

“Loving Kindness and Truth Meet”: The Weaving Together of Caring (Love) and Law within *Marpéh*—An Israeli CPE Program

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In this article I offer a glimpse into my reflections on the training of Israeli spiritual caregivers/chaplains, which began only eight to ten years ago. These reflections are taken from my theory papers I submitted to my advisors (Zahara Dawidowitz Farkash of the National Association of Jewish Chaplains and Rev. Dr. John Develder (Robert Wood Johnson CPE program) during the year 2013-2014 as part of the requirements towards completing the first training course for Israeli CPE educators. The evolution of spiritual care as a profession in Israel began in 2006, the first year of the philanthropic initiative of the Jewish Federation of New York.

My focus here is on the *Marpéh* program at The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, an intimate, academic, graduate school located in Jerusalem that specializes in pluralistic approaches to Jewish Studies.¹ Students at Schechter are mostly Jews who come from all walks of Israeli life and interact with each other within our relatively small classes and enjoy an informal, warm relationship between faculty, staff and students. The *Marpéh* program, founded in 2011, is a two year training Israeli CPE training pro-

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gram open to all Israelis and woven into the Master's Degree program at the Schechter Institute. It is structured according to the standards set in 2011 by the coalition of chaplains and organizations promoting spiritual care in Israel, with professional help from the National Association of Jewish Chaplains as well as key supervisors from ACPE and CPSP. We decided that in Israel a chaplain can be certified following the completion of an 800-hour program (400-500 clinical academic hours and 300-400 theoretical hours). Any person, not necessarily a religious authority, can be trained and certified as a chaplain in Israel. In 2012, the coalition drafted and accepted the Israeli Spiritual Caregivers' Code of Ethics that states that in order to address particular Israeli communal, national and religious sensitivities, we, Israeli chaplains, will not introduce ourselves at the bedside using our religious or academic titles.

I am today a 55 year old Israeli, observant, non-denominational Jewish woman, living in the *Katamonim*, a neighborhood in Jerusalem, populated by mostly Sephardic and other Middle Eastern Jews who immigrated to Israel in the 1950s from Iraq, Kurdistan and North Africa. I am married to Arik, an American-born Reform rabbi and social activist who "made *aliya*"-immigrated to Israel - almost two decades ago. Following a long period of struggle with infertility we became, in our forties, parents of two wonderful children, a girl and a boy. My professional life brings me great joy as well: for the past twenty years I have been a lecturer in modern Jewish Thought at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies. In 2006 I opened, on behalf of Schechter and together with NAJC, the first CPE summer program in Israel. Between the years 2009-2012, in the summer NAJC offered CPE courses in which I trained to be a chaplain. During those years I wrote, on behalf of the coalition members, the Israeli Standards and Code of Ethics. In 2011, I opened the *Marpeth* training program for Israeli spiritual caregivers while attending the first Israeli CPE educators' program. In 2014, I was among the founders of the Israeli Association of Spiritual Care, modeled after ACPE and CASC. This body was founded in order to oversee standardization and accreditation of spiritual care programs, as well as the certification of Israeli chaplains and supervisors.

The structure of the *Marpeth* program at the Schechter Institute is similar to two CPE American units. We meet for two and a half hours each week for four semesters. However, in order to fulfill the requirement of 300 academic hours and, instead of inviting many guest speakers, our students (who often lack a theological background) take classes in Jewish Studies,

such as medical ethics, Rabbinic and Hassidic approaches to suffering, customs concerning mourning and visiting the sick, and a class on psychology and Judaism as reflected through the human life cycle. In addition, our students complete their 500 clinical academic hours of practicum at old age homes, hospitals, congregations and other institutions in Israel. We are the only program that weaves chaplaincy training into an academic program in Israel. Therefore, our students are assigned a significant amount of readings every week, in addition to being required to write and submit (and often present) 16 verbatims over the course of the program.

