

Pastoral Care from a Jewish Perspective

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All good pastoral care involves compassionate, nonjudgmental listening, careful questioning, and patience. Regardless of religious orientation, all pastoral caregivers strive to comfort the afflicted, offer hope, and preserve the dignity of those to whom they are ministering. What makes an ordinary pastoral caregiver an exceptional one is the ability to access religious systems beyond his or her own, whether for the benefit of a coreligionist or people of a different faith. In this essay I will present an approach to essential pastoral skills and values from a Jewish perspective. Since the techniques and methods of good pastoral care are universal, the purpose of this discussion is not to offer new skills, but, rather, to provide an introduction to Jewish language, imagery, and textual references that will enable the non-Jewish chaplain to be more effective when called to serve someone who is Jewish.

Chaplaincy Lessons from the Bible

The starting point for understanding a Jewish approach to chaplaincy is found in Genesis 1:27: "And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him. . . ."¹ Judaism understands this in a nonliteral sense. We do not actually look like God, but rather possess an intangible essence that inexplicably makes us godlike. Judaism further assumes that this is a prescriptive, not

INJUSTICE AND THE CARE OF SOULS

TAKING OPPRESSION
SERIOUSLY
IN PASTORAL CARE

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we might act God-like. What then does it mean to act God-like? To approach an understanding of this directive let us look closely at how God is depicted intervening in the lives of some biblical personalities.

Let us begin with what I consider to be the first recorded pastoral intervention in history, God's response to Adam and Eve after their having tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and bad. They violated God's very specific instruction, but there is no immediate response in the Bible. Though this lack of immediate response may lead us to believe that the violation was no big deal, in fact, a crisis of biblical proportion (pardon the pun) has begun to unfold. This delay or hesitant response provides the first lesson in how to approach a pastoral situation in a God-like way. In a word: cautiously. A crisis is by definition a situation where we have no choice but to learn or accept that change is inevitable. A crisis does not necessarily require an immediate or urgent response. If we assume that God is omnipresent and omniscient, then of course God knows what has happened and what will happen as a result of Adam and Eve's action. Note, however, that God's response is slow and cautious. Our first lesson in acting God-like, then, is that not only is it appropriate to respond to a crisis cautiously and slowly, but quite likely that is the best way. The critical event has occurred. Now our job as caregiver begins as we figure out how best to guide the person in crisis.

Once again, God models for us an appropriate response to an unfolding crisis. Let's look at how God is described as responding to Adam and Eve's transgression. It is easy to enter into relationship with a person in crisis with all the answers. After all, they are looking for answers and we have them, right? Wrong—at least from a Jewish perspective it is rarely about the answers; rather, it is all about the questions we ask. How did God respond to Adam and Eve? First, God responded slowly and cautiously, "moving about in the gardens at the breezy time of day," according to Genesis 3:8. One gets the impression that God was meditating, so to speak, deciding how to respond to this crisis at hand. Finally, God calls out, "Where are you?" as if an omniscient, omnipresent God did not know. This then is our second lesson: enter into pastoral relationships with questions, not answers. Good questions, such as the one God asked, are open-ended and are subject to interpretation by the hearer. For example, does God's question mean "Where are you physically at the moment?" or does it mean "Where are you in relationship to the crisis you are facing?" It is easy to assume that we know how a person must be feeling in response to a crisis. After all, it is a crisis and so it must be terrible. Actually, this is not always the case.

In an earlier stage of my life I was very involved with mountain rescue. Our

how to set a bone to initiating a complicated lowering system. It also involved extensive training in asking questions, both of the victim and of ourselves. Paralleling God's slow response to Adam and Eve, we were also taught that upon arriving at the scene of an accident, instead of rushing to respond we should sit down, take a drink of water, and carefully and cautiously assess the situation before acting. Sometimes what we first encountered was not always the real crisis. For example, there might be one person holding his leg and moaning loudly while just ahead and out of sight another person might be unconscious and bleeding profusely. In addition, we had to learn how to assess personal risk as we approached the accident scene to avoid making a bad situation worse. Although the circumstances are different, both a chaplain's and rescuer's response reflect the lesson God is depicted role-modeling for us: respond to a crisis cautiously and with questions, not answers.

