.

The practical difference is that in Hasidism man is not treated as an object of examination but is called up to "straighten himself out." At first, a man should himself realize that conflict-situations between himself and others are nothing but the effects of conflict-situations in his own soul; then he should try to overcome this inner conflict, so that afterwards he may go out to his fellow-men and enter into new, transformed relationships with them.

Lesson 4 Text

Buber, The Way of Man According to Chasidism, Chapter 4 (cont.)

Man naturally tries to avoid this decisive reversal — extremely repugnant to him in his accustomed relationship to the world — by referring him who thus appeals to him, or his own soul, if it is his soul that makes the appeal, to the fact that every conflict involves two parties and that, if he is expected to turn his attention from the external to his own internal conflict, his opponent should be expected to do the same. But just this perspective, in which a man sees himself only as an individual contrasted with other individuals, and not as a genuine person, whose transformation helps towards the transformation of the world, contains the fundamental error which hasidic teaching denounces.

The essential thing is to begin with oneself, and at this moment a man has nothing in the world to care about than this beginning. Any other attitude would distract him from what he is about to begin, weaken his initiative, and thus frustrate the entire bold undertaking.

Rabbi Bunan taught: "Our sages say: 'Seek peace in your own place.' You cannot find peace anywhere save in your own self. In the psalm we read: 'There is no peace in my bones because of my sin.' When a man has made peace within himself, he will be able to make peace in the whole world."

However, the story from which I started does not confine itself to pointing out the true origin of external conflicts, i.e., the internal conflict, in a general way. The quoted saying of the Baal-Shem states exactly in what the decisive inner conflict consists. It is the conflict between three principles in man's being and life, the principle of thought, the principle of speech, and the principle of action. The origin of all conflict between me and my fellow-men is that I do not say what I mean, and that I do not do what I say.

For this confuses and poisons, again and again and in increasing measure, the situation between myself and the other man, and I, in my internal disintegration, am no longer able to master it but, contrary to all my illusions, have become its slave. By our contradiction, our lie, we foster conflict-situations and give them power over us until they enslave us. From here, there is no way out but by the crucial realization: Everything depends on myself, and the crucial decision: I will straighten myself out.

But in order that a man may be capable of this great feat, he must first find his way from the casual, accessory elements of his existence to his own self; he must find his own self, not the trivial ego of the egotistic individual, but the deeper self of the person living in a relationship to the world. And that is also contrary to everything we are accustomed to.

I will close this chapter with an old jest as retold by a zaddik. Rabbi Hanokh told this story: There was once a man who was very stupid. When he got up in the morning it was so hard for him to find his clothes that at night he almost hesitated to go to bed for thinking of the trouble he would have on waking. One evening he finally made a great effort, took paper and pencil and as he undressed noted down exactly where he put everything he had on. The next morning, very well pleased with himself, he took the slip of paper in his hand and read: "cap" "pants" — there it was, he set it on his head; there they lay, he got into them; and so it went until he was fully dressed. "That's all very well, but now where am I myself?" he asked in great consternation. "Where in the world am I?" He looked and looked, but it was a vain search; he could not find himself. "And that is how it is with us," said the rabbi.

UNIT 5: SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL QUESTIONS IN HEALING

Having steeped themselves in Jewish paradigms of healing, this unit will ask learners to set down language describing their current understanding of essential concepts: the nature of sickness, death, and healing, God's place in those processes; their role in the healing process; the obligation to engage in healing work even when difficult, the limitations upon healing. To provide Jewish models of thinking, this unit will expose the learners to different questions and paradigms of thought relevant to healing: predeterminism, suffering, commandedness, radical obligation (Levinas), and relational healing (Buber).

UNIT SUMMARY

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Healing occurs in relationship: the person in process of healing in relation to him/herself, the healer, the community, God.

Unit Essential Questions:

- How do I understand the nature of sickness and death?
- What role does God play in the healing process? What role do I play?
- How can we help heal when the other is hard to care for?
- What are the limits to my capacity or ability to heal?

Content Survey

The human journey from sickness to health and back again can powerfully expose human vulnerabilities in a culture that values strength and self-sufficiency. This exposure to the frailty of humanity touches those people who are ill and all those who are privy to, and witnesses of this journey in another human being. Much of the curriculum to this point focuses on tangible matters: the practical imperative that Jews have to visit the sick and console the bereaved as agents of healing. Perhaps learners have begun to articulate the difficult spiritual and existential questions that underlie all that has come before. Now, the curriculum offers its participants an opportunity to confront some of these questions directly.