THEOLOGY PAPER

TRUTH AND LOVINGKINDNESS, OR THE TEACHING OF TRUTH AS LOVINGKINDNESS

My work as a CPE supervisor echoes the words of the psalmist, "faithfulness and truth meet; justice and well-being kiss;"² and it explores the constructive tension between *Hessed*, lovingkindness, and *Emet*, truth. Truth here represents consciousness, cognition, awareness, ethical and religious principles, and professional standards.

This professional perception merges with my initial attraction to the non-Orthodox Zionist thinker who influenced my life, A. D. Gordon (1856-1922), and his theological concept of *chavaya*. Gordon invented the term *chavaya*, deriving it from the name of the first mother in human history according to the Hebrew Bible, Eve - *Chava*, in Hebrew. *Chavaya* according to Gordon is our perceptual primordial capacity to feel "embraced by the mother" and thus united with and part of a larger whole which can be the womb, our family, community, our people and the world (in that order). *Chavaya* is an intuitive feeling that stems from a sense of our deep connection to our historical-religious identity without being too specific about laws and declarations of faith. *Chavaya* is a spontaneous capacity through which we connect to people and to God.³ In my CPE experience, *chavaya* is an expression of my immediate, intuitive love for my patients, students and colleagues.

Gordon's thought is essentially a liberal and a pluralistic one. Gordon wrote to the "theologically perplexed" socialist pioneers like my grandparents who had left their Orthodox homes in Eastern Europe for the purpose of building the State of Israel, yet remained strongly connected to the Jewish People and its traditions. Gordon's writings are imbued with the pro-

phetic notion that "Though all the peoples walk in the names of its gods; we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever."⁴ Thus, he emphasized the intertwined nature of the universal and the particular in Judaism.⁵ He left "the gate of faith" open equally to all: agnostics, pantheists and Orthodox Jews. Gordon's "open theology" is also an authentic interpretation of minimalist theological statements in the Hebrew Bible such as the verse from Isaiah: "For My plans are not your plans, nor are My ways your ways."⁶ God, according to Gordon's thought, will remain a mystery to us, always. Like Moses, *Moshe Rabeinu*, who tried to seek God's face which always eluded him,⁷ so are we modern humans agnostic by definition - - our perception is limited, but we may often feel inspired by God and feel God's presence in a way that we cannot explain. That feeling is the *chavaya*, and it is beyond our capacity to explain it. It is from Gordon's thought that I derive my initial, pluralistic disposition towards all of my patients and students. As they do, so do we all have an intuitive sense of that mystery which is beyond our perceptive capability, and it is to that feeling of mystery and unity that spiritual care ultimately seeks to connect.

Another source of inspiration in Gordon's persona is that he served de facto as a spiritual care giver for many of the secular pioneers in the early kibbutzim. In that sense I see him as a professional role model.⁸ He supported many individual pioneers who were suicidal as a result of the existential crisis brought about by having left their religion and their families behind, and by their fearfulness about their future. He consoled various communities, particularly widows, following the death of their loved ones.⁹ Prior to his death at age 68 from cancer, almost a year after receiving news of the death of his son from a plague following the pogroms in Eastern Europe, Gordon finally articulated his reflections on death and the afterlife. He testified that it is not death that scares him (us) but the suffering that comes before death,¹⁰ and that the afterlife is the individual's ultimate, often unknown, influence upon life. Sometimes, one's influence is felt long after the end of his/her physical life, just as the light of the stars illuminates Earth ages after these stars have been extinguished.¹¹ I often share this teaching with my students, patients and colleagues.

On the topic of death and the afterlife, I consider myself also a student of the Eastern European and later American Jewish thinker, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972). In a television interview with Carl Stern shortly before his death, he said the following: "We believe in an afterlife. But we have no information about it."¹² It is this statement, also in a vein of "theological

humility," that enables me to be pluralistic vis-a-vis my students' diverse beliefs that do not always reflect the rational-theological atmosphere wherein I was educated.

