

# *Advanced Jewish Healing Program:*

*Lilmode, Lelamed, Lenakhm*

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*To Learn, To Teach, To Comfort*

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TEMPLE CHAI

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This project was designed to support the development of a leadership cadre for the National Jewish Healing Movement and support the development and publication of resources and materials for the field of Jewish healing.



The Kalsman Institute  
on Judaism and Health

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## **Background**

**“God knows that the best synagogue is the healing heart.”**

This old Chasidic saying describes this philosophy of Temple Chai, a large reform synagogue in Phoenix, Arizona, where caring and compassion are at the center of synagogue life.

In the late 1980s, Temple Chai set out to redesign the synagogue in order to make it a more caring, compelling institution. Rabbi Bill Berk called together several physicians, nurses, therapists, and health educators to begin an experiment to make explicit the healing core of Jewish religious experience by providing resources that help people recover the healing power of their Jewish heritage and traditions. Out of this meeting came *Bet Tikkun* (House of Healing). In 1996, Temple Chai established the Deutsch Family Shalom Center, a center dedicated to providing healing, learning, and wholeness through educational programs, support groups, and spiritual development. The intent of the Shalom Center is to bring the eternal Jewish prayer of *shalom* – wholeness, well-being, completeness, and peace – to our congregants and community while utilizing Jewish wisdom, tradition, and compassion.

In May of 2003, the Deutsch Family Shalom Center at Temple Chai and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health held an international conference on Jewish healing wisdom, “Mining the Jewish Tradition for its Healing Wisdom.” Thirty renowned scholars and rabbis facilitated workshops that engaged participants in meaningful learning with new and rarely taught texts. More than 300 participants attended, including rabbis, cantors, educators, healthcare professionals, and lay people who were seeking and digging deeper to develop fresh tools for their healing work and spiritual growth.

As a consequence of the far-reaching success of this healing conference, participants found a new passion and motivation for deepening their understanding and participation on

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Jewish healing practices and the *mitzvot* (commandments) of healing. Many asked, “What next?” In response to this enthusiasm, the Shalom Center decided to develop a curriculum and multi-year effort under the broad banner of “Advanced Jewish Healing” to further our collective education and explore opportunities for bringing healing to our personal and professional work and to the entire congregation and community.

The Advanced Jewish Healing effort was developed at Temple Chai by Rabbis Bill Berk and Mari Chernow and Sharona Silverman, Director of the Deutsch Family Shalom Center, in response to the needs and desires of its participants. For its first year, beginning in September 2003, the Shalom Center invited members of Temple Chai’s Caring Committee and those individuals involved directly or indirectly with the caring professions to participate in this new, longer-range program. We selected a relatively small group of congregants (less than 30), to preserve intimate, meaningful interaction among participants. This program was to be called “*Lilmode, Lelamed, Lenakhm*,” or “To Learn, To Teach, To Comfort.”

## **Summary, Description, and Impact**

**Why:** To deepen participants' understanding of Jewish healing practices and the *mitzvot* of healing; to offer practical assistance to clergy and congregants; to create and develop projects to bring healing to our personal and professional work and to our community.

**Who:** Congregants who yearn to integrate healing insights and teachings into their personal lives, healthcare professions, and community involvement. The program is designed for those who seek fresh approaches to their healing work and spiritual growth. It is highly recommended for Caring Committee members and those individuals involved directly or indirectly with the caring professions.

**What:** A participatory learning process to explore and utilize our Jewish traditions and wisdom in the areas of:

- Traditional and contemporary concepts of Jewish healing
- Personal development skills of listening and connecting with self and others
- Theological issues in health, illness, and loss
- Role of prayer and the spiritual dimension of health and illness
- Jewish principles of caring for the dying and their loved ones
- Ancient and modern texts related to Jewish healing
- Development of healing projects for our community

**How:** The program was conceived, presented, and implemented as a three-year effort.

**Year I:** Monthly meetings facilitated by Temple Chai clergy and selected guest scholars of the Jewish healing movement; weekend retreat; selection of healing projects

**Year II:** Workshops presented by participants, along with the implementation of selected healing projects; lectures and workshops throughout the year; healing trip to Israel

**Year III:** Continued implementation of healing projects; group activities (retreat, hike, etc.); and closing ceremony

**Description:** This report contains outlines of the activities and schedules of Years I and II, including the healing trip to Israel. To provide readers with a sense of the breadth and scope of participant exploration, individual projects by participants are listed. Six outstanding projects are described in detail.

**Impact of Project:** Many Jews throughout the world are experiencing dissatisfaction and alienation in their personal, communal, and professional lives. Some are turning to the synagogue to address their difficult life issues in a Jewish context, seeking strength, compassion, and solace during times of growth or change. Those who have been comforted through their transitions are often looking for opportunities to help others in return or as part of their own healing process. They want to get involved by reaching out to others with the gift of a caring community that they received in their time of need. In our efforts to maintain the focus of Temple Chai and the Shalom Center on the healing core of our Jewish religious traditions, we have consistently emphasized partnership with our congregants that empower them to actively participate in this community effort.

With healing at the core of the synagogue experience, many healthcare professionals have been drawn to this community with its rich and authentic spirituality and opportunities for personal growth. These professionals are also turning to synagogue life at a time of re-examining their roles at work. Many are experiencing burnout, disillusionment, and/or family and health concerns. They seek safe and non-judgmental opportunities to re-examine their roles as professionals/healers and family/community members and to bring balance into their lives.

The Advanced Jewish Healing Program provides a framework for the participants to facilitate healing for themselves, their families, and their community of others seeking and learning about healing. Through their study and their projects they had the opportunity to redesign their work and personal lives to more fully reflect the light of Jewish values and teachings.

By promoting a strong base of Jewish education and connection, participants in this program have been able to pass on a sturdy foundation of skills, teachings, and values to their community. The result has been to strengthen their commitment to creating work environments and relationships in the context of Jewish wisdom and values, with a greater integration of spirituality in their personal and professional lives.