How do I understand the nature of sickness and death? What role does God play in the healing process? What role do I play? How can we help heal when the other is hard to care for? What are the limits to my capacity or ability to heal? This curriculum offers learners a brief opportunity to answer these questions with the full knowledge that their

answers are not static, and will change as each participant's beliefs grow and evolve with time.

This unit is the most variable, and therefore, the least structured. The four unit EQs are huge, existential questions, and any answers that these learners have for them will be provisional ones, and subject to change in relation to emerging experiences when serving as healer, or in relation to personal experiences of sickness, loss, and healing. Each lesson will open up one of the existential questions and provide a range of “answers” and resources to which you can expose your learners. You, the teacher, have the best sense of your learners, and will not offer a text that heavily posits God's agency in healing when you have a group of learners who do not connect to God.

Take some time to read the introduction to each lesson. In the absence of specific content that this curriculum stipulates you ‘must’ explore, these introductions will describe the goals for each lesson in detail, and provide a sense of how the lesson fits into the overall sequence of the unit. Many of the resources suggested are present on a Resource Sheet at the end of each lesson. Feel free to use other resources as necessary or befits your expertise.

The content of this unit is quite theoretical. Thus, the set inductions and closures are designed to ground the learners in something concrete. Particularly in the closure to every lesson, learners should answer the following question in a journal entry: *The next time I visit the sick or comfort the mourner, what is something new that I will be thinking about? How might this impact my work as a healer?* Hopefully, the teaching and discussions will naturally turn to grappling with these larger questions in connection to learners' healing work. Asking this question as closure will help concretize the learning for the session, and provide a series of insights for learners' future reference.

LESSON 1: HOW DO I UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF SICKNESS AND DEATH?

Lesson Introduction:

The curriculum to this point has explored healing's different manifestations, and this first lesson becomes the place to uncover what they believe about the nature of sickness, disease, and death. The approach learners take to answer this question will speak to their larger belief system that they've been developing (and perhaps articulating) throughout the course of their life, and the course of this curriculum.

In the healing environment, the healer's beliefs about the nature of sickness, illness, and death should inform the healer, but not affect the healing itself. For example: if you believe that disease is a biological inevitability and you visit a cancer patient who expresses the belief that the disease is a test sent by God, you do the patient a disservice by inserting your beliefs onto their own. However, by understanding the range of beliefs they will encounter, learners will be better equipped to relate to the sick or mourning with empathy.

The answers surrounding the question of the nature of sickness and death run the spectrum from scientific to deterministic and religious, and each permutation of an answer holds implications for how a learner makes meaning out of their own experiences of sickness and death, and out of their experiences as healers who interact with situations of sickness and death. This curriculum makes no claim to any "correct" answer. Rather, this lesson is designed to encourage learners to think about where they stand, to articulate belief in a concrete way, and to provide opportunities to reflect upon the implications of this articulated belief on their healing work.

Possible "answers" to the question "what is the nature of sickness and death" all attempt to make meaning out of the "why" of pain, suffering, and mortality. (See attached Text Resources)

- Punishment
 - God (and/or the Universe) punishes me because of something I (or my family, or my community) has done wrong. This is a theology particularly present in the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic literature, and with later Jewish thinkers who need God to act justly, and for calamities to have justification. This theology underpins the **Book of Job, Numbers 14:18, Deuteronomy 11:13-17, and the story of Miriam afflicted with leprosy (Numbers 12)**. The rabbis imagine that the punishment of *karet* shortens lifespan, and that the number of days a person is sick prior to death reflects their standing with God (**Babylonian Talmud Moed Katan 28a**)
- Predeterminism
 - God (or my biology) has determined a lifespan for me and/or the illnesses to which I am predisposed. The extent to which a person can change their "fate", then, is a matter of degrees. This idea is particularly present in the

Unetaneh Tokef section of High Holy Day liturgy, where “repentance, prayer, and charity can temper (or make more bearable) the decreed punishment.”

- Test
 - God (or the Universe) is testing me through this trial; I can handle it and it will help me grow. This answer to the “why” focuses less on the cause of the illness so much as it attempts a functional explanation of what sickness comes to teach.
- Rational
 - Sickness and death come as a consequence of the natural world that follows laws
 - Sickness and death come as a result of randomness in our world:
 - Sickness and death come as the hands of another.