These observations informed my work when I wrote the *Professional Standards for Spiritual Care of the Israeli Spiritual Care Network*, on behalf of Israeli spiritual care givers. At that time, a colleague told me that those working in the field of Israeli spiritual care must prepare themselves to embrace a mystical language prevalent in Israeli society with which we may not be familiar. Following this theological observation I wrote into our standards that the qualifications of Israeli spiritual care givers include developing "an ability to respect and emotionally accept people of different beliefs, opinions and ways of life," and that chaplains must cultivate "an interpretative ability in mediating between the insights of the present and the philosophical and religious sources of the past."¹³

Case Example. One recurring theme that occasionally arises among my students is their belief in reincarnation. A student brought it up in her personal supervisory meetings with me. Though she was a totally secular Jew (in Israel we train secular and religious people alike to be spiritual caregivers), she shared with me her belief in reincarnation, her non-belief in God and religion notwithstanding, and her happiness that her father's soul has been reincarnated somewhere. It was hard for me at first to understand this theological inconsistency, but I have learned that this theological pattern is part of a greater New Age religion prevalent nowadays among some Israeli Jews, especially in the greater Tel Aviv area. Initially I was concerned that these ideas were an indication of my student's general confusion in life. As an educator I embraced her and who she is and wondered what it is that I learn from her statement that had seemed strange to me at first. I told her that I keep an open mind regarding such ideas. Both Heschel's statement that we have no (direct) information about the afterlife, and Gordon's emphasis on the importance of the *chavaya*—the immediate, intuitive mystical experience—taught me to refrain from dwelling too much on religious statements that are not part of my own religious journey and vocabulary but instead to focus on spiritual awareness. For my student, her support of her father throughout his last fifteen years suffering from Alzheimer's, including at his deathbed, was an authentic expression of *chavaya*. Reincarnation, about which I have no direct information, is part of my student's authentic spiritual language that I as her educator must respect. It has given her the

spiritual resilience to do all the good work that she has done for her family and patients.

The limitation of Gordon's pluralistic intuitive theology, however, has to do with the way our cognitive capacities engage in our spiritual journey and quest for meaning. If intuition is everything in our spirituality, what is there for us to learn, what is learning, and what is spiritual training? We must use our cognition, meaning not only our intellectual learning capacity but also our self-awareness, which we must cultivate in order to struggle with life's challenges and a complex reality.

It is here that I turn to another modern Jewish thinker whose works I regularly read and study with my students: the leader and founder of modern Orthodoxy in North America during the twentieth century, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993). Soloveitchik's collected essays, *Out of the Whirlwind: Essays on Mourning, Suffering and the Human Condition*, discuss with thoroughness interpretations of ancient Jewish sources on topics such as the meaning of suffering, illness, and facing death. In the absence of other modern Jewish theological writings on these topics, Rav Soloveitchik's book has become a central piece of what I think should be required reading by my students.¹⁴

Rabbi Soloveitchik came to the United States in the middle of the twentieth century from an established family lineage of rabbis who had founded a special method of learning and teaching Talmud through critical non-academic hermeneutics (known as the Brisk method). Unlike A. D. Gordon who found God working in the fields of Israel, Soloveitchik's encounter with God was through the pages of *Talmud* and in the application of the intellectual-spiritual effort to understand the Oral Torah as accurately as possible, for it determined not only his sense of meaning but also the observant Jew's daily life as shaped by Jewish law (*Halacha*). In his essay "The Crisis of Human Finitude," Rabbi Soloveitchik emphasizes the way by which the Hebrew Bible and later Rabbinic literature understand suffering as a "depth-crisis," an opportunity to "be fully cognizant of this tragic aspect of . . . existence, to explicate and spell out the deep-seated crisis in his very existence."¹⁵ Soloveitchik sees humans' "depth-crisis" as an opportunity to create true fellowship with God and touch the true meaning of human life.¹⁶