## **Goal and Summary of Monthly Meetings for Years I and II**

### **Goals:**

- To deepen participants' understanding of Jewish healing practices and the *mitzvot* of healing
- To offer practical assistance to clergy and congregants
- To create and develop projects to bring healing to our community

### **Summary of Year I by monthly sessions:**

#### **1. Introduction to the Advanced Jewish Healing Program**

- a. Create a feeling of comfort, safety, and confidentiality for participants
- b. Assess participants' and group's interests and needs
- c. Define expectations and level of commitment required
- d. *Hevrutah* study on Biblical references for *lilmode*, *lelamed*, and *lenachem*
- e. Introduce traditional and modern teachings on illness and healing in the Jewish tradition
- f. Discuss a variety of opportunities for healing: the elderly, children, homebound, the dying, acute care, mental health, etc.

#### **2. Personal Development Skills and Basic Tools for the Jewish Healing Practitioner**

- a. Understand the importance of spirit-centered listening and connecting with self, others, and God
- b. Develop skills of spirit-centered listening, such as creating a holy space, creating a *kavanah*, being fully present, etc.
- c. Understand and develop healthy boundary setting
- d. Understand Jewish views of speech and communication

#### **3. Healing Retreat: Guest Facilitator – Rabbi David Zeller of Jerusalem, internationally-known scholar of Jewish mysticism and meditation**

- a. Develop skills of meditation, mindfulness, silence, and holy listening
- b. Practice of self-care to prevent stress and burn-out
- c. Develop and share own healing and transformational stories
- d. Study healing transformation material in Chasidic texts
- e. Participate in rituals and ceremonies related to our healing work and transformation

#### **4. Exploring Personal Passions and the Role of Jewish Healing in our Communities**

- a. Creative exploration of personal interests and areas of priority in Jewish healing
- b. Discuss collaboration and community
- c. Explore collaborative projects needed in our community
- d. Understand Jewish healing resources of psalms, music, stories, guided imagery, ritual, humor, poetry, journaling, etc.
- e. Develop creative liturgy on healing

**5. Bikkur Cholim within our Synagogue and Communities**

- a. Understand the context of *Bikkur Cholim* in Jewish history and in our communities
- b. Introduce highlights and key points of our *Bikkur Cholim* training program at Temple Chai
- c. Study of traditional and modern Jewish writing on health and illness
- d. Discuss teachings of Maimonides and the Laws of *Bikkur Cholim*

**6. Care for the Dying and their Loved Ones: Guest Facilitator – Anne Brener, LCSW, psychotherapist, spiritual director, rabbinic student, and author of Mourning and Mitzvah**

- a. Explore participants' understandings and feeling about death and dying and the *mitzvot* of *nichum avelim* (comforting the mourner) and *kavod hamet* (honoring the dead)
- b. Understand the Mourners' Path
- c. Present an overview of the needs of dying people, and of Jewish concepts and texts that respond to these needs
- d. Present an overview of Jewish bereavement practices and the cycle of the seasons to mourn our losses

**7. Role of Prayer and the Spiritual Dimension in Healing and Illness**

- a. Create a level of comfort around the role of prayer in Judaism
- b. Introduce formal and spontaneous prayer
- c. Understand the uses and history of the *Mi Shebeirach* and *Modeh ani* prayers
- d. Create personal prayers of healing
- e. Define projects for Year II
- f. Create a sacred space of closure for Year I with enthusiasm and inspiration for continuation of Jewish healing study and work

**Summary of Year II monthly sessions:**

**1. Guest Speaker: Len Felder, author of Seven Prayers That Can Change your Life: How to Use Jewish Spiritual Wisdom to Enhance your Health, Relationships, and Daily Effectiveness**

- a. Utilizing specific prayers during visits to ill and bereaved congregants
- b. Role of prayer, human effort, and medical science in healing
- c. Tensions and synergies between Western medicine, Eastern medicine, and Jewish spirituality
- d. Wisdom of prayer in Jewish faith

**2. Guest Speaker: Danny Siegel, founder and chair of the Ziv Tzedakah Fund**

- a. Importance and examples of *mitzvot*, the power of *tzedakah*, and the bringing of healing to our world, *tikkun olam*
  - b. Introduction of Advanced Jewish Healing projects
- 3. Guest Speaker: Rabbi Peter Levi, Assistant Rabbi, Temple Chai**
- a. Favorite healing Jewish wisdom: “Oneness of God”
  - b. Presentations by group participants of component of project
    - Compassionate Listening
    - Meditation as Prayer
    - *Shiva Minyans*
    - Creating Star of David Quilts
- 4. Guest Speaker: Rabbi Lisa Tzur, Assistant Rabbi, Temple Chai**
- a. Healing experiences and resources for children dealing with crises
  - b. Presentations by group participants of component of project
    - Four-world model of healing
    - Power of visualization
    - Developing maturity as a healer
- 5. Guest Speaker: Rabbi Mari Chernow, Associate Rabbi, Temple Chai**
- a. Caring for a loved one during final moments of death
  - b. Study of midrash on Moses’ death
  - c. Presentation by participants on Caring for the Dying as component of project
  - d. Developing *Chevra Kaddishah* at our synagogue
- 6. Guest Speaker: Rabbi Bill Cutter, Director, Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health**
- a. Utilizing creativity in healing process
  - b. Modern Poetry of Healing presented by Rabbi Cutter
- 7. Trip to Israel: “The Healing of the Israeli People, the Healing of Ourselves”**
- 8. Closing Session for Year II**
- a. Highlights of healing trip to Israel
  - b. Review of accomplishments of past two years
  - c. Continuation of projects for Year III
  - d. Closing ceremony for Year II