Essential Question

- How do I understand the nature of sickness and death?

Goals

- To stimulate learners’ thinking about God’s agency in the world, by asking them to think through the nature of sickness, death, and decay.

Objectives

- Learners will have the opportunity to describe how they make meaning about the nature of sickness and death.
- Learners will have the opportunity to clarify their belief system in relation to new ideas and peer feedback.
- Learners will have the opportunity to apply these beliefs to their future healing work.

Activities

Introduction:

- Paper tear midrash-- Using no other materials but colored construction paper and glue sticks (no scissors, pens, etc.), learners should create an artistic midrash about sickness (what it is, where it comes from, etc.). After creating for 15-20 minutes, learners will have the opportunity to share their art and their thought process with a partner and/or with the whole group.

Exploring “Answers”

- Choose a range of possible answers (see Introduction) and their corresponding texts.
- Possible presentations:
 - A gallery of viewpoints around the room to which learners can respond.
 - Text learning with questions for discussion.
 - A debate between two contrasting “answers”
- Learners can try to map their representation of sickness from the Paper-tear midrash exercise on the stances or categories the teacher presents.

Closure:

- Journal Entry: The next time I visit the sick or comfort the mourner, what is something new that I will be thinking about? How might this impact my work as a healer?

Lesson 1 Text Resources

Textual Resources for “Exploring ‘Answers’”

Punishment:

- **Excerpts from Numbers 12:1-15**

(1) Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married: “He married a Cushite woman!” (2) They said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?” The LORD heard it.... (5) The LORD came down in a pillar of cloud, stopped at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, “Aaron and Miriam!” The two of them came forward; (6) and He said, “Hear these My words: When a prophet of the LORD arises among you, I make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. (7) Not so with My servant Moses; he is trusted throughout My household. (8) With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the LORD. How then did you not shrink from speaking against My servant Moses?” (9) Still incensed with them, the LORD departed. (10) As the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam stricken with snow-white scales. When Aaron turned toward Miriam, he saw that she was stricken with scales. (11) And Aaron said to Moses, “O my lord, account not to us the sin which we committed in our folly. (12) Let her not be as one dead, who emerges from his mother’s womb with half his flesh eaten away.” (13) So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “O God, pray heal her!” (14) But the LORD said to Moses, “If her father spat in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of camp for seven days, and then let her be readmitted.” (15) So Miriam was shut out of camp seven days; and the people did not march on until Miriam was readmitted.

- **Job 4**

(1) Then Eliphaz the Temanite said in reply: (2) If one ventures a word with you, will it be too much? But who can hold back his words? (3) See, you have encouraged many; you have strengthened failing hands. (4) Your words have kept him who stumbled from falling; you have braced knees that gave way. (5) But now that it overtakes you, it is too much; it reaches you, and you are unnerved. (6) Is not your piety your confidence, your integrity your hope? (7) Think now, what innocent man ever perished? Where have the upright been destroyed? (8) As I have seen, those who plow evil and sow mischief reap them. (9) They perish by a blast from God, Are gone at the breath of His nostrils.

- **Numbers 14:18**

‘The LORD! Slow to anger and abounding in kindness; forgiving iniquity and transgression; yet not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children, upon the third and fourth generations.’

Lesson 1 Text Resources

Textual Resources for “Exploring ‘Answers’” (cont.)

Punishment (cont.)

- **Deuteronomy 11:13-17**

(13) If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving the LORD your God and serving Him with all your heart and soul, (14) I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late. You shall gather in your new grain and wine and oil— (15) I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle—and thus you shall eat your fill. (16) Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them. (17) For the LORD’s anger will flare up against you, and He will shut up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that the LORD is assigning to you.

- **Moed Katan 28a: (Koren Edition)**

If one dies when he is fifty years old, this is death through *karet*, [the divine punishment of excision, meted out for the most serious transgressions].... Rabba said: [Not only is death at the age of fifty a sign of *karet*,] but even death from fifty to sixty years of age is death by *karet*.... Sudden death is also considered to be a form of *karet*.

Predeterminism:

- **Unetaneh Tokef (High Holy Day Liturgy)**

And with a great shofar it is sounded, and a thin silent voice shall be heard. And the angels shall be alarmed, and dread and fear shall seize them as they proclaim: behold! The Day of Judgment on which the hosts of heaven shall be judged, for they too shall not be judged blameless by you, and all creatures shall parade before you as a herd of sheep. As a shepherd herds his flock, directing his sheep to pass under his staff, so do you shall pass, count, and record the souls of all living, and decree a limit to each person's days, and inscribe their final judgment.