Based on his understanding of the theology of Moses Maimonides, a major medieval Jewish thinker, Rav Soloveitchik sees the traditional role of the teacher as essentially a vocation as spiritual caregiver. The teacher of Torah is, in essence, a person who performs acts of *hessed*—lovingkind-

ness—through learning the Torah with a student or a group of students. That *hessed*, or lovingkindness, occurs when the teacher's aim for the mutual learning is to expand benevolent learning to the student through Torah study.¹⁷ The role of empathy according to Soloveitchik is central to the work of lovingkindness, as it is a "surge towards the other."¹⁸ The desire to teach, according to Maimonides and, following him, Rabbi Soloveitchik, is just that—the surge towards breaking one's isolation and embracing others.¹⁹ Both Maimonides and Rav Soloveitchik claim that spiritual-intellectual teaching and lovingkindness (or, in my spiritual language, "love" and "the law") are not separate or contradictory but one category! Often my colleagues and students here in Israel challenge me as to why it is necessary to focus so much on CPE standards and ethical codes. If our work is a work of love and awakening spiritual awareness, why insist on academic, bureaucratic demands? A classical response would be that without rigorous learning and standards our love and caregiving cannot reach a professional plane. Love, too, needs a structure to contain it. But Rav Soloveitchik goes further by emphasizing that *structure itself*, the demanding law, is love when it emerges from one's deep sense of care towards the other. Truth, which represents rules and knowledge, when shared as a result of someone's deep care for the other, becomes itself an act of loving kindness—the shared path of the student and the teacher in their joint spiritual journey.²⁰

Thus my perception of spiritual care is theologically informed by Gordon and Soloveitchik *together*. My perception of the dialogue between them awakens my sense of being in the world *together* with my patients, students, colleagues, family and community as learning partners (*havruta*).²¹ While the term *havruta* is traditionally used to portray people learning in pairs while studying together, mostly at the Yeshiva, I borrow it from the Talmud through the theology of Rav Soloveitchik and use the term metaphorically in my worldview of spiritual care. In that sense, a spiritual caregiver, or CPE educator, is a *havruta*. Together we explore intellectual-spiritual issues; we study texts and sing as part of our mutual process of creating meaning. This work requires discipline, standards, rules, and techniques that are learned through the use of our intellect and through practice. The patients, students, and I myself use our cognitive capacities to ponder our theological questions. But at the end of the journey we realize that the *chavaya*, an awareness of something beyond the cognitive, has operated here, something miraculous that has brought us together into the spiritual care bond.

The same could be argued about my own theology of death and suffering and the way it directs me in life. Death and suffering disrupt our sense of meaning. Finding meaning in a chaotic and therefore a seemingly meaningless situation involves conceptualizing what suffering is and why it happens. In my own theology today I understand that the existence of death is necessary for us to have a life full of meaning. In that sense I see death as an act of unification with God and a necessary “ingredient of human life.” Without death we would not be humans, and as a monotheist and an observant Jew I believe that we ought to celebrate our humanity and be thankful for it. Suffering, unlike death, is a disruption of a natural human balance. It is not a “natural necessity” that is a corollary to our humanity but a product of our existential loneliness resulting from social alienation and apathy or the absence of an “inner spiritual center” in the individual. Being connected to our spiritual center through our awareness of our own *chavaya* operates our non-cognitive capacity and helps us find our spiritual companions, our *havruta*. Together with another human being we can heal suffering. Communicating to a person that he or she is not alone in the world, that there is someone who cares, and that God takes care of us may lead that person to intellectual and spiritual serenity and beyond. That is the core of spiritual caregiving. This combination of cognition and intuition of laws and love is, in my experience, spiritual teaching at its best.²²

In spiritual care situations, the patient or the student’s striving for meaning and connectedness to people and/or to God can be understood as seeking out the needs of the person cared for and the signals s/he gives, replicating the role of the mother in her relationship with her infant and standing in God’s universe together as a *havruta*, a traditional learning pair, which is, as Rabbi Soloveitchik implies, a nuclear community that transforms learning of the law into lovingkindness.