**Itinerary of Group Tour:**  
**“The Healing of the Israeli People, the Healing of Ourselves”**  
**April 11-21, 2005**

**Monday, April 11**

- Leave Phoenix, fly through Toronto on Air Canada

**Tuesday, April 12**

- Arrive in Tel Aviv
- Travel to Golan
- Overnight at Kfar Charuv overlooking Lake Tiberias

**Wednesday, April 13**

- Sulha Peace Project: *Sulha is an ancient process, whose goal is to arrive at a solution for conflicts between people, groups, and families*; meeting with Gaby Meyer, Sulha founder
- Hike Mt. Meron
- Dinner in Tiberias

**Thursday, April 14**

- Retreat with RIKMA Fellows at Kibbutz Tzuba (Rabbi David Lazar): *RIKMA is an educational organization to develop community leaders working toward creating schools, synagogues, and hospitals that work together holistically to support all community members both in sickness and health.*
- Evening of creating healing songs with musician, Josh Laufer
- Overnight at Kibbutz Tzuba

**Friday, April 15**

- Daven with RIKMA fellows, breakfast
- Walking Tour of Jewish Quarter
- Chuvra Synagogue – presentation on “From Ashes to Social Action” by Bonna Devora Haberman, Director, Mistabra Institute for Jewish Textual Activism, Brandeis
- Prepare for Shabbat
- Kabbalat Shabbat at Shira Chadasha
- Shabbat dinner at the Berks’ home
- Overnight at Beit Shmuel

**Saturday, April 16**

- Free morning
- Shabbat lunch and Havdalah at the Berks’ home
- Afternoon study with Stuart Schoffman (journalist, Jerusalem Post), “My Healing and the Healing of the Jewish People” links his own struggle with cancer and Israel’s struggle to heal itself from old and recent wounds.
- Free evening in Jerusalem

**Sunday, April 17**

- Yad Lakashish – workshops for the elderly on producing beautiful crafts
- Hadassah Hospital – meetings with Prof. Charles Sprung, Director, General Intensive Care Unit; Prof. Arie Shalev, Head, Department of Psychiatry; tour of Intensive Care ward; Chagal windows and chapel
- Yad Vashem tour
- Presentation by Holocaust survivor and her experiences with a Jewish physician in the camps
- Evening Discussion with Danny Brom, Israel's foremost psychotrauma expert

**Monday, April 18**

- Western Wall Tour (and tunnels under the Temple)
- Koby Mandell Foundation: lecture by Sherri Mandell
- Shaare Tzedek Medical Center; tour and discussion with Jonathan Rudnick and staff on Spiritual Care and Training in Israel

**Tuesday, April 19**

- Hamakom: Neo-Hasidic Retreat and Spiritual Center: hiking and nature walk; teaching with Ohad Ezrahi
- Visit to Qumran – Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit
- Leave for Tel Aviv. Two nights at Renaissance Hotel

**Wednesday, April 20**

- Rehabilitation Center for War Disabled at Tel Hashomer; tour with Dr. Gabi Zeilig, Director of Neurological Rehabilitation
- Eretz Israel Museum
- Palmach Museum

**Thursday, April 21**

- SHIRAM Integrative Medicine Clinic at Asafe Harofe Medical Center, meeting with Dr. Shai Pintov and staff
- Tour of Neve Tzedek neighborhood
- Closing ceremony on the beach
- Farewell dinner

## **Project Proposals**

### **Ginette D., “Shiva Minyan Training”**

**Proposal:** Resource material on the service, the importance of the shiva process, hands-on-training on the various components of the service.

**Outcome:** Developed material and provided two workshops to train congregants.

### **Leslie E.,**

#### **“How to Avoid Foot in Mouth Disease When Visiting the Sick, the Dying, and the Bereaved”**

**Proposal:** To write a guide for lay people and professionals using real-life examples of what to say and what to do for folks who are sick, those who are dying, and others recently bereaved; to provide some pointers in dealing with visitors.

#### **“A Spiritual Guide to Jewish Healing”**

**Proposal:** To create a monograph that synthesizes the body, the mind, and the spirit. To indicate the parallels between ancient Jewish prayers and practices with present-day healing wisdom text and videos.

**Outcome:** Produced manuscript on “Good Things to Say in Tough Situations.”

### **Larry E., “Grand Canyon Spiritual Adventure”**

**Proposal:** Organize and co-lead a five-day backpacking spiritual adventure into the Grand Canyon with Rabbi Mari Chernow. Would include a series of educational meetings focusing on faith, land, hiking, and healing.

**Outcome:** Lectured on “God Signs in the World of Nature: A Jewish Spiritual Path and How to Walk It” at Shalom Center Lecture Series on Jewish Approaches to Healing and Growth.

### **Ron F., “Case Studies in Jewish Healing”**

**Proposal:** To develop teaching cases in Jewish healing and mechanism(s) for distribution to Jewish clinicians, Jewish “laypeople,” and Jewish professionals.

### **Ellen F., “Wellness through the Four Worlds of the Kaballah”**

**Proposal:** Creation of a list of resources and development of physical activities that promote healing, incorporating the four worlds of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Working with different congregants, 2-3 times a month, on an on-going basis.

**Outcome:** Developed notebook of activities on “Healing Through the Four Worlds” and provided wellness workshops and hiking experiences for small groups within the congregation.

### **Ellie G., Anita R., and Joan Z., “Chevra Kaddishah”**

**Proposal:** To study and develop materials on death and dying practices within the Jewish tradition and to research the formation of a volunteer burial society according to Jewish law (for the Reform community).

**Outcome:** Researched subject and developed presentation on concepts.

**Marlene H., “Bikkur Cholim for the Jewish Unaffiliated”**

**Proposal:** To develop material and to work with hospitals, hospice, extended care facilities, rehabilitation facilities, etc. to provide the art of Bikkur Cholim with unaffiliated Jewish patients, utilizing Jewish wisdom/Jewish spiritual healing.

**Beth I., “Bereavement Mentor for Families”**

**Proposal:** Research and study to be a mentor in the bereavement process: to be available during the time of a loved one dying and after, for up to a year, and to possibly include bereavement work with children and grief associated with infertility issues, miscarriage, abortion, and suicide.