On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed - how many shall pass away and how many shall be born, who shall live and who shall die, who in good time, and who by an untimely death, who by water and who by fire, who by sword and who by wild beast, who by famine and who by thirst, who by earthquake and who by plague, who by strangulation and who by stoning, who shall have rest and who shall wander, who shall be at peace and who shall be pursued, who shall be serene and who shall be tormented, who shall become impoverished and who shall become wealthy, who shall be debased, and who shall be exalted.

But repentance, prayer and righteousness avert the severity of the decree.

Lesson 1 Text Resources

Textual Resources for “Exploring ‘Answers’” (cont. 2)

Test:

- God (or the Universe) is testing me through this trial; I can handle it and it will help me grow. This answer to the “why” focuses less on the cause of the illness so much as it attempts a functional explanation of what sickness comes to teach.
- Does God “temper the wind to the shorn lamb”? Does He never ask more of us than we can endure? My experience, alas, has been otherwise. I have seen people crack under the strain of unbearable tragedy. I have seen marriages break up after the death of a child, because parents blamed each other for not taking proper care or for carrying the defective gene, or simply because the memories they shared were unendurably painful. I have seen some people made noble and sensitive through suffering, but I have seen many more people grow cynical and bitter. I have seen people become jealous of those around them, unable to take part in the routines of normal living. I have seen cancers and automobile accidents take the life of one member of a family, and functionally end the lives of five others, who could never again be the normal, cheerful people they were before disaster struck. If God is testing us, He must know by now that many of us fail the test. If He is only giving us burdens we can bear, I have seen Him miscalculate far too often.
--Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 31.

Rationalist Explanations

- Sickness and death come as a consequence of the natural world that follows laws: “Once the destroyer is given permission to destroy, it does not differentiate between the righteous and the wicked.”
--Talmud Bava Kamma 60a
- Sickness and death come as a result of randomness in our world:
[Therefore] we are responsible for taking precautions for our own safety. In the Talmud, Rabbi Yannai argues that before crossing a bridge, one should examine the bridge {Talmud Shabbat 32a}. He goes on to say that a person should never put him or herself in a dangerous situations, reasoning, ‘I’ve been good, so God will make a miracle for me.’ There *are* miracles, as any physician can attest, but we do not know on what basis they are distributed. It is not on the basis of deserving, in any case.
-- Rachel Adler, “Bad Things Happen” in *Judaism and Health: A Handbook of Practical, Professional, and Scholarly Resources*, ed. Jeff Levin and Michelle Prince (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013).
- Sickness and death come as the hands of another.

LESSON 2: WHAT ROLE DOES GOD PLAY IN THE HEALING PROCESS? WHAT ROLE DO I PLAY?

Lesson Introduction:

After exploring a range of beliefs about the nature of sickness and death, learners clarified their own positions, and gained an appreciation for the types of beliefs they will encounter with those sick and in mourning, in order to relate to these individuals with empathy.

In a similar fashion, learners must also provisionally answer the question of God's role in the healing process and how they understand their roles as healers. Much of learners' beliefs will depend on their understanding of God's agency in the world: If God causes disease, then God can heal; if disease is a natural process (whether God initiated this natural process or not), can God defy nature to heal disease?

In the healing environment, the healer's beliefs about God's and their own role in healing should inform the healer, but not affect the healing itself. For example: if you believe that God suffers with the mourner or the *choleh*, and the mourner or *choleh* does not believe in God, you do the other a disservice by inserting your beliefs onto their own. Possible "Answers" to the question of God's agency in the healing process, and healer's role in the healing process:

- God has the power to heal, whether as a matter of course or through miracles. Healers can channel God's healing energy, in the manner of healer rabbis who wrote amulets or talismans with mystical names for God to aid in the healing process. **Berachot 34b: R. Hanina b. Dosa**
- God is present and provides comfort to humans who suffer in that the *Shechinah* rests above the head of the *choleh*: **Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 335:3 and Lesson 2.3**
- God does not heal, but as a partner in creation, God does suffer when humans suffer. See: **Bradley Shavit Artson, "Ba-derekh: On The Way — A Presentation of Process Theology," *Conservative Judaism* 62, nos. 1-2 (Fall-Winter 2011).**
- Healing can occur during the intimacy of I-Thou moments between healer and *choleh/avel* (**Buber: I and Thou**)
- A healer does not heal directly-- through relationship with the Other, they help that Other heal themselves. This healer can be a witness to pain and catharsis, miracles (medical and divine), and healing.
- A Chasidic understanding: Each individual's soul is a spark of God that shines through most brightly through good deeds and *mitzvot*. This spark can become occluded through sin, which can lead to illnesses of the soul, physical illness, or further sin. Healing can occur when the light from the divine spark in the healer encounters the light from the divine spark in the sick - thereby removing a layer of occlusion from both. (**Sfat Emet**)

Essential Questions

- What role does God play in the healing process?
- What role do I play in the healing process?

Goals

- In light of the previous lesson on God's agency, this lesson asks learners to consider God's place in the healing process, their individual place in the healing process, and their sense of responsibility, religiously-mandated or otherwise, to engage in healing acts.

Objectives

- Learners will be able to describe their belief about God's agency in healing and how they as outside parties affect healing in another.
- Learners will be able to compare and contrast foundational theological tenets of Chassidism, Buber, and Levinas as related to sickness and the act of healing another.

Activities

Set Induction: The Ultimate Care Package for the Sick or Mourner

- Ask the learners to brainstorm the ultimate care package that a sick person or mourner would want. Learners might start by thinking of items that address physical needs; encourage them to think about emotional and spiritual needs.
- Note: this activity is designed to go beyond the typical response of "we bring food", and designed to elicit answers like: (someone to witness, someone to reassure, silent company, my dead relative back, God, answers)
- Reflect upon this list with the learners: who can provide the person with this "care package item?"

Exploring "Answers"

- Choose a range of possible answers (see Introduction) and their corresponding texts (see appended Text Resources).
- Possible presentations:
 - A gallery of viewpoints around the room that learners can respond to
 - Text learning with questions for discussion.
 - A debate between two contrasting "answers"

Closure:

- Journal Entry: The next time I visit the sick or comfort the mourner, what is something new that I will be thinking about? How might this impact my work as a healer?

Lesson 2 Text Resources

Textual Resources for “Exploring ‘Answers’”

God has the power to heal, and healers can channel God’s healing energy.

They declared concerning R. Hanina b. Dosa that when praying on behalf of the sick, he would say, "This one will live, that one will die." They asked him, "How do you know?" He replied, "If my prayer is fluent in my mouth, I know that he is accepted; but if not, I know that he is rejected."

Bavli Berachot 34b

God is present and provides comfort to humans who suffer in that the Shechinah rests above the head of the choleh:

The visitor should not sit on a bed, nor on a chair, nor on a bench but rather wrap himself in a tallit and sit in front of him [but not at/above his head] because the Divine Presence rests above his head.

Shulchan Arukh Yoreh De’ah 335:3

God does not heal, but as a partner in creation God does suffer when humans suffer.

Here again we meet a dynamic, relating God who suffers, a God who becomes vulnerable in having created us. This is not an all-powerful, impassible, eternal God, but a God so connected through relationship that the best way to describe this temporal, passionate covenant partner is in the language of love and law....

To love someone is to become vulnerable to his or her choices. It is to suffer another’s pain, and to exalt in the lover’s triumph. It is to want to be steadily a partner and helper, and to sometimes be hurt by his or her rejection or bad choices. In such a way, God suffers and rejoices in the world, and with the world: “In all their troubles God was troubled. [Isa. 63:9]” In Psalm 91, we are told, “I will be with him in his suffering. [Ps. 91:15]” In Mishnah *Sanhedrin*, Rabbi Meir says, "When a person is sorely troubled, what does the Shekhinah (God’s indwelling Presence) say? She says, my head is ill; my arm is ill; I am not at ease. [Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 6:5]” Our suffering pains God.

Bradley Shavit Artson, “*Ba-derekh: On The Way — A Presentation of Process Theology*,” *Conservative Judaism* 62, nos. 1-2 (Fall-Winter 2011): n.p.

Lesson 2 Text Resources

Textual Resources for “Exploring ‘Answers’”

Healing can occur during the intimacy of I-Thou moments between healer and *choleh/avel*

I-It Relations: “People usually relate to things by observing them, examining them, testing them. They are measured, taken apart, put back together again and thus comprehended. Doing this can involve ingenious manipulation of the object or the use of sensitive instruments to yield a precise understanding.... On an ordinary level, it is our common modern manner of relating to our surroundings.... [But] are detachment, analysis, manipulation capable of opening us up to the human being who stands before us who might, if we are accessible, speak to us from the very depths?”