Here is an example of how an assumption was misguided. When I was a young prison chaplain, I met an inmate about my same age who was serving a life sentence with no chance for parole. During one of our pastoral conversations I voiced my assumption that my client must surely find incarceration depressing and that he must undoubtedly struggle with having wasted his life. Whatever he had on his mind at the time it was not this, because he looked at me and said emphatically, "God, no. I am wickedly sorry for the crime I committed, but if I had not been caught and convicted I know I would be dead by now. Look what I've managed to accomplish." He then proceeded to tick off a long list of accomplishments, all achieved only after incarceration. He came to me for pastoral counseling and I made the mistake of assuming I knew what must be on his mind, rather than asking him.

There are at least two more lessons that we can glean from God's response to the crisis of Adam and Eve: compassion and subjectivity. Adam and Eve made a huge mistake with profound ramifications. God did not back away from the promised consequences and so they were banished from the garden of Eden and as a result came to know death. However, God also did not withhold compassion for them. Remember, "the two of them were naked" (Gen. 2:25). Instead of sending them out into the world naked and alone, "God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). It was not enough that God made them clothing, but from the words "and clothed them" one has the sense that God lovingly dressed them in preparation for their journey. In this example, God role-models compassion, an important quality for good chaplaincy work.

As a prison chaplain I often found myself providing guidance and comfort to

myself that the courts had determined the inmate's punishment. My duties had nothing to do with this punishment. My job as a chaplain was to treat each inmate as a person created in God's image. One need not be a prison chaplain, however, to find oneself providing pastoral care to someone who needs support, not judgment. For example, a hospital chaplain might be called to meet with someone who caused a terrible accident while under the influence of alcohol. As chaplains our task is to act God-like and be compassionate, not judgmental.

The next lesson from the Adam and Eve story that I want to highlight is *subjectivity*. To Judaism the banishment of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden was a blessing that made possible all of the other blessings and miracles that have since filled each and every day. On the other hand, Christianity looks upon their banishment as the "original sin" for which humankind must always seek forgiveness. This is not the place in which to discuss these two points of view. I mention it only to reiterate a point I made earlier about making assumptions. People respond to crisis differently, just as Christianity and Judaism view the impact of Adam and Eve differently. Therefore, it is important to remember that individuals respond to crisis in their lives differently than we as chaplains might expect.

The Bible is replete with many more prescriptive or instructive examples for chaplains to glean. Here are three more. The first has to do with conditions of ritual cleanliness (*salubr*) and impurity (*tamai*), two of the more perplexing themes found in the Bible. In truth, we do not know what these words actually mean; however, we do know that they are not inherently negative. In fact, in the biblical context they describe conditions that everyone experiences (see Leviticus). These conditions are natural and accepted parts of life, and include such examples as the priest after a day's duties in the temple; a woman after giving birth; and a person who cares for a dead body. The Bible goes on to describe how a *tamai* person must be separated from the rest of the community until the condition passes. This might be only the short time it takes to change clothing—or weeks, depending on the presumed cause. In any case, properly understood, this is not a punishment but a necessary period of healing or transition. In some cases this is a "medical" healing and in other instances it is more spiritual. From this we learn the importance of creating sufficient space and time for the "healing" that is needed.

With the help of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhak), the classic eleventh-century Jewish scholar from Troyes, France, we find two more examples of God demonstrating for us what it means to be God-like. In the opening sentence of Genesis 18, "G-d appeared to Abraham in Elonei Mamrei, as he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day." Why does God suddenly appear? The

immediately after Abraham's self-performed circumcision, a painful experience at any age but certainly all the more so at the advanced age of ninety! Rashi gives us two answers. The first is straightforward: visiting the weak, infirm, and ill is holy work. This, of course, is obvious to anyone pursuing the work of chaplaincy. However, too often we avoid this important responsibility because we do not know what to say when meeting someone who is in pain or ill. Herein lies God's second role-modeling lesson, according to Rashi. God appears without words and fanfare: "G-d appeared to Abraham in Elonei Mamrei. . . ." God's mere appearance is healing enough. This teaches us that sometimes as chaplains just being present, even in silence, is healing.