**Outcome:** Researched topic and developed presentation.

**Douglas J., “A Mature-Jewish Healer Role”**

**Proposal:** Development, presentation, and refinement of a mature, Jewish, healer role – reflecting the fruits of a committed Jewish path of lifelong learning, ethical refinement, and service. This model will provide 18 (or so) indices of maturity in Jewish healing, tied together by a clear and logical structure – easy to understand, easy to critique, and refine. There could also be a self-report instrument to measure one’s progress and set goals.

**Outcome:** Presented study and writing on “A Measurable Model for Maturity” to which Jewish healers might aspire.

**Sandy J., “Connecting to God: Nurturing the Sacred in Our Lives”**

**Proposal:** To provide a group on spiritual direction to discover, nurture, and deepen the experience of the sacred through experiential learning, discussion, and personal reflection.

**Outcome:** Organization, training, and facilitation of six Group Spiritual Direction groups.

**Dale K., “Jewish Spirituality’s Healing Role in the Job Search/Transition Process”**

**Proposal:** To connect Jewish wisdom on healing and Jewish approaches towards work and identity to the job transition process so as to better enable people in the job search efforts. Approaches and guidelines will be recommended to be used by Jewish groups around the country.

**Outcome:** Provided bi-monthly support group and conference on “Job Transitions Networking and Education for the Changing Workplace.”)

**Barbara K., “Creating a Healing Environment within Temple Chai”**

**Proposal:** To assess needs and create a healing environment for congregants and staff based on the four world model within Judaism.

**Outcome:** Providing decorating assistance to widow and widowers on transitioning at home; providing workshops on “Increasing Productivity with Space Design and Presentation.”

**Idell K., “Abortion: The Untold Secret”**

**Proposal:** To offer the opportunity for women - and possibly, later men - to share their experiences with abortion in a safe, non-judgmental setting. Political posturing would be left at the door. Here individuals would have the opportunity to share stories and feelings, perhaps secrets kept for years. Those who have kept secret the memories of abortion would create for each other a supportive community of acceptance and healing.

**Outcome:** Presented at Healing lecture on “New Rituals for Women”

**Barbara M., “Healing Prayers and Poetry”**

**Proposal:** To write a book of healing prayers and poetry and to facilitate teachings on creativity as well as prayer and poetry-writing for the healing process.

**Outcome:** Booklet of prayers and poetry in development; presented the power of Visualization at Advanced Jewish Healing Program.

**Carol and Howard M., “Affirmations for Modern Jewish Healing”**

**Proposal:** To develop a small book of daily affirmations including engaging others in experiences that connect with one’s own feelings and embraces God’s healing spirit.

**Deborah M., “Star of David Lap Quilt”**

**Proposal:** Anne Brener wrote about the yearnings for healing as represented by a triangle – and two triangles together become the Star of David. This symbol can be used to make lap quilts that family members or Caring Committee members could make for congregants who are ill or are recovering from a serious illness or surgery.

**Outcome:** Facilitating two workshops on “Learning to Quilt” for participants to make a Star of David Quilt for healing.

**Don S., “Job Bank Development”**

**Proposal:** To work on the newly proposed job bank and meld it with expansion of the existing professional resource list.

**Outcome:** Researching job transition program and job banks for support group and conference on Job Transitions Networking and Education.

**Esther S., “Healing Great Wounds”**

**Proposal:** To research the topic of how Judaism has dealt with individual trauma and/or collective trauma and how we heal from great trauma, great wounds, be it the Shoah or the constant threat of terrorism, or disabilities. The results of the research will be to help with the healing conference, the Shoah committee, and possibly the Sukkot Healing Service.

**Nona S., “Helping Teens Cope with Issues in a Jewish Context”**

**Proposal:** To help assemble a teen center of programs that would provide needed information and would be a setting for questions and discussions on contraception, STDs, smoking/alcohol/drug information, gender identity issues, mental health issues, social action, exercise.

**Outcome:** Workshops in development for teens and parents.

**Howard S., “Jewish Physician Healing Network: Clinical Experience Illuminated by the Light of Torah”**

**Proposal:** Create a curriculum in Jewish healing for Jewish physicians to help them reconnect, integrate, and infuse their professional and personal lives with meaning and Jewish life.

**Outcome:** Presentation by Howard on “Medicine and Judaism” for Healing Lecture series; presentation and needs assessment at Kalsman Partners gathering.

**Deborah W., “Knitting with Kavannah”**

**Proposal:** Knitting healing shawls for congregants (to include healing circle and knitting for congregants).

**Outcome:** Creating monthly gatherings to knit healing shawls.

**Shira Z., “Meditation Garden with Labyrinth”**

**Proposal:** The Meditation Garden would be a place for people to come to meditate or just be alone with God in their own way. It would include calming elements for all the senses: calming aromas, flowing water, beautiful healing colors, and calming objects to touch and hold.

**Outcome:** Researched labyrinths for healing and presented workshop on “Role of Meditation in Prayer.”

## **Six Highlighted Project Summaries and Descriptions**

### **A. Ellen F. (physical therapist)**

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**Project Title:** “*Wellness Through the Four Worlds of the Kaballah*”

**Project Summary:** Jewish healing is about *shalom* or wholeness. Jewish tradition has a healing message for everyone including those with chronic illness, those who are grieving, those coping with everyday stresses, and those maintaining wellness. The Zohar, the authoritative text on Jewish mysticism, attempts to bring balance between the physical, the emotional, the mental, and the spiritual aspects of ourselves. These are the “four worlds” that Ellen chose to explore. Her project entails creating a guide listing and describing resources and activities that promote healing, using the four worlds as the fundamental touchstones of Jewish healing. In her own work as a physical therapist, Ellen weaves the ideas of the four worlds with her professional skills to assist congregants and the synagogue staff.