PERSONALITY THEORY

The tension in my life between “love” and the “the law,” between intellectual learning and observance of laws and boundaries while striving towards and appreciating creative outbreaks of intuition and love, has fueled an ongoing struggle. This tension is reflected in my style of supervision as well in that I desire to create a program that is academically demanding, while I also hope to attract a diverse group of people, including those who

are less strong academically, and eventually form together with my students a group of colleagues who are spiritually bonded together.

The two personality theorists informing my work are psychoanalysts who practiced in the beginning and middle of the twentieth century in Europe, in Vienna and in London, and who focused on themes related to early childhood and the family. The first is a "first-generation" psychoanalyst and colleague of Freud, Alfred Adler (1870-1937), and the second is a "third-generation" psychoanalyst, John Bowlby (1907-1990).²³ When I finally became a mother, following many years of fertility treatment, I realized how miraculous the whole experience of mothering is and how much complexity and sophistication it entails. Being a feminist, I did not imagine that I would feel that way until it happened. In the context of CPE education, Bowlby's theory of attachment frames my understanding and my vision of spiritual care. In his observations of humans and other mammals, Bowlby discovered that "attachment behavior is regarded as a class of social behavior of an importance equivalent to that of mating behavior and parental behavior."²⁴ The function of attachment behavior, argues Bowlby, is "that it affords opportunity for the infant to learn from mother various activities necessary for survival."²⁵ Later in life, attachment behavior can be observed "in situations when a predator is either sensed or suspected."²⁶ Bowlby concludes the book with his claim that "both parties," the parent (he distinguishes between the mother and father) and the child, "can be said to be bonded," meaning that attachment may evolve into a mutual model. Furthermore, he argues that in adulthood "continuity of that role is not inevitable."²⁷ I find it interesting that Bowlby does not reduce attachment to sexuality, that he considers attachment an emotion and behavior that stands on its own.

I am fascinated with Bowlby's concept and description of attachment as a primordial animal/human behavior. In many ways, this resonates with A. D. Gordon's central theological concept of *chavaya* that I have mentioned above. Both philosophical concepts address the maternal, intuitive capacity that nourishes our early years and our entire lives. Bowlby's understanding of "attachment" inspired me as a mother who followed the educational parenting school of "attachment parenting," a term coined by pediatrician Dr. William Sears of California. Sears, together with his wife, a nurse, transformed Bowlby's theory into a philosophy and practice of daily parenting and thus created a school of thought that encourages mothers to be fully present in their children's lives while negotiating and adjusting to professional responsibilities.²⁸ William and Martha Sears instruct mothers to be

sensitive to children's needs and signals as much as possible. By doing so, "parents increase their children's development and sense of security," they argue.²⁹ Having adopted this philosophy of education in my own style of mothering at home and having found it very helpful, I ask myself, what would "attachment CPE education" look like?

In a nutshell, I feel that that the very need for spiritual care, and for the study of CPE, can be understood as the craving for attachment and love in an alienated world. Illness and other types of crises may be seen as "predators." Illness motivates adults to search for some kind of attachment in a time of crisis.

As a CPE educator, I have learned and am still learning to remind myself that while I try to pay close attention to my students' cues and help them grow, I am my students' educator, not their mother. Given the fact that they are mostly women and we might easily slip into a projected mother-daughter-sister symbiosis, as Nancy Chodorow has pointed out in her influential book *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, I must be constantly vigilant in maintaining clear boundaries between myself and my students. I must make sure that the relationship between us remains professional and not allow it to slip into close friendship as long as they are enrolled in the program. Chodorow highlights mothers' tendencies to maintain "their daughters in a non-individuated state through behavior which grew out of their own ego and body-ego boundary blurring and their perception of their daughters as one with, and interchangeable with, themselves."³⁰ My relationship with my female students could easily slide into situations of transference where we see each other as "sisters" (they are mostly my age, married, and have children). Literature concerning CPE supervision addresses the supervisor's professional obligation to be alert to this and not slip into boundary-breaking that might damage our professional relationship and their training process.³¹ While I do extend my "maternal-educational" paradigm of attachment to my female and male students in watching for the (often unspoken) signals that indicate where they need particular help and instruction, I make sure that we maintain a strictly professional framework for our meetings. Within the informal atmosphere of Israeli society, this is not easy. I have learned not to disclose too much information about myself, my thoughts, my family life, etc. This is not easy because some of my students come from my immediate or extended community. Some of them live in my neighborhood, or belong to the same synagogues or social circles to which I belong, or send their children to the same