Borowitz on Buber, 147

I-Thou Relations: “In authentic encounter – meeting, dialogue, relationship – two individuals come to understand and appreciate one another, not just the words or signs they exchange.... Encounter arises in a far different way than does I-It knowing. It demands participation, not distance; giving oneself, not objectivity. If the other person is to know you and not merely part of you, you cannot hold back part of yourself from the communication.”

--Borowitz on Buber, 149

Eugene B. Borowitz, “Religious Existentialism: Martin Buber,” in *Choices in Modern Jewish Thought: A Partisan Guide*, 143-165 (Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 1995).

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.

Meeting as Time-out of Pure “Beingness”: The counseling relationship partakes of the mystical qualities of Martin Buber’s I-Thou relationship, a transpersonal encounter in which the usual badges of identity and objectifying tactics of “relationship” are surrendered in favor of what can be called a meeting of pure “beingness.”

For both the counselor and counselee, life is moved out of the marketplace into a sanctuary, the pulse of life is converted from the racing irregular tyranny of “if” to a steady “isness.”

No less so than the counselee, the counselor is converted from the frantic urgency of being performer, expert, merchant, and consumer to the quiet intensity of being witness. For both, it is a moratorium, a benign suspension of the social contracts and web by which human relationships are conventionally defined and structured. An alternative reality prevails. The fabric of expectations—expectations of what one should give and should get—is suspended and transcended.

--James E. Dittes, “The Ascetic Witness,” in *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings*, edited by Robert C., Dykstra (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 138-

139.

A healer does not heal directly-- through relationship with the Other, they help that Other heal themselves. This healer can be a witness to pain and catharsis, miracles (medical and divine), and healing.

A Chasidic understanding: Each individual's soul is a spark of God that shines through most brightly through good deeds and *mitzvot*. This spark can become occluded through sin, which can lead to illnesses of the soul, physical illness, or further sin. Healing can occur when the light from the divine spark in the healer encounters the light from the divine spark in the sick - thereby removing a layer of occlusion from both.

--Adapted from the Introduction to Arthur Green, ed., *The Language of Truth: The Torah Commentary of the Sefat Emet, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger* (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1998).

LESSON 3: HOW CAN WE HELP HEAL WHEN THE OTHER IS HARD TO CARE FOR?

Lesson Introduction:

Whereas the previous two lessons concerned larger questions of meaning around sickness, death, healing, God, and healing purpose, these next two lessons ask more practical, but no less important questions.

The Jewish tradition posits a communal obligation to care for the sick and the mourning. Jewish thinker **Emmanuel Levinas** argues that an individual has an ethical imperative to be completely responsible for another - an ethical impossibility that is incumbent by virtue of shared humanity and/or divinity. And yet, people do not always make it easy to fulfill this caring responsibility. Sometimes the social, emotional, or physical situation hits close to home (countertransference) such that the healer runs the risk of emotional compromise.

NOTE: During this lesson, it may prove beneficial to ask a social worker, psychologist, or other mental health professional to join you to teach about, and help your learners think through issues of countertransference.

Essential Question

- How can we help heal when the other is hard to care for?

Goals

- To juxtapose the theological/ethical imperative to heal with the reality of complex human interaction.

Objectives

- Learners will be able to recall and describe past situations when they found it difficult to serve in a healing or caring capacity.
- Learners will be able to imagine and justify their responses to hypothetical healing scenarios.

Activities

Set Induction:

- Think back through prior situations when you've served in a healing or caring capacity-- either during this course or prior in your life. What were some particularly difficult situations?

- Share with a partner and brainstorm with them, what made the situation so difficult?