**Description:**

- a) Ellen developed four different resources: a guide containing a list of healing opportunities and experiences from within the Jewish tradition; a self-evaluation tool for *cheshbon hanefesh* (an accounting of one’s soul); individual stories of growth; and a bibliography of suggested readings.
- b) Ellen created wellness and fitness programs that were developed for the synagogue staff and for parents within our childhood center.
- c) Ellen provided therapy guidance that was offered through Temple Chai’s Caring Committee.

**Ellen’s Reflections on the Advanced Jewish Healing Program:**

*“How has the program helped you to integrate Jewish healing into your personal and professional life?”*

- Becoming more comfortable utilizing professional knowledge with congregants seeking physical therapy.
- Utilizing four-world model in professional life in traditional medical settings, emphasizing the role of spirituality in healing.

*“What have been some of the unexpected outcomes?”*

- Utilizing more spiritual tools in everyday work, based on experimental learning from the Advanced Jewish Healing Program, such as poetry, creating new prayers, and Torah study.
- Enhanced personal approach to life and relationships; better self-care.
- Gaining comfort with challenging clients. As Anne Brener taught in her session, “We must experience each person as the image of God”.
- Ellen reports, “I am more willing to develop my own physical therapy practice, which creates an environment for people who are seeking spiritual connection in their own physical rehabilitation or daily exercise practice.”

*“What has the impact been on the community?”*

- Greater understanding within our community of the need to balance physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual components of one’s life.
- The larger healthcare community who which uses a medical model is becoming more aware of practitioners and patients who are seeking the spiritual component in their healing.

## **B. Sandy J. (psychotherapist and spiritual director)**

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**Project Title:** *“Connecting to God: Nurturing the Sacred in Our Lives”*

**Project Summary:** In spiritual direction, the primary question is, “Where is God?” Helping others through painful and challenging life events by growing their relationship with God is a way of using and integrating Jewish healing practices. This project will provide small group experiences in spiritual direction to discover, nurture, and deepen the sacred.

### **Description:**

- a) Sandy introduced congregants to the basics of spiritual direction, how it works, and how individuals can grow their relationship with God. The workshop included experiential learning, discussion, and personal reflections. Six groups of 4-6 participants were formed with 1 or 2 facilitators. These groups met for six sessions, utilizing prayer, meditation, silence, music, and psalms to draw participants closer to the Source.

- b) A facilitator-training was developed and a facilitator group met monthly utilizing the Spiritual Direction model.
- c) Evaluations from the group participants have been excellent. Many will continue participating in Group Spiritual Direction. Responses from participants include:
  - “I know I had a connection to God all along, but I found it difficult to understand. This group taught me to notice God’s presence and deeply strengthened my relationship with God. This class and all the moments that I have learned to notice because of it will be remembered and cherished as one of the most ‘Life-changing experiences of my life’”
  - “I have found a peace that I have never known because of what I hear in this group.”

**Sandy’s Reflections on the Advanced Jewish Healing Program:**

*“How has the program helped you to integrate Jewish healing into your personal and professional life?”*

- Involvement in this program opened a new area within professional and spiritual life, primarily as a Spiritual Director, and as a psychotherapist. “It gave me the context in which to develop something so close to my heart, enabling me to bring it to a community with a structure to support it.”
- Increasing integration as identity and skill as a Spiritual Director grew, as well as comfort in a synagogue setting.
- Taking greater initiative in Spiritual Direction community as panelist at Jewish Spiritual Directors meeting and in writing a journal article on group experiences.
- Feels more connected to Jewish life: “I don’t feel on the outside with relationship to God in a synagogue setting.”

*“What have been some of the unexpected outcomes?”*

- Direct feedback from program has been beyond expectations with participants feeling much more intimately connected to God and to the experience of prayer and silence.
- Congregants are making a real commitment to pray for themselves and others, sharing with others how God moves in their lives.
- Growth in own capacity to be in prayer and silence.

*What has the impact been on your community?*

- The “Connecting to God” groups have been extremely well received, recognizing a yearning for a connection between God and the heart.
- Synagogue communities can provide opportunities for congregants to discern God’s presence in their daily lives.
- Acknowledging the need for congregants to express their need of a relationship with God and for synagogue professionals to listen closely at how God is moving in their lives.

**C. Dale K. (faculty associate in business management; owner marketing firm)**

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**Project Title:** *“Jewish Spirituality’s Healing Role in the Job Search/Transition Process”*

**Project Summary:** Many people are finding that the nature of their work, their personal careers, and their self-identity are challenged as result of changes in market place dynamics, technology, educational and skill requirements, shifts in the economy and global trade, and population demographics. Many people today find themselves in the midst of an unexpected job transition: needing to get a new job, to re-enter the workforce, or to seek ways to better utilize their work skills or passions. Today’s job search process is often lengthy and confusing. This project’s aim is to see how Jewish spirituality guidelines, Jewish wisdom on healing, and Jewish approaches towards work identity can be incorporated pragmatically in the job transition process to offer participants encouragement and reinforce an ongoing positive outlook in their endeavors.

**Description:**

- a) Dale facilitated a bi-monthly group at Temple Chai on “Job Transitions Networking Education for the Changing Workplace.” This group offered critically important services to a segment of the Jewish community coping with job transition issues including stress, changes in family relationships, financial planning needs, and spiritual guidance.
  - b) Dale gathered resource material from Jewish sources that addressed transitions and challenges as well as relevant job search materials to assist job seekers in their efforts.
- Dale coordinated a full-day conference on job search skills and other needs in the changing workplace and promoted the conference to the Jewish community.