schools that my children attend. It is often all too easy to identify with their struggles and suffering.

Case Example. My heart went out to my student, *B*, who is around my age and an Orthodox mother of seven, when she told me in an interview that one of her sons had died of cancer five years ago at the age of seven. When my "core course" in spiritual care—a CPE-style course—started, all the students introduced themselves to each other. Each one shared his/her personal spiritual biography in a nutshell. When the woman sitting next to *B* told the group about her son's recovery from cancer in his childhood, I noticed that *B*'s eyes were wet. . . . Then came *B*'s turn to speak, but I saw the tears in her eyes as a sign that she was not ready to disclose her personal life story to the group. So I asked someone else to share his life story with us. Nobody else in the group noticed what had transpired. I later returned to *B*, and she disclosed other things about herself but did not reveal at that point the painful information concerning the death of her son. In our supervisory meeting she thanked me for being sensitive to the situation, yet at the same time she suggested that the two of us continue the meeting in a nearby park rather than in my office. I politely replied that the park is indeed very beautiful but that I meet my students at my office. Given my very warm emotions towards her and perhaps also my insecurity about my own supervisory authority, it was difficult for me to set such boundaries in this situation. But I realized that this is a challenge that I must confront as a professional supervisor: to set clear limits when I meet with my students, especially when it comes to time and space, so that our relationships remain professional.

This is a challenge. Because spiritual care giving is not yet a recognized profession in the State of Israel, there is a tendency to regard chaplaincy as a "diffuse" vocation, and as a result, the necessary boundaries are not always clear and present. Nevertheless, as I continued to supervise Israeli CPE students, and *B* in particular, I realized that while I must set boundaries, I must not exclude my use of self and could bring examples from my own life and professional experience as well. This awareness evolved as I understood that I too easily slip into "attachment mode" at the expense of a more professional mode. Professionalism requires me to challenge *B*'s resistance to learning, which is expressed in being "too friendly"; at the same time, I have gradually taught myself how to find a balance between attachment and a structured authoritative behavior in reaching the pattern of supervision that is right for me and for my students. Today I am less reluctant to share from

time to time personal information, a professional opinion, or examples of spiritual care from my own personal and professional life.

As I have gained more experience and feel more confident in my authority as a supervisor, I have learned when I may allow this to happen. On certain occasions I play music with my students or share general existential concerns regarding a family event or my own spiritual journey, personal relationships, etc. My initial tendency in CPE supervision is to not reveal too much about my opinions and emotions in order to encourage the students to bring more of themselves and be less engaged in me or in their relationship with me. I always try to provide a safe and a warm learning environment within a very demanding program.

If we humans long for attachments, I wonder, why is it that so often such longings are hindered by imbalances and suspicions in our relationships, including our professional educator-student relationships? Why is it that true feelings of attachments in our adult lives are so difficult to achieve? Bowlby's theory delves into questions regarding the long-term implications of interruptions in the healthy process of early attachment to the mother,³² yet he does not provide a nuanced explanation to this common problem. At this point, Adler's individual psychology may help explain how the meaning of life lies in overcoming our natural inferiority complexes by learning to cooperate with one another. Adler's psychological school is very dominant in Israel; a student of Adler's founded a school for parents in the 1960's. I first encountered Adler's theory, which focuses on humans' cooperative capacities as stemming from their role in their nuclear family, through a therapist of mine. I find it a useful model in my supervision today on other levels as well. "Human cooperation," argues Adler in his book *What Life Could Mean to You*, "has need of many different kinds of excellence."³³ He outlines the various impediments to cooperation engraved in our personalities. These stem, he claims, largely from whether we are first, second, or youngest among our siblings.³⁴ He claims that "an individual's struggle to reach a position of superiority is the key to her whole personality; we meet it at every point of her psychic development."³⁵

