

Resilience in Times of Communal Crisis: Lessons from Spiritual Care

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There is no
“us” and
“them” in a
communal
disaster

In addition to our roles and identities as those who care for and serve others, we are concerned for our own families, health, communities, and personal situations.

The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.

Rachel Naomi Remen, Kitchen Table Wisdom

Sacred Sources:

Any source
which feels
sacred to you.
It might bring
you comfort,
sustenance, or
a sense of awe.
A sacred source
can be:

- ▶ A text, such as Torah, Scripture, or a selection from liturgy
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Nature
- ▶ Poetry
- ▶ Children's books
- ▶ An image
- ▶ Humor
- ▶ Something not mentioned here, because everyone has their own sense of the sacred



Sacred
Source: The
West Wing
(Season 3,
Episode 14:
Night Five)



"I'm good, I guess. How are you?"

Sacred Sources

HUMOR. CONNECTION.
FRIENDS. A SENSE OF THE
ABSURD.

Resilience

► “The essence of resilience is a positive, adaptive response in the face of significant adversity. It is neither an immutable trait nor a resource that can be used up...Stated simply, resilience transforms potentially toxic stress into tolerable stress.”

(Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, Working Paper #13)

Practices that lead to resilience

(Brene Brown, Shame Resilience Theory)

Contextualize

Highlighting or painting the big picture.

Normalize

You're not the only one.

Demystify

Sharing what you know with others.



Layers of Grief

- - Disenfranchised grief is grief where the loss, the style of grieving, or the griever is not recognized
- - Ambiguous loss is a relational grief where one's loved one or loss is either physically present and emotionally unreachable (dementia) or emotionally present and physically absent (missing person).
- - Hidden sufferers
- - Challenges of identity (expectations of heroism)
- - Layered losses



Heroes



Disaster Impacts Us:


Cognitively

Emotionally

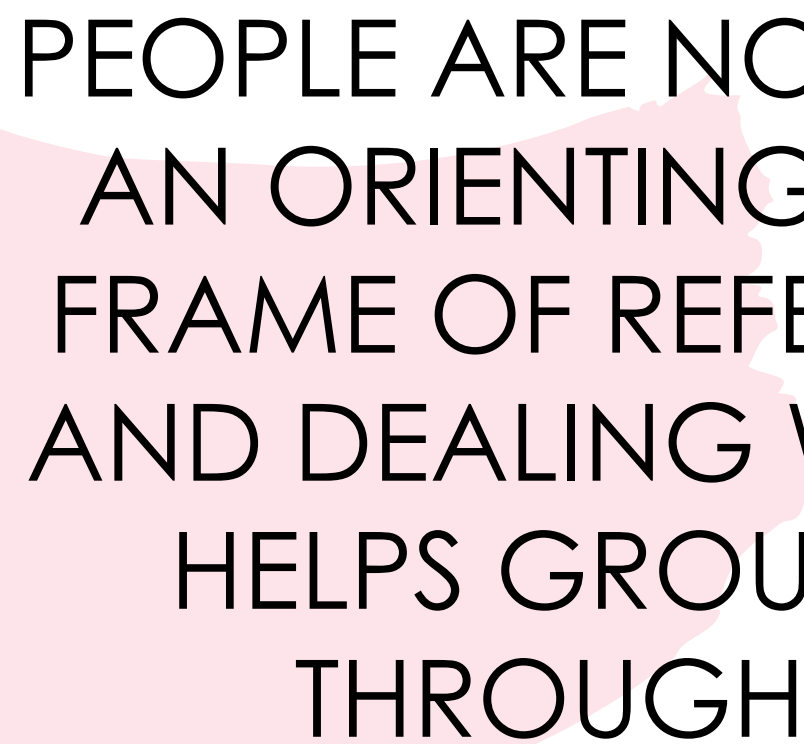
Socially

Physically

Spiritually



Our minds, our bodies, and our souls
are having
EXPECTED responses to an
UNEXPECTED situation.



IN THE FACE OF NEGATIVE EVENTS,
PEOPLE ARE NOT HELPLESS. WE BRING
AN ORIENTING SYSTEM, A GENERAL
FRAME OF REFERENCE FOR VIEWING
AND DEALING WITH THE WORLD THAT
HELPS GROUND AND DIRECT US
THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES.