**Dale's Reflections on the Advanced Jewish Healing Program:**

*“How has the program helped you to integrate Jewish healing into your personal and professional life?”*

- Through attendance in the healing conference, “Mining the Jewish Tradition for its Healing Wisdom,” Dale gained initial knowledge about the healing process and developed a greater interest in Judaism. Dale states that “a key aspect of Jewish healing is transformation; learning from and providing to people specific experiences that help form, shape, and reveal aspects of one’s self.”
- Dale utilized the principles of Jewish healing through teaching classes on responsible leadership and personal and organizational ethics. She views ethics as “a critical part of healing – for one of the consequences of not having a moral compass is a deterioration of one’s mental and physical health.”
- Dale has an understanding on how Judaism looks at the role of work/career in one’s life, the role of ethics, and a holistic approach of integrating spirit, mind, and body.

*“What have been some of the unexpected outcomes?”*

- Growing interest in ethics and reading more about Jewish ethics, particularly in the workplace.
- “This experience on healing has made me yearn more about being Jewish and participating in the Jewish religion, reading more about Judaism.”
- Relating to people; tending to make fewer judgments.
- Improved self-care with the integration of Jewish healing concepts as a way of life.

*“What has the impact been in the community?”*

- Providing a job/career transition process beyond skill building aspect.
- “Job Transitions Networking and Education for the Changing Workplace” became a dynamic support group and developed into a conference with approximately 130 people in attendance. During the past two years, experts in the fields of job and career transitions volunteered their time to speak to the group, providing guidance, skills, and support.

- Integrating Jewish healing wisdom on the changing nature of life, work and identity, specifically how Jewish tradition can be a source of comfort and positive outlook at a time of stressful change.

#### **D. Howard S. (family physician)**

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##### **Project Title: “*Jewish Physician Healing Network: Clinical Experience Illuminated by the Light of Torah*”**

**Project Summary:** Many Jewish physicians / clinicians are puzzled about how they can integrate their Jewish spirituality with their clinical practices in appropriate and useful ways. The Jewish healing ‘movement’ has given rise to the creation of materials ranging from text study to *Bikkur Cholim* training courses but this material is not available in any central location. The creation of a curriculum in Jewish healing for Jewish physicians / clinicians would help Jewish physicians / clinicians to reconnect, integrate and infuse their professional and personal lives with meaning and Jewish life. Creating such a curriculum could also begin creating a community of Jewish physicians / clinicians to nurture and sustain themselves and their communities. It is anticipated that participants would also bring meaning and insights gained in this course of study back into individual clinical encounters as well as into medicine as a whole.

##### **Description:**

- a) Howard developed a process for obtaining curricular input for a course for Jewish physicians. This included identification of key individuals (rabbis, physicians, social workers and other healing professionals) to interview and a structured interview process focusing on Goals and Learning Objectives, Topics, Resources and Processes.
- b) A presentation at the Kalsman Partners Gathering in order to test the process detailed above and to obtain curricular input from Kalsman Partners attending the session.
- c) Information will also be obtained through the Department of Family Concerns at Union of Reform Judaism.
- d) Once the curriculum is finalized, it will utilize an integrated sequence of live retreats, *hevrotah* study and online content and discussion forums.

**Howard's Reflections on the Advanced Jewish Healing Program:**

*“How has this program helped you to integrate Jewish healing into your personal and professional life?”*

- The opportunity to have personal study of texts and other writing related to Jewish healing practices, the exposure to material I would not otherwise come across, such as the study of healing poetry.
- Individual project has created connections with like-minded clinicians and Jewish scholars involved in healing work.

*“What have been some of the unexpected outcomes?”*

- Getting connected with leaders in the field of healing.
- Stronger connection and friendship with participants in Advanced Jewish Healing program.
- Jewish healing has been “legitimized” as group members make a three-year commitment to participate in the program.
- Realizing the great potential in *hevrutah* study of physicians/clinicians and clergy.
- Increasing the partnering between those in the Jewish healing movement with physicians and clinicians.

*“What has the impact been on our community?”*

- Revitalizing Jewish physicians and clinicians in deepening their understanding of Jewish healing.
- Bringing together resources on Jewish healing from disparate sources in an organized and meaningful way.
- Bringing meaning and insights gained in this course of study back into individual clinical encounters as well as into medicine as a whole.

**E. Ginette D. (manager, communications department)**

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**Project Title:** *“Shiva Minyan Training”*

**Project Summary:** At the time of bereavement, the community must be there to reach out to the bereaved and say, “You are not alone; we care about you.” Jewish bereavement classes with

hands-on training in leading *shiva minyans* will tap some of the vast wealth of talent at the synagogue. A series of sessions can provide interested congregants with the tools for leadership at these important times in one's life. The program will include teachings and an overview on Jewish views of death, bereavement, immortality of the soul, and the afterlife, and offer study of select Biblical and Talmudic texts on death and bereavement.

**Description:**

- a) A two-part interactive training was developed to answer the following:
  - What are Jewish bereavement practices? How did they come into being?
  - How do I comfort mourners?
  - Could I lead a *shiva minyan*? What do I need to know?
- b) Study texts and reference materials were provided, including *The Minyan of Comfort* prayer book used during *shiva minyans*.
- c) Class members participated in a *shiva minyan* service in which issues and concerns were addressed.
- d) A roster of available congregants for leading *shiva minyans* has been made available to the Temple Chai clergy. Some class members continue to be mentored by assisting others at the service.

**Ginette's Reflections on the Advanced Jewish Healing Program:**

*"How has the program helped you to integrate Jewish Healing into your personal and professional life?"*

- Initial exposure at healing conference, "Mining the Jewish Tradition for its Healing Wisdom" brought awareness of the rich tradition of Jewish healing.
- "As a professional, I have learned how important it is to really listen, to cultivate more humility and patience and to stand in awe of those who have gone through difficult times."
- See article in Appendix titled, "Coming Back to My Judaism."

*What have been some of the unexpected outcomes?*

- Growing number of congregants interested in becoming more comfortable with dealing with issues of death and dying and relating to others during difficult times.

- Meeting and studying with others who are tackling difficult topics.
- Ginette has become a better manager in the workplace through listening and compassion.
- Adding the healing component to her adult Jewish education has increased Ginette's interest in doing more for her community and the world.