Adler's personality theory is better equipped than Bowlby's to help me understand the function or dysfunction of different groups that I supervise. He pushes me as a supervisor to be empathetic to the impediments that each participant has in a group situation.³⁶ According to Adler's personality theory applied to groups, "every human being strives to gain a victory, to reach a position of supremacy" over his/her peers.³⁷ And yet, as Adler points out,

"we need cooperation every moment of the day, and the degree of our ability to cooperate shows itself in the way we look and speak and listen."³⁸ As a person who both supervises groups of spiritual care workers in training and who promotes this new profession in Israel, I often ask myself how to bring about greater collaboration among the groups learning CPE and thus overcome the destructive forces of competition that tear us apart. How do we become chaplains who can work well together? A good place to begin my struggle with this challenge is to be empathetic with students' and colleagues' natural envy of each other and to my own sense of inferiority and resulting suspicious or competitive behavior, which are, according to Adler, natural behaviors through which we try to achieve positions of supremacy.

Adler identifies "human striving for superiority" as "the struggle to rise from an inferior position to a superior position."³⁹ This drive can become destructive when we do not understand "the demands of social life" and are "not concerned with" our "fellow human beings."⁴⁰ This destructive force is the source of various kinds of "games of resistance" played between ourselves and our supervisees or ourselves and our supervisors. Whether this resistance is named a "game,"⁴¹ or "transference and counter transference,"⁴² or a "learning problem" in the relationship between the supervisee and the patient or in the relationship between the supervisor/educator and the supervisee⁴³—all of these variations of resistance to learning come from our fear of exploring "personal conflicts" or "painful feelings." They are "a way to protect ourselves from anxiety."⁴⁴ Using Adlerian language, we could argue that they all stem from our students' and our own striving for superiority, a natural desire that thwarts our attempt to turn it into meaningful cooperation, into a *havruta*.

Compassion for this vulnerable human condition helps me gain a better understanding of why spiritual care is defined in Israel as "companionship" (*Livui Ruhani*, in Hebrew) for people in existential crises and less as a "helping profession" supported by psychoanalysis (this understanding is highlighted and developed in conversations among educators who are founders in the field); the reasons why my students develop obstacles to cooperation with their patients, each other, with me as their educator, and ultimately with themselves are less important to me.⁴⁵ In my supervision I learn to identify the obstacles to balanced sustainable attachments and cooperation. My vision for my students and for myself is that we be able to identify our childhood impediments, have a charitable attitude towards them, and allow ourselves to get past them as far as possible so that we can celebrate

our engagement in the field as givers and receivers of spiritual care. I regard these obstacles as *opportunities* through which we learn to overcome challenges engraved in our psyche/soul on the way to achieving good implementation of caregiving and peer collaboration within the emerging community of Israeli chaplains.

A useful insight that guides me as I realize, address, and untangle such obstacles with my students is my need to remind myself constantly that my students are not “extensions” of me, neither “a projection of my power” nor “a proof of my skill.”⁴⁶ Eckstein and Wallerstein’s 1958 description of psychotherapy, “undefined as it is in large part, competitive as it is and beset as it is by rival ideologies,” reminds me of the contemporary field of spiritual care in Israel.⁴⁷ In this context, I permit my students to identify with me not so much as a person but mostly “as a carrier of a method and a function.”⁴⁸ This focus, I believe, helps me become aware of and, to the best of my ability, clear out my own narcissistic needs in the context of supervision.⁴⁹