This reminds me of another very powerful experience I had while working in the prison. I arrived on a restricted housing block and announced my presence. An inmate I did not know called me over to his cell. On this block the men were not allowed out of their cells so we had to speak through the small openings in his door. Since he did not want his cell-mate to overhear us he spoke in a hushed tone. If hearing him was not hard enough, to complicate matters he had a very strong Spanish accent. I stood outside his door with my head cocked toward his voice for a good fifteen minutes, but I confess that between his heavy accent and hushed tone of voice and all the background noise, I could not understand a word he said to me. Finally, he lifted his head, with tear-filled eyes looked at me, smiled, and said, "Thank you, *gracias*, thank you." He turned and went to his bunk. My silent presence was all he needed to find the strength within himself to go on.

My experience reminds me of a story one of my teachers once told. When he was a young man and going through a difficult period he felt an urgent need to speak with his pastor, so he called him in the evening at his home. His pastor reluctantly agreed to meet in his office. My teacher arrived and settled into a comfortable chair. With head in his hands he immediately began a long soliloquy. This pastor liked to sit in a big, oversized leather swivel chair. When it was turned so the back of the chair faced into the room it was almost impossible to see him. Well, after a long time of emptying his heart my teacher looked up and noticed that the chair was turned away from him. He stopped speaking and peeked around the edge of the chair. His pastor was sound asleep. Quietly my teacher turned and slipped away. When asked if his pastor falling asleep like that insulted him, he answered, "Not at all. I only needed his presence, nothing more, to find my own inner strength."

The last biblical lesson I want to explore is one that gives caregivers a real challenge. This is the teaching of boundaries. To keep Adam and Eve from

cherubim and the fiery ever-burning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). In preparation for experiencing the great theophany at Mt. Sinai, Moses relays these instructions from God: "You shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, 'Beware of going up the mountain or touching the border of it'" (Exod. 19:12). Creating and respecting boundaries are critical skills to master. They are essential to the health and well-being of both client and chaplain. The Bible puts it in the strongest terms of life and death. Yet, as important as it is to respect boundaries, at times our task involves asking our clients to explore their own boundaries and even inviting them to consider redefining where they are drawn. How does one do this? In a word: cautiously. The other aspect of respecting boundaries deals with those that we as caregivers create to protect ourselves. Too often we tend not to establish clear boundaries between the people we serve and ourselves, leading to a myriad of problems, not the least of which is ineffectiveness. It is good to remember God's role-modeling for us and to create healthy boundaries for ourselves as well as respect those of the people we serve.

Chaplains must also be careful to respect the boundaries between different religions. A person ordained to perform rites and rituals in one religious system does not have any right or obligation to assume these duties while providing chaplaincy service to a client. Nevertheless, this does not mean that one cannot participate or even preside over the fulfillment of a ritual or rite for someone of a different religion. A chaplain based in one faith should assume such a responsibility for someone of another religion only with their consent and clear parameters so as to maintain the integrity of both religious systems. Let me be clear that I am not referring to an interfaith service or ritual. For example, as the chaplain of our local fire department I am occasionally called upon to officiate at funerals for firefighters or their family members if they have no specific religious affiliation. When this happens I lead a standard Protestant service, choosing readings from the book of Psalms and other passages in the Old Testament. For specifically Christian prayers, I call upon either a past chief or another senior officer. This kind of interfaith work is very rewarding but requires careful attention to working so closely to the boundaries that separate one religion from another.

Chaplaincy Lessons from the *Siddur*

I would like to now shift to the Jewish prayer book, known as the *Siddur*, for more examples of a Jewish approach to chaplaincy.² Over the centuries men

when one seeks guidance, counsel, and wisdom. As a result, the *Siddur* provides a wealth of insight for a Jewish approach to chaplaincy. A well-rounded chaplain expected to provide succor to someone who is Jewish will need at least an introduction to the *Siddur*.