Case Study Scenarios

- Using the following scenarios as guidelines or suggestions, provide case studies to your learners. The range of cases should include situations of countertransference and of difficult individuals, and address bikkur cholim and nichum avelim situations. Learners should propose how they would respond to the scenario and justify their reasons.
 - You're visiting Gina at her home where she is convalescing after a fall. Her daughter - who is helping her mother during this time - invites you into the home and brings you to Gina's bedroom, and takes the opportunity with you there to get out of the house for an hour. You're having a conversation and Gina asks you to get up and adjust the thermostat. A little later she asks you to get some water from the kitchen. A little later she needs you to fluff her pillow. After attending to all her needs, Gina asks you to help her to the bathroom.
 - Walter, an older gentleman in the congregation has been ill for a while. You've visited him a couple of times and he confides in you: I'm ready to go. My kids are hovering, they want me to hold on, but I'm just tired and ready to go. I've lived a good long life.
 - You're walking into the *shiva* house, and you immediately notice: there's an icy chill in the house and you notice that family members are snippy with each other. How do you approach the family members?
 - You notice during the *shiva* that one of the siblings seems to be acting out their grief by behaving provocatively or flirtatiously with some of the visitors.
- NOTE: Feel free to create other options for Case Study Scenarios

Closure:

- Journal Entry: The next time I visit the sick or comfort the mourner, what is something new that I will be thinking about? How might this impact my work as a healer?

Lesson 3 Resources

Emmanuel Levinas and the Ethical Imperative toward the Other

In *Ethics as First Philosophy* Emmanuel Levinas writes that: *In the face of the other man I am inescapably responsible and consequently the unique and chosen one.* (p. 84) For Levinas Ethics is the First philosophy, it is our central concern as beings and therefore prior to any other form of philosophy; and the way in which our ethical concern is awakened, informed, directed and ultimately expressed is in concern for the Other. The Other calls us to him/her and to ourselves because we can see their fate (and they can see ours); and in this mood we can see our own fate, death. It is through the dawning of our shared fate that despite our separateness we are neighbours and our affinity emerges.

--David Parry, "Ethics as First Philosophy and its Implications for Psychotherapists and Counsellors," *Existential Analysis* 19, no. 1, (2008): 156-175.

Levinas' writing focuses on what he calls the "face-to-face encounter with the other," an experience in which an individual is made aware of the other's mortality and vulnerability, and is thus called upon to respond ethically to the other's cries for help. When the other is seen in the vulnerability of the face-to-face encounter, it is "prior to any knowledge about death." The issue of mortality arises in the encounter because the individual recognizes the other's imminent death, while at the same time the individual is *made responsible* for this death. Since the other person cannot see his or her own death, this recognition, writes Levinas, actually "calls me into question, as if, by my possible future indifference, I had become the accomplice of the death to which the other, who cannot see it, is exposed." The knowledge of our shared mortality as human beings is one of the underlying sources of empathy.

--Ruth Domrzalski, "Suffering, Relatedness and Transformation: Levinas and Relational Psychodynamic Theory," *Advocates' Forum* 9 (2010).

Confronted with the feeling that caring for another is "difficult" for any reason, Levinas's ethic of care demands a response. The way we as caregivers, visitors, and comforters rise to that challenge is an open question, but Levinas provides the standard of radical care toward which we must strive.

LESSON 4: WHAT ARE LIMITS UPON MY CAPACITY OR ABILITY TO HEAL?

Lesson Introduction:

This lesson builds off the last lesson that discussed the imperative to act in a healing capacity and potential scenarios that presented potential internal or external difficulties to healing. This lesson should build from those scenarios by describing transference and countertransference as emotional entanglement between healer and *choleh/avel*. It should define appropriate boundaries between the healer and *choleh/avel* - both of whom are congregants. **Note: as with the previous lesson, this lesson may be another appropriate place to enlist the services of a mental health professional to augment the teaching and learning.**

This lesson should stress that learners have the support of their peers and of the clergy in working with difficult congregants and difficult personal emotions. And it should stress the importance of *shmiat ha'ozen* - of listening to the internal voice that warns of a difficult situation and/or emotional compromise.

Learners should know they are not alone in this endeavor. **Pirkei Avot 2:16** states: "You do not have to finish the work, but you are not free to desist from it." This formulation is often used to exhort individuals to social action. This lesson asks learners to reverse the phrase: "You are not free to desist from the work [you are obligated], but you do not have to finish it." This reversal is designed to give permission to practice *shmiat ha'ozen*, to pause their work, accept their limits as healers, and give themselves permission not to "fix."

Essential Question

- What are the limits to my capacity or ability to heal?

Goals

- To build upon the previous lesson in exploring the limits to healing another.
- To contextualize the healing work the learners will do as important and incumbent upon them, but not dependent upon them alone.

Objectives

- Learners will be able to identify factors that might limit their ability to heal or diminish their effectiveness as healers.
- Learners will be able to apply the concept of *shmiat ozen* to the moments they perceive factors limiting their work as healers.