(KENNETH PARGAMENT, THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION AND COPING, P. 90)

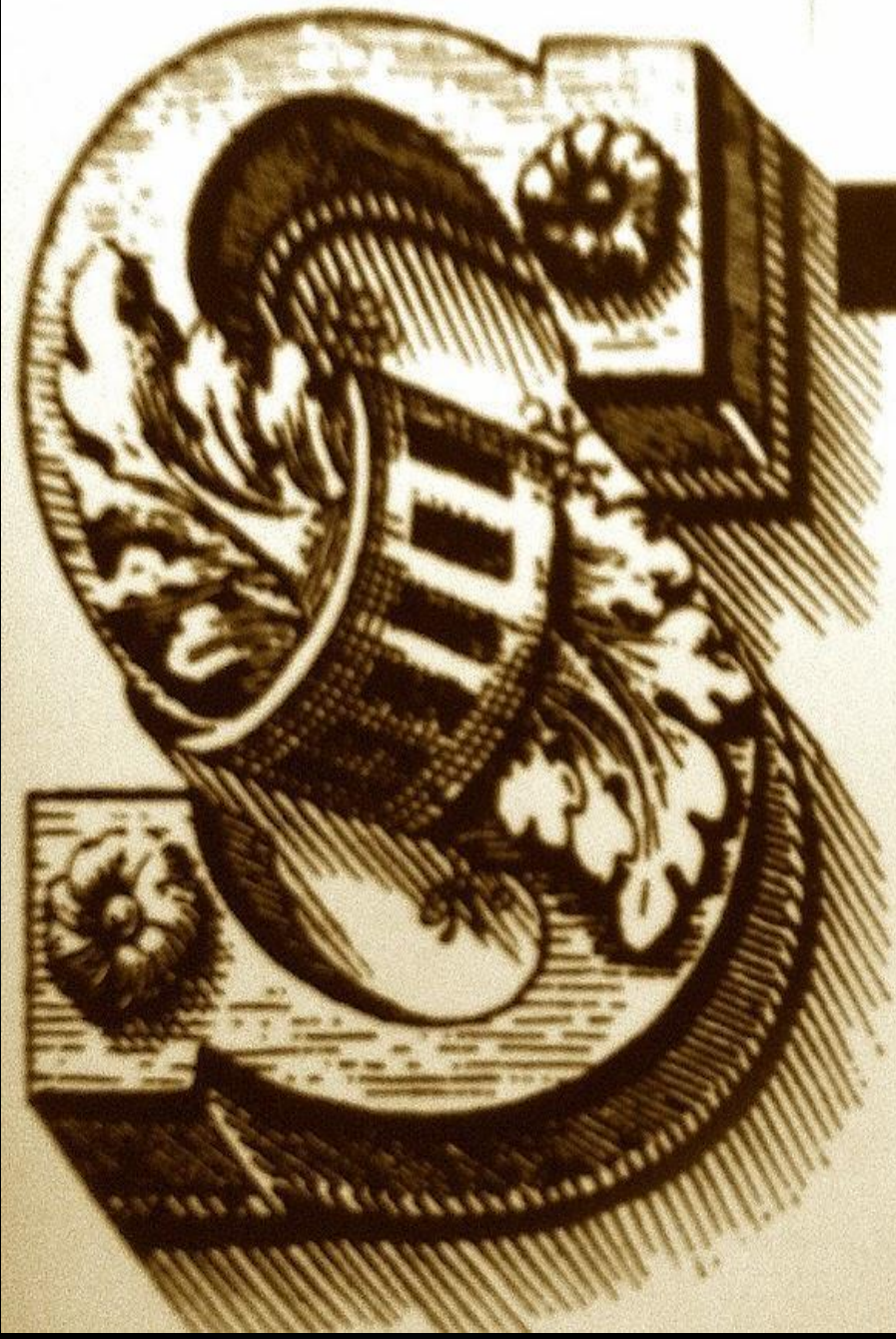
Sacred Source: Talmud - Weathering the Storm

יבמות קכ"א א:י"ח

תניא אר"ג פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בספינה וראיתי ספינה אחת שנשברה והייתי מצטער על תלמיד חכם שבה ומנו רבי עקיבא וכשעליתי ביבשה בא וישב ודן לפני בהלכה אמרתי לו בני מי העלך אמר לי דף של ספינה נזדמן לי וכל גל וגל שבא עלי נענעתי לו ראשי