*What has the impact been on the community?*

- *Shiva minyan* prayers have been demystified and congregants are increasing their comfort level to assist clergy at prayer services.
- Consideration of para-rabbinic program to further train congregants.
- Utilizing mentoring to educate and guide other congregants toward new skills.

#### **F. Deborah M. (dermatologist)**

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**Project Title:** “*Star of David Healing Quilts*”

**Project Summary:** In Mourning and Mitzvah (p. 169-70), Anne Brener writes about mutual yearning as God and each human being together engage in *tikkun olam*, healing the world. The intersection of the two triangles reveals, according to a Kabbalist interpretation, the mutual interaction between what is above and what is below, as well as the universal yearning for wholeness or *shalom*. The Star of David symbol can be used in simple-to-make lap quilts that can be made for congregants who are ill or recovering from a serious illness or surgery. The quilt can give comfort long after a visit is over and can be passed from one generation to the next. Furthermore, the meaning of the *Magen David* can lead to discussion and meditation on the hopes of healing and *refuah shleimah*.

**Description:**

- a) Simplified directions were developed to guide anyone interested in making lap quilts.
- b) Publicity for this program was provided at Temple Chai committee meetings and through written publications. Publicity included an invitation to “Learn to Quilt” with step-by-step instruction.
- c) Several meetings were offered to complete 42” x 42” quilts.

- d) A dynamic group of quilters, both beginners and more advanced, met regularly in a group called “Chai Quilters.” Membership requires one lap-sized quilt (42” x 42”) donated to the Caring Committee and one quilt block (9 ½” x 12 ½”) donated per year to make a shared quilt for the Temple Chai silent auction.

**Deborah’s Reflections on the Advanced Jewish Healing Program:**

*“How has the program helped you to integrate Jewish healing into your personal and professional life?”*

- As a Jew by Choice, developing more of a comfort with, and a vocabulary for, speaking to God outside of formal services.
- Connecting to patients with greater presence and more consciousness of God’s role in healing.
- Realizing blessing of skills, energy, and emotional stability to being a good physician.
- The more we know about Jewish healing the more comfortable we will be to be there for others.

*“What have been some of the unexpected outcomes?”*

- Initial group of 15 were impressive, coming together with a variety of skill levels and with people in mind to present their quilt for healing.
- Reasons for attending varied: One woman said that her husband had recently died after a long illness. Though she had been a quilter many years before, she did not have the time over the past years as she was a busy caregiver. This was the first time since his death that she has gotten out her sewing machine and gone back to quilting. Community helped bring her back to a craft she loved!
- In its potential, these quilts can be given to many congregants in need and can outlive their maker, passed on through generations.

*“What has the impact been on the community?”*

- Promoting creativity and the *mitzvah* of *gemilut chasadim*.
- Brought people back to lovingly create crafts within a community.

## **Three Personal Experiences Based on the Program**

### **A Physician's Perspective**

**By Howard D. S., MD MS**

Some time ago, I joined a group of physicians who had come together to study ancient texts related to healing. We studied many interesting passages illuminated by the light of our personal and shared experience as clinicians. As a result of these conversations, a special energy and connectedness grew within this group.

One of the passages we studied was from a section of the talmud. The talmud was assembled around the year 200 and is a vast compilation of the oral tradition along with extensive rabbinical elaborations and commentaries. This particular passage describes the interaction between two well-known colleagues as follows:

Rabbi Hiyya ben Abba fell ill and Rabbi Johanan went to visit him. He said to him: Are your sufferings welcome to you? He replied: Neither they nor their reward. He said to him: Give me your hand. He gave him his hand and he raised him. (Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 5a)

When we studied this particular passage, we had several discussions regarding the meaning and significance of the last sentence **“He gave him, his hand and he raised him.”** It seemed that there was something very important here. In spite of many conversations about it, however, we all felt that the deeper meaning remained elusive.

On our next call one of the docs, Mark, shared that he had just been diagnosed with gastroesophageal cancer. We were all floored. We talked for an hour about this news and to my surprise (and delight), nobody played the role of clinician. Rather, we all joined him fully right where he was. At one point, one of us asked if his sufferings were welcome to him and his immediate reply was, **“Neither they nor their reward.”** More discussion ensued and soon we were at the end of the time allotted for this call. I asked him if he felt he had been raised. There was silence, then sobbing, then a quiet, **“Yes, very much so”**.

By actually ‘living’ this text together experientially, we had moved to an entirely new level of understanding of it, not to mention connection with each other and with Mark.

**Coming Back to My Judaism  
By Ginette D.**

Early one February, close to six years ago, I made a decision that changed my life: I began attending Saturday morning services. As many of my dear friends in the morning *minyan* know, my first few forays were nothing short of traumatic from my perspective. I sat alone, knowing no one, no Hebrew, and nothing about the service. Positioned by the exit for a quick getaway if need be, I sat completely overwhelmed as the congregation sang, prayed, bowed, rose, sat, all seeming experts in every nuance of the service. I had this sinking feeling that I was in way over my head, nonetheless, I felt drawn to return. There was a power in community prayer; I might not know all the words, but I could literally feel those prayers shoot directly up to God. I knew I had to part be part of that holy experience

So, I slowly began learning the prayers, reading about the service, going to weekly Torah study. And, with each week, I moved further away from the exit. Then, something beautiful began to happen. My dear friends at the *minyan* beckoned me to join in prayer with them. We prayed together and had our Sabbath morning post-services coffee where we talked about life, faith, love, family, and the value of friendship. Soon, as the weeks progressed, I began to count the days to Saturday service, relishing the joy of prayer, the power of friendship, and the strength of community. Although I hadn't fully realized it at the time, I know now that I had come home.