Activities

Set Induction:

- Read Pirkei Avot 2:16--
- Ask: What does this text say about responsibility?
- Ask: What does this text mean when applied to healing?

Exploring “*shmiat ha’ozen*”

Exploring “limitations”

- When the other person does not want the help?
- When healers feel internally compelled to invest too much in a situation?
- When healers feel compelled by a family to invest too much in a situation?
- When healers feel transference of emotion onto them?
- When healers feel countertransference of their emotions onto an external situation?
- When they feel like they’re crossing boundaries they didn’t expect?

Closure:

- Journal Entry: The next time I visit the sick or comfort the mourner, what is something new that I will be thinking about? How might this impact my work as a healer?

Lesson 5.4: Text Resources

Textual Resources

Pirkei Avot 2:16a

הוא הֵיָה אוֹמֵר לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְלָאכָה לְגַמֹּר וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶן חוֹרִין לְבַטֵּל מִמֶּנָּה

He used to say: It is not your responsibility to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.

Shmiat Ha'ozen: Attentive Listening

- Taking the virtue of attentive listening to others and turning it inwards upon ourselves to understand our limitations as healers.

The word *shmiat* comes from the root *shma*, to hear or listen. *Ozen* is the Hebrew word for ear. Therefore, this quality is, literally, “a listening ear,” or, we might say, attentive listening. Hearing is a physiological and involuntary act; listening is something different.... It means digging in to unpack the meaning... So often, the message is not only in the meaning of the words but in the emotion or tone in which they are said or the body language of the person speaking, as well.

We learn about a listening ear from a story told about Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (1820-92). A man approached the rabbi to ask if it would be permissible to fulfill the obligation of drinking four glasses at the ritual Passover seder with milk instead of the usual wine. The rabbi asked the man if he was considering making that switch because he was ill. No, the man told him, his health was not the issue. Wine was just more expensive than he could afford.

The rabbi then gave the man twenty-five rubles. After the man left, the rabbi's wife asked why he had given the man so much when two or three rubles would have been enough to buy wine. The rabbi said, “If that man was thinking of drinking milk at the seder, not only did he not have enough money for wine, he didn't have enough money for meat or other necessities of the seder either.”

--Alan Morinis, “Attentive Listening: Shmiat ha'Ozen,” in *With Heart in Mind: Mussar Teachings to Transform Your Life* (Boston: Shambhala Books, 2014)

UNIT 6: A HEALING SELF-ASSESSMENT

CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT

Enduring Understandings:

- For both healers and those in process of healing, the journey toward *refuah sh'leimah* (complete healing) extends over a lifetime.
- Healing encompasses *refuat ha-guf*, *refuat ha-nefesh*, *aveilut*, and *teshuvah*.
- Healing occurs in relationship.
- Although imperfect themselves, all healers can heal perfectly.

Essential Questions:

- What does *refuah sh'leimah* look like?
- Who am I as a healer?

Objectives:

- Learners will have the opportunity to define healing.
- Learners will have the opportunity to evaluate their strengths, weaknesses, and fears regarding the coming learning experience.

Activities:

These activities mirror two of the activities in Unit 1, Lesson 1. They will allow learners to chart the progress they have made in term of how they understand healing, and how they feel they are as individuals learning to become healers.

Images of Healing:

- Instructor should print ~20 images that represent healing in some way (however directly or abstractly).
 - Note: Try to find images that reflect the curriculum's expansive definition of healing: *refuat ha-guf*, *refuat ha-nefesh*, *aveilut*, and *teshuvah*.
 - Note: These should be the same images used in the first lesson of the curriculum! (For examples, see Lesson 1.1 Resource Sheet)
- Place those images around the room in a "gallery" and allow learners the opportunity to view the images. Instruct them to choose one "that encapsulates the idea of healing" and reconvene as a group.
- Ask each learner to share:
 - What about your picture encapsulates healing?

- How does your conception of healing compare to where it was at the beginning of our learning together?

Self-Assessment:

- This self-assessment reprises the self-assessment in the first lesson of this curriculum. Give each learner their self-assessment from the beginning of the curriculum and ask each to write another written reflection on the following questions:
 - What strengths do you bring to this work?
 - Where do you hope to continue to grow in this work?
 - What fears do you have?
- Optional: Learners can share with the group where they stand on any of these three questions.

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