Let me begin with the language of the prayers contained within the *Siddur* because it is instructive. The prayers are unevenly divided between first person singular and first person plural. In fact, the vast majority of the prayers are in the first person plural. Only the opening, preliminary section of the daily morning service is composed in the first person singular. This is also the most corporally orientated part of the entire Jewish worship service. For example, it includes references to "removing slumber from my eyes" or "who made me in your image." It also describes a prayer known as the "bathroom" prayer, which I consider in more depth below. This initial physical orientation serves to remind both the chaplain and client that there is a uniquely inner strength within each individual (the "I" language) that must be tapped. However, the imbalance in the language of the prayer book in favor of the first person plural emphasizes that a Jew need never be alone when facing crisis. He or she is inextricably part of a larger community from which additional support may always be drawn. This not only makes sense intuitively, it also mirrors one of the initial tasks of a chaplain when entering into relationship with a client, namely to convey the message that the person does not have to face his or her challenge alone. Anyone who has experienced personal travail—whether illness, incarceration, problems in a relationship, or trauma—knows that it is often accompanied by an overwhelming sense of aloneness. At the same time we also need to help our client seek the inner strength that she must access for meeting the challenge she faces. Literally, as a caregiver one of the first "lifelines" we are likely to throw out is that of a caring connection that pierces the loneliness of coping with crisis. A fundamental task of a chaplain is to dispel loneliness and begin the process of drawing the client back into community. The language of Jewish prayer does this.

Beyond language, the *Siddur* also contains innumerable passages and blessings that are very useful to the chaplain. One of my personal favorites is found in the opening section of the morning service. It is occasionally referred to as the bathroom prayer because it is traditionally recited after a visit to the bathroom.

Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who

and vessels of the body. It is revealed and known before your Throne of Glory that if one of these passage-ways be open when it should be closed, or blocked up when it should be free, one could not stay alive or stand before you. Blessed are you, Adonai, the wondrous healer of all flesh. (*Kol Hanishama*, 21)

The literal meaning of the prayer is an expression of gratitude for our ability to open up our bodies and discharge waste. On a deeper level, however, it speaks to the wondrousness of our bodies. Without any conscious effort on our part we are host to an infinite number of miracles taking place within our bodies; our cells open and close as needed, as do the valves in our heart and other organs. Rabbi Arthur Green sums up the importance of this passage by pointing out that "We do not need to stand before any greater wonder of nature than our own bodies in order to appreciate the intricacy and beauty with which our world is endowed. A sense of awe at our own creation is a starting point . . ." (*Kol Hanishama*, 20). For me this blessing brings to light how we are infused with the divine presence, a gift of pure grace.

I was once meeting with an inmate who suffered tragically because of a drug addiction. He had recently violated his condition of release because of his addiction problem and was back in prison. He was utterly crushed. He felt devastated because he believed he let down all those who had worked so hard to help him gain his release. Back in the prison he was feeling his life was worthless. Instead of trying to argue with him that this was not the case I invited him to say this blessing with me. I explained to him that even though he was having so much trouble controlling certain aspects of his life, other parts were safely in God's hands. By taking time to meditate on this passage he was slowly able to see that even though he thought God had abandoned him, indeed this was not the case. I cannot say that this revelation cured him of addiction problems. But I can say that it helped him to regain the strength to start therapy again.

Prayer language is metaphorical. Conscious use of metaphors can be extremely helpful in many cases. However, one must be careful to use the right metaphor at the right time. For example, the "bathroom" prayer might not be the best metaphor to use with a patient suffering heart or kidney failure. In such cases it is advisable to use alternative metaphorical prayer language. There is another passage in the opening section of the morning service that conveys a similar message but does not focus specifically on bodily functions. This passage states: "My God, the soul that you gave to me is pure. You have created it, you shaped it, and you

For a person suffering from physical ailments, self-loathing, excessive guilt, or shame, repeating these words can be transformative. No matter how impure or unholy or dirty a person may feel, this passage is a reminder that deep within us is a pure, God-given soul. In Hebrew the word for soul also means "breath." Thus, on another level this simple sentence can also be understood as saying with each breath one takes one inhales a godly gift of the pure breath of life and hope. Both this sentence and the "bathroom" prayer are profound yet simple passages from the daily Jewish prayer service that have tremendous healing potential. Their universal themes make them valuable tools in the hands of a chaplain, regardless of religious orientation or training.