Talmud Bavli, [Yevamot 121a](#)

It is taught in a *baraita*: **Rabban Gamliel said: Once I was traveling on a boat, and from a distance I saw a boat that shattered and sank. And I was grieved over the apparent death of the Torah scholar who was on board. And who was it? Rabbi Akiva. But when I disembarked onto dry land, he came, and sat, and deliberated before me about *halakha*. I said to him: My son, who brought you up from the water? He said to me: A plank (*daf*) from the boat came to me, and I bent my head before each and every wave that came toward me.** The waves did not wash me off of the board, and I reached the shore.



TORY

1. Do
You know?

1. Do you know how your parents met?
 2. Do you know where your mother grew up?
 3. Do you know where your father grew up?
 4. Do you know where some of your grandparents grew up?
 5. Do you know where some of your grandparents met?
 6. Do you know where your parents were married?
 7. Do you know what went on when you were being born?
 8. Do you know the source of your name?
 9. Do you know some things about what happened when your brothers or sisters were being born?
 10. Do you know which person in your family you look most like?
 11. Do you know which person in the family you act most like?
 12. Do you know some of the illnesses and injuries that your parents experienced when they were younger?
 13. Do you know some of the lessons that your parents learned from good or bad experiences?
 14. Do you know some things that happened to your mom or dad when they were in school?
 15. Do you know the national background of your family?
 16. Do you know some of the jobs that your parents had when they were young?
 17. Do you know some awards that your parents received when they were young?
 18. Do you know the names of the schools that your mom went to?
 19. Do you know the names of the schools that your dad went to?
 20. Do you know about a relative whose face "froze" in a grumpy position because he or she did not smile enough?
- (Duke and Fivush Scale)



Do you know?

ALFRED COPE, ESQ.
CHARLES LENHARD, ESQ.
VICTOR LUXEMBURG, ESQ.

CHAIRMAN:
L. ROSENTHAL, ESQ.

N.B.
TELEPHONE: MOUNTVIA

10th September, 1939/5699.

DEAR MEMBER,

Amid all the woe of the present time, let us not, for one moment forget our faith in God, and our adherence to His Laws. We shall, with His help, celebrate the Festivals, and my appeal to you, is to gather regularly in the Synagogue, that collectively we may pray to Almighty to save us, and our dear ones, our King and country, from the horrible devastation of War which is raging in our midst.

I enclose herewith the usual Time-Table with the number of your seat on the first page. Naturally, the Time-Table as printed will not be adhered to. The following are the times of the Services in accordance with the instructions from the Chief Rabbi:—

EVENING SERVICES. On Roah Hashanah the Services will commence at 6 p.m., and will be concluded at least 30 minutes before it gets dark. The Friday Evening Services throughout the year will start about one hour before dusk.

ROSH HASHANAH MORNINGS. The Service will commence at 8.30 a.m. promptly, as they must be concluded not later than 10.30 a.m. Members are requested to say Shachris at home, as the Service will commence with the Reading of the Law. Please attend in time.


KOL NIDREI NIGHT. There will be no Service in the Synagogue.

YOM KIPPUR DAY. The Service will commence at 11.30 a.m. and end at 1 p.m. Begin again at 5.15 p.m. and end at 6.30 p.m. The Shofar will not be sounded at the end, as the Fast does not terminate till 7.37 p.m.

I am glad to state that some of the Honorary Officers are Air-Raid-Wardens, and all advice will be given in case of an air raid warning during the Service. Please bring your gas mask. It is sincerely hoped that all members will be inconspicuously dressed. For the duration of the war top hats should not be worn for Synagogue.

I earnestly appeal to you, that during the war, you will continue your support to the Synagogue both socially, by attending the Services and other functions that may be held, and financially. Let us not forget for one moment, to hold fast to the Synagogue, for which we have striven so many years, and which will give us the faith we so urgently need in these times of trouble.

May our New Year bring victory and peace to our Nation, which is the wish of all.



Wisdom from
Dr. Shelly Rambo, theologian:
This is too much for anyone
to bear or carry.

What can I carry today?



