



## The MASKS of PURIM

by DEBBIE PERLMAN

**P**urim is the time of topsy-turvy, inside-out. It is the time of the contrary, when appearances are deceptive. We put on a mask and become Esther the heroine, or Vashti the vanquished, or Haman the unspeakable.

So with my illness and disability. I have many masks to wear: some I choose, some that are forced upon me, some that just happen. Who am I? Who do I want to be?

*In this central core of me,  
You mark my potentials;  
You ignite the spark of eternity  
You have placed within me.*

*I sometimes forget, Eternal God,  
The me that lies buried beneath  
The faces I must wear,  
The duties I take for my own.*

I am the rebellious patient, the demanding one who, hospitalized, questions every medication I am handed and criticizes the bedside manner of interns. I exact responses when the respiratory therapist changes the settings on my ventilator. But this mask is also the mask of the self-advocate. I am protecting myself.

*Uncover the center of me, O God;  
Polish it and smooth it  
Like old cherished silver  
Handed down from mother to daughter.*

I am the self-sacrificer, wearing my mask of compliance. Because I am frightened that if I make too much tumult, I will, like Vashti, be forgotten, sent to the silence of unanswered buzzers and unreturned telephone calls. I am agreeable while fuming. I smile my thanks, and my mask smiles, too, while beneath I cry.

*I sometimes forget, Spark Maker,  
That I glow with Your light,  
That I burn with passions  
I am sometimes frightened to reveal.*

I am the happy cripple. And I am happy. My physical, spiritual, and financial needs are met. Within the confines of the world I have created for myself, I am free. I have everything that money can buy. What I really want—a return to the freedom of a whole and healthy body—is beyond any means. But I have made an armistice with that. And if I sometimes snarl at the oxygen hose that trips me up, I still am here, loved and loving others. This mask smiles like Mona Lisa and underneath I wear my look of serenity. I am at peace.

*Send fuel to these sparks,  
That I might light a way to righteousness;  
Let a steady wind fan these flames  
That serve You in faithfulness.*

*Then will my mouth praise You  
From the center of my being;  
Then will I strip away artifice  
To praise the Living God.*

## The OUTSTRETCHED ARM

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR, JANET SHERMAN



Jewish spiritual support groups are one of the basic modalities utilized by Jewish healing programs to provide spiritual support for people struggling with serious illness, their families and caregivers, and those who are bereaved. In response to feedback from local healing centers and Jewish Family Services (JFS) over the past year, The National Center for Jewish Healing held a two-day intensive training in November to prepare rabbis and mental health professionals to co-facilitate such groups.

This well-attended training conference, entitled *Sustaining our Spirits: Jewish Spiritual Support Groups*, was sponsored in collaboration with the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies (AJFCA), and attracted participants from 16 states and Canada. It included an evening specifically geared to address the special challenges JFS representatives face in embarking on the establishment of a Jewish healing program.

Lead faculty for the 2-day training were Dr. Carol Hausman and Rabbi Simkha Weintraub, and they were joined by Rabbi Nancy Flam on the second day.

Dr. Hausman, a clinical psychologist and gerontologist, is the founder and coordinator of the Washington DC Jewish Healing Network; Rabbi Weintraub is Rabbinic Director of the National Center for Jewish Healing and the New York Jewish Healing Center. Rabbi Flam is one of the founders of the Jewish healing movement and of *Ruach Ami: The Bay Area Jewish Healing Center*.

The program explored the "nuts and bolts" of implementing a Jewish spiritual support group, Jewish spiritual resources and tools for groups, group facilitation and co-facilitation, group dynamics, and case studies of three kinds of

groups: people dealing with serious illness, health care professionals, and those who are bereaved. A lot of information was shared and experienced; our hope is that the new knowledge and strengthened skill set will motivate and enable communities to provide Jewish spiritual support groups to all who need them.

Another recent conference to note was targeted for rabbis. *When a Child Dies: Helping the Rabbi Help*, co-sponsored by the New York Jewish Healing Center and the Jewish Institute for Pastoral Care of the HealthCare Chaplaincy, attracted some 60 rabbis from 10 states and Ontario. Following a poignant keynote address by Dr. Kenneth Gorfinkle and a response by Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, participants attended workshops on *Sudden Loss, Prolonged Illness, Pregnancy & Perinatal Loss, Self-Care for the Rabbi and Text & Teachings*. Participants felt that this conference added to and deepened their ability to support congregants facing this heart-breaking loss. The National Center will soon make available videotaped copies of the opening session.

The next national training will be presented in partnership with the Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program. It is a one-day seminar planned for May 1, 2000 in Minneapolis targeting Jewish health-care professionals. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE IN EARLY MARCH.**



### HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

*We are pleased to invite you to attend:*

#### **"Judaism and Healing for Health Care Professionals"**

May 1, 2000 • Minneapolis, Minnesota

*Sponsored by:*

The National Center for Jewish Healing\*  
in partnership with the Twin Cities Jewish  
Healing Program

*This conference will provide a forum for Jewish health care professionals to explore the link between their direct care provision and their Jewish identity. Through a plenary session, a panel discussion, and focused workshops, participants will look at the importance of spiritual care for both the patient/client and the health care provider. Faculty will include Rabbi Amy Eilberg, Dr. Elizabeth Feldman, and well-known experts from the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.*

*For further information, please call  
Susie Kessler at (212)399-2320 in New York,  
or Rabbi Simcha Prombaum at (612)542-4863.*

*\*in collaboration with the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies (AJFCA)*



## A GROWING NETWORK OF CARE

*The Outstretched Arm is proud to share with you this growing list of Jewish Healing centers. Please do not hesitate to call these centers if you are in need, wish to become involved, or would like to contribute financially to their growth.*

### ALLENTOWN, PA:

JFS of the Lehigh Valley  
Contact: Karen Zeff  
Ph: (610)821-8722

### BALTIMORE, MD:

Baltimore Jewish Healing Network  
Contact: Israella Meyerstein and Rabbi Gila Ruskin  
Ph: (410)484-2172  
fax (410)484-2373  
e-mail: alephgrp@ocpl.net

### BOSTON, MA:

Jewish Healing Connections (a service of JF & CS)  
Contact: Marjorie Sokoll  
Ph: (617)558-1278  
fax (617)559-5250  
e-mail: msokoll@jfcscboston.org

### CLEVELAND, OH:

Cleveland Jewish Healing Center  
Contact: Rabbi Susan Stone  
Ph: (216)381-6119  
fax (216) 291-2010  
e-mail: rabsues@aol.com

### DELAWARE:

Kimmel-Spiller Jewish Healing Center of Jewish Family Service  
Contact: Rabbi Myriam Klotz  
Ph: (302)478-9411  
fax (302)479-9883  
e-mail: klotzstein@aol.com

### DENVER/BOULDER, CO:

Rafael: Jewish Spiritual Healing Center of Colorado (in formation)  
Contact: Rabbi Eliot Baskin (Denver)  
Ph: (303)759-5199x351  
Contact: Elinor Szapiro (Boulder)  
Ph: (303)530-5494

### HARRISBURG, PA:

The Jewish Healing Center of the JFS of Greater Harrisburg  
Contact: Helene Cohen  
Ph: (717)233-1681

### LOS ANGELES, CA:

The Jewish Healing Center at Metivta  
Contact: Ellen Winer  
Ph: (310)477-5370  
fax (310)477-7501  
e-mail: metivta@metivta.org

### MIDDLETOWN, NY:

Jewish Family Services of Orange County  
Contact: Donna Haviv  
Ph: (914)341-1173  
fax (914)342-6436

### MINNEAPOLIS, MN:

Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program  
Contact: Shayne Karasov  
Ph: (612)542-4863  
e-mail: jfcs@jfcsmpls.org

### NEW YORK, NY:