Another quintessential Jewish blessing is called the *shechiyanu*: "Blessed are you, Eternal One our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who gave us life, and kept us strong, and brought us to this time." It celebrates and affirms the uniqueness and holiness of each new day. It is traditionally said whenever we experience something for the first time. The blessing means that we are grateful for having been sustained with life so that we might make it to this moment in time. It also is a celebration of encountering something for the first time. However, if we loosen its traditional application it becomes an alternative mantra to the familiar "live one day at a time." Instead of living one day at a time, by reciting the *shechiyanu* we bless and express gratitude for each day, hour, or minute with a new frame of mind or attitude. Like the first passages from the *Siddur* already explicated, the *shechiyanu* can be a simple but powerful tool to build self-esteem and courage to face crisis.

Jewish Perspectives on Certain Chaplaincy Issues

I want to briefly touch on Jewish perspectives on a variety of topics a chaplain may encounter. Keep in mind that in Judaism, like life in general, there is rarely one right response to a situation. For deeper and more nuanced examinations of issues please consult a rabbi. However, please note that even among rabbis responses will vary. Your client or his/her family will be the final judge in determining which rabbinic point of view to follow.³

Abortion. Judaism is not categorically opposed to abortion. Judaism does not presume that life begins with conception. Since almost all Jewish precepts and ordinances can be violated in order to save a life, an abortion is permissible if

to define what is life threatening, and when life begins, may be ambiguous. As a chaplain you may be called in for guidance to help determine this.

Alcohol. Judaism recognizes that the consumption of alcohol can lead to harmful addictive behavior. Despite the potential harm it can cause, drinking is not prohibited within Judaism. In fact, in Jewish tradition wine is closely associated with the act of consecrating time or activities. For example, special blessings are recited over wine in order to sanctify the Sabbath. Some people maintain that the popular Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve-Step program is "not Jewish." This is not true. There is nothing in the AA Twelve-Step program that contradicts Jewish values or teachings. Alcohol consumption becomes problematic when its use leads to such things as violation of the value of *shalom b'bayit* (peace in the home), self-destructive behavior, and/or inability to meet personal responsibilities.

Autopsy. Traditionally, autopsy is strongly discouraged. However, when state or local law mandates, it is permissible. The principle or underlying value is that the body should be kept as intact as possible and treated with the highest regard. When an autopsy might contribute to saving the life of another person it is also considered permissible. Defining the parameters of what it means to save the life of another person is subject to discussion. Does this include general research or education (for doctors in training, for example), or must it be more specific?

Contraception. There are no specific restrictions regarding the use of contraception. However, among observant Jews there are concerns about "wasting seed" (Gen. 38:9) and a desire to fulfill the blessing to "be fertile and increase, fill the earth . . ." (Gen. 1:28). On the other hand, the Bible also instructs us to be responsible stewards of the land: "The Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to till it and tend it" (Gen. 2:15). With overpopulation a very serious environmental problem it is evident that there is potential conflict between these two commandments. Similarly, the use of contraception also affects another Jewish value, *pikuah nefesh*, saving a life. The use of contraception not only reduces the chance of pregnancy but also the spread of life-threatening diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Cremation. Traditionally, Judaism has opposed cremation. There are two main reasons for this. One is that the idea of "dust to dust" reminds us that Adam (humankind) was created from earth and to earth we are destined to return upon death. (Note that in Hebrew the word for earth, *adamah*, is linguistically closely related to the word for humankind, *adam*). Second, since the Holocaust when millions of Jews were murdered in Nazi crematoria,

environmental and economic factors have given the option of cremation a new value and relevance.

Domestic violence. Judaism has a core religious value called *shalom b'bayit* or peace in the home. Domestic violence comes in many forms—verbal, emotional, psychological, and of course physical—all of which destroy peace in the home. Also, domestic abuse violates the value of *bizelem Elohim*, that we are all created in the image of God. In principle, Judaism is intolerant of domestic violence. Unfortunately, identifying it is often difficult. Across the religious spectrum it is laden with much social stigma. Victims often feel somehow responsible for their victimization, while perpetrators contradictorily feel embarrassed by their actions, yet perversely justified. Consequently, people are often reluctant to admit abuse is going on. Also, without obvious physical injuries, identifying abuse can be highly subjective. This can be additionally challenging for someone not familiar with observant Judaism's often clear and distinct gender roles.

Ending life support. Judaism maintains that time and cause of death are in God's hands alone. However, compassion and concern for prolonged suffering, quality of life, and definitions of life and death mitigate against a formulaic response to whether or not it is acceptable according to Jewish tradition to end life support. The importance of a living will and medical directive cannot be understated with respect to issues surrounding whether or not to end life support. In general, the law of the land supercedes religious law.