Heavy

Mary Oliver

That time
I thought I could not
go any closer to grief
without dying

I went closer,
and I did not die.
Surely God
had his hand in this,

as well as friends.
Still, I was bent,
and my laughter,
as the poet said,

was nowhere to be found.
Then said my friend Daniel,
(brave even among lions),
"It's not the weight you carry

but how you carry it –

books, bricks, grief –
it's all in the way
you embrace it, balance it,
carry it

when you cannot, and would
not,

put it down."
So I went practicing.
Have you noticed?

Have you heard
the laughter
that comes, now and again,
out of my startled mouth?

How I linger
to admire, admire, admire
the things of this world
that are kind, and maybe

also troubled –
roses in the wind,
the sea geese on the steep
waves,
a love
to which there is no reply?



Sacred Source: Music

Sacred Source: Friends

(who learn together)

**Rabbi Rob
Scheinberg's**
interpretation of a
midrash from Eichah
Rabbah on
Hashiveinu

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְנִשְׁוֹבָה תִּזְנֶשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקִדְמָם:

Return us, God, to You, and we will return.

Renew our days as you renewed our days in earlier times.

It means, “Renew our lives, as you renewed our lives after we were exiled from the Garden of Eden.” *Hadesh yameinu ke-kedem* is then not a plea for restoration of a formerly perfect condition, but rather it is a plea for resilience, a plea for the ability to renew ourselves after future crises and dislocations, just as our lives have been renewed before. As Elie Wiesel said, “God gave Adam a secret — and that secret was not how to begin, but how to begin again.”



Resilience

*“It is spring again.
The earth is like a
child who knows
poems by heart” –
Rainer Maria Rilke*



And if all else fails....



A Prayer...

For all who care for the sick with enormous courage, compassion, and expertise,

...that they may be safe and feel affirmed in this most sacred work;

For all suffering in isolation, holding on through the course of illness,

...that they may find relief and energy, in body and spirit, by every means;

For families separated by physical barriers, necessary but painful,

...that the transcendent connection of love have for them the power of an embrace;

For all anxious in the surrounding uncertainty,

waiting on tests, vigilant for any sign of illness or improvement,

or wondering where may be lurking that which is invisibly microscopic, or fearful of the larger disruptions in our world,

...that the path ahead become clear and promising;

For all of us in this time of COVID-19,

may we discover within us and around us what we need to press forward,

...that our struggles give way to healing and a new day.

Amen.

--Chaplain John Ehman, 3/26/20

Resources for Further Reading and Study

- ▶ Helpfully articulated article about getting emotionally organized in a crisis
<https://medium.com/@PippiKessler/getting-emotionally-organized-in-a-crisis-77501633c1d>
- ▶ [Six Questions to Ask Yourself Daily](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_daily_questions_to_ask_yourself_in_quarantine)
- ▶ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_daily_questions_to_ask_yourself_in_quarantine
- ▶ [Meaning vs. Happiness](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/opinion/coronavirus-mental-health.html?fbclid=IwAR3Mih9bTgIJ_h9EzNtoGy-OvPgA8lvVyww7fI3HEHsv51-0R_LO-xhzKwM)
- ▶ https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/opinion/coronavirus-mental-health.html?fbclid=IwAR3Mih9bTgIJ_h9EzNtoGy-OvPgA8lvVyww7fI3HEHsv51-0R_LO-xhzKwM
- ▶ [Your Surge capacity is depleted: That's why you feel awful](https://elemental.medium.com/your-surge-capacity-is-depleted-it-s-why-you-feel-awful-de285d542f4c)
- ▶ <https://elemental.medium.com/your-surge-capacity-is-depleted-it-s-why-you-feel-awful-de285d542f4c>

More Resources

- ▶ [Lessons from a Veteran on Protecting from Moral Injury](#)
- ▶ <https://www.statnews.com/2020/04/01/lessons-different-war-protecting-clinicians-moral-injury/?fbclid=IwAR1LPpJRTxZkuDN75R69AHwo38YYV-u9EuRA5OgIHVOoiy8vcgCd4sREIpM>
- ▶ Helpful Books:

Greenspan, Miriam. *Healing through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear, and Despair*. Boston: Shambhala, 2004.

Masten, Ann. *Ordinary Magic: Resilience in Development*. Guilford Press, 2015.

Van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Viking, 2014.

Van Dernoot Lipsky, Laura and Connie Burk. *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*.