Case Example. *L* is a student who came to the program with some experience of practicing spiritual care in Europe. She grew up in Europe and in her adult life immigrated to Israel. She is Orthodox, and although she has a wide circle of friends and acquaintances, adjusting to Israeli culture, particularly secular Israeli culture, seems quite a challenge for her. I sensed that she was highly motivated but extremely competitive. As a result, while she was very dedicated to learning and to practicing spiritual care, I often felt that she was resistant to gaining insights from her peers. The atmosphere in her group was very good, and I did my best to cultivate it; *L* thus became more open to ideas shared by group members. In her case I could clearly identify how the experience of immigration and perhaps certain personality traits locked her in the “Adlerian paradox” of striving for attachment yet perceiving it as a threat to her individuality and uniqueness as a chaplain. She finally admitted in one of her written assignments that she, a religious woman, had learned how to respond to the spiritual needs of a patient’s secular kibbutz family from a presentation made by a secular kibbutz member who is one of her peers. This, perhaps, is a good example of how, despite a strong subconscious resistance to attachment to the group, she finally established trust and was able to derive benefit from the group experience.⁵⁰ My own contribution to that process was by means of identifying her competitive drive on the one hand and her loneliness in this culture on the other hand, and by trying to push her towards a greater level of cooperation with her peers that seemed to be crucial to her progress.

Beyond these skills that I share with my students and the wisdom that my students share with me⁵¹ (as the Talmud indicates, we mostly learn from our students),⁵² I do not allow myself to forget that "trusting the system" and *caring* are the essence of CPE. It is through caring for each student, and the students' caring for each patient, that we discover each person's own unique reflection of God's image that shines through this endless partnership in the lifelong journey of spiritual care.⁵³

NOTES

1. The name *Marpeh* ("healing" in Hebrew) is taken from a verse in Proverbs: "The tongue of the wise brings healing" (Prov. 12:18).
2. Psalms 85:11. I wish to offer special thanks to Susan Freeman, a CPE supervisor from southern California, for reading and rereading this paper and offering her important critique of it.
3. Einat Ramon, *God, The Mother: A Critique of Domination in the Religious Zionist Thought of A. D. Gordon (1856- 1922)* (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1999), 239–52.
4. Micha 4:5.
5. This pragmatic, pluralistic theology resembles very closely that of William James, who lived around the same period in the United States, though there is no indication of any influence of James on Gordon. See William James, "Reflex, Action and Theism" (1881), in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy and Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 126; William James, "What Pragmatism Means" (1907), in *Pragmatism: A Reader*, ed. Louis Menand (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 94–96.
6. Isaiah 56:8.
7. Exodus 33:20.
8. Ramon, *Thought of A.D. Gordon*, 52–60.
9. A. D. Gordon to Hayuta Bussel, Aharon David Gordon, 5717, *Mikhtavim Ureshimot* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: The Zionist Library (1957), 152–55; "A Living Tombstone," *Mikhtavim Ureshimot*, 206–8.
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11. *Ibid.*, 224.
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14. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Essays on Mourning, Suffering and the Human Condition*, ed. David Shatz and Joel B. Wolowelsky (New York: Toras Horav Foundation, 2003).
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16. *Ibid.*, 178.
17. *Ibid.*, 210.
18. *Ibid.*, 209.
19. *Ibid.*, 211.
20. *Ibid.*
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26. *Ibid.*, 226.
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34. *Ibid.*, 105–35.
35. *Ibid.*, 69.
36. *Ibid.*, 171–73, 183–97.
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38. Ibid., 186.
39. Ibid., 168.
40. Ibid., 169.
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43. Rudolf Eckstein and Robert S. Wallerstein, *The Teaching and Learning of Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books, 1958), 137–76.
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48. Ibid.
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50. Corey, Corey, and Corey, *Group*, 157–64.
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52. Babylonian Talmud, *Taanit* 7a.
53. Mishna, *Sanhedrin* 4:5.