My decision to join Temple Chai was based on my first experiences at the Shalom Center, a truly spiritual place that welcomed me and taught me the power of a healing community. I knew that God had drawn me to this very holy place to teach me what I needed to know to make me a conduit for healing. I didn't quite know how, but for the first time, I opened myself up totally to the experience. I tried to listen to the signals God was sending me through the loving and caring people at what has become my second home, Temple Chai.

The emotional, spiritual, and academic learning experiences here have changed my life. After completing the Temple's Adult *B'nai Mitzvah* program, I enrolled in the advanced studies and healing programs. I also had the privilege of studying with Rabbi Berk and Cantor Sharona Feller and of learning from all who I met at Temple Chai who have become like extended family to me.

With all that the Temple had given me, it was time for me to begin giving back, as best as I could, to this community that I love so dearly. For the past few years, I have had the supreme honor of becoming one of the Temple's lay leaders, conducting occasional Saturday morning services and shiva *minyans*. And, in January, I will join Rabbi Chernow and the Shalom Center's Sharona Silverman to conduct a series of Jewish bereavement classes whose goal will be to train congregants to lead shiva *minyans*.

I stand in awe of the amazing talent of our clergy and our congregants and their commitment to their Judaism through study, community service, teaching, volunteering, and social activism. This new Jewish bereavement class hopes to tap some of the vast wealth of talent here at Temple Chai. My dream one day is to have a series of classes taught by Temple Chai congregants for Temple Chai congregants that will train us to become a resource for our dedicated – and overburdened – clergy as the temple continues to expand its membership.

Through Temple Chai, I have re-found my Judaism. It is my inner compass: guiding me to pursue righteousness, goodness, justice, and love; reminding me to be thankful for my blessings; to turn my focus away from myself and towards others; reintroducing me to the joy of life. As it says in the morning service, "How greatly I am blessed, how good is my portion, how pleasant my lot, how beautiful my heritage," and may I add, "What a joy to be alive!"

**The Healing Journey For A Healing Journey  
By Shira Z.**

For most of my life, I've been plagued by intense fear and anxiety. These difficult emotions manifested themselves strongly when I was caught at the epicenter of a 6.8 earthquake, when I witnessed a mid-air plane crash, and when I went through treatment for thyroid cancer, all of which occurred within the past 11 years.

Twenty-five years ago, I was fortunate to spend a year in Jerusalem and have wanted to return many times over since then. However, when Israelis were pictured on TV wearing their gas masks in their tiny sealed rooms during the first Gulf War, I convinced myself there was no way I was ever going to be able to go back. The fear was too great. Then, when the suicide bombings started, I was even more certain there would never be a trip back. I looked at the people going and said, "You have amazing courage. I could never do that!"

Well, over the past few years, I have overcome quite a few fearful experiences as I have deepened my spirituality. When I heard about the Shalom Center's healing trip to Israel, I decided to try to tackle my fear in order to enable me to return to Israel. At the time I made the decision to go, I was not completely sure I could do it, but I was determined to try. So, I set out a plan to work toward being able to overcome the fear that was blocking my ability not only to be in Israel, but also to be on a plane for more than an hour.

Every day I took concrete steps toward overcoming my fear of flying and being in Israel. These steps included meditating on inspirational/spiritual books, praying, visualizing myself succeeding, visualizing peace in Israel, asking for support from people, and setting up a reward system for myself along the way. I also pictured myself bringing healing to Israel.

I'm proud to say I conquered my fear and not only went to Israel, but had an incredible healing, inspirational, and powerful experience that I will always remember. I am proud that I was offered, and took, several opportunities to heal others while I was there. I am even opening up to the possibility of returning.

I've learned a very powerful lesson: Fear is only an illusion; it is a state of mind rather than a state of being. When I remember this powerful lesson, I know I can do anything I want. I conquered Mount Everest. I left my *Mitzrayim*. The power of healing led to the power of healing.

May we all find the resources and the inner strength we need to heal the broken/missing parts in ourselves so that together we can bring healing to our people Israel, and to the world.

**The Bracelet  
By Shira Z.**

Through a series of unusual and miraculous events, I had the opportunity to bring healing to a grieving family in Israel.

The events started when I bought a bracelet at the Temple Chai Religious School's Mitzvah Mall a few months ago. Mikaela and Margot Sands sold bracelets engraved with the names of Israeli victims of terror as part of their Mitzvah Project. (The money goes to help surviving family members.) The name on my bracelet was Nir Sami, a 21-year old soldier who was killed in a terrorist attack on the West Bank.

When I joined the Shalom Center's Healing Trip to Israel in April 2005, I had no idea a connection would be made. But while we were visiting the Koby Mandell Foundation in Jerusalem, we were told that one of the services they offer is support groups for mothers who have lost children in terrorist attacks. All of a sudden it occurred to me that Nir's mother might have attended one of the groups. I showed them the bracelet and asked. I was told probably not, because the army provides services to families whose children were killed while serving in the army. The Koby Mandell Foundation serves basically civilians. But she promised to check. At the end of our visit, I was told that Nir's mother, Chava, not only lives in Jerusalem, but also had recently started attending a support group, even though her son had been killed last September. I was given the phone number and made the call as soon as we got back to our hotel. I was excited and nervous. My intention was just to let her know I was visiting from the States and that I was wearing a bracelet with her son's name on it to honor his memory. But she did not understand about the bracelet and asked if I could come visit so she could see it. Though we had a free evening, I had already made plans with a friend, but hearing the sadness in her voice, I decided it was more important to visit. So my friend and I took a taxi to her house and spent an hour and a half getting to know a beautiful, grieving family. I met Chava and Itsik, Nir's parents, Tzachi and Omri, his brothers, and Mordechai and Etti, his uncle and aunt, plus a few neighbors who stopped by to meet me and see the bracelet. They were all extremely moved to see this bracelet with their son's name. They had no idea a bracelet existed like it. They were very grateful for the visit, and I felt like it lifted their spirits to see the bracelet. I left it for them as a gift.

I feel honored to have been part of such a healing experience, one of many from our Healing Trip to Israel.

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