Euthanasia. In general the Jewish view on euthanasia is relatively straightforward. Time and cause of death are in God's hands alone. Compassion and concern for prolonged suffering complicate this relatively cut-and-dried answer and invite questions about the extent of medical intervention necessary to comport with tradition. However, in no situation does Judaism permit the taking of one's own life to avoid future pain and suffering.

Gambling. Judaism recognizes that gambling, like alcohol, can lead to harmful addictive behavior. Despite the potential harm it can cause, gambling is not prohibited. In fact, Jewish tradition includes games of chance, the most well known being *dreidle*, a game closely associated with the holiday of Hanukkah. As with alcohol consumption, gambling becomes problematic when it leads to such things as violation of the value of *shalom b'bayit*, self-destructive behavior, and/or inability to meet personal responsibilities.

Homosexuality. The Jewish people are divided on the issue of homosexuality. Some people base their opposition to homosexuality on one interpretation of Leviticus 18:22 that states, "Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abhorrence." Others argue that there are different ways to read this passage,

some more literal than others, that do not support opposition to homosexuality. Still others maintain that the biblical passage ought to be secondary to the foundational value that we are all created *btzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. While traditional doctrine opposes accepting homosexual behavior, it does not permit the mistreatment or abuse of any kind toward gays or lesbians. Regardless of theology, hostile homophobic behavior is not acceptable.

Interfaith worship. Interfaith worship presents particular problems for chaplains. For many Christians, worship that does not include the opportunity to witness their belief in Jesus is at best insipid and at worse sacrilegious. For many Jews, evoking the name of Jesus or closing a prayer in Jesus' name creates an uncomfortable situation, and an untenable one for others. Interfaith worship is certainly possible. Sometimes it helps to call the gathering something other than "worship." However, careful thought as to what to include can easily mitigate most problems. Christian prayer is often more spontaneous than Jewish prayer, which tends to follow a set structure. This in itself is typically not a problem if the closing of such a prayer is not sealed in the name of Jesus. Awareness of this is important.

Life after death. Judaism's views on life after death are complex and often contradictory. Insofar as Judaism does not maintain a concept of an eternal hell, it does not make much of a link between how one lives his life and what happens in death. At a minimum, Judaism promotes the notion that each person's soul will be reunited with God upon death, while the body will return to the earth. The idea of "divine punishment" is left as a mystery. Judaism does not address the issue of life after death for a non-Jew.

Organ donations. There is no restriction on organ donations when the organs will be used imminently to save a life. There are reservations over donating organs that will be stored until needed. It is noteworthy that traditionally organ donation was discouraged. This is not the case anymore.

Sin/Forgiveness. Making a mistake is considered a necessary part of life. Within Judaism, therefore, sinning—while not desirable—is never the end of the world, so to speak. Judaism distinguishes between two broad categories of sins: sins between people and sins between a person and God. For sins between people, God does not intervene with forgiveness. Only a person against whom a transgression was executed can forgive the transgressor. For sins between God and humankind, however, Judaism teaches we may expect forgiveness from God if we seek it.

The soul. Judaism's views on the nature of the soul are so complex that it teaches that we actually each have five souls! The most operationally important

it is pure; it is a gift of grace from God; and, finally, "someday God will take it back."

Conclusion

Judaism is a complex system of historical and religious traditions rich with a wide variety of, and often conflicting, values. It is rarely easy to know when one value takes precedence over another in determining the best response to a situation. Indeed, sometimes the right response for one person may be exactly the wrong one for someone else. Both perspectives may well be perfectly legitimate and appropriate Jewish responses. A well-trained, multifaceted chaplain will understand that his or her Jewish clients are often wrestling with these many different Jewish points of view. Judaism, it should again be mentioned, favors questions over answers.

When in doubt, ask your client what he or she thinks about a situation or wants or expects from it. Also, do not hesitate to contact any rabbi for insight, clarification, or information. It is not advisable to ask a Jewish friend because there is much folklore that circulates among well-intended people as "tradition." A chaplain will never go wrong if he or she goes back to the basic Jewish core values that we are all created in the image of God and one good question is worth much more than a dozen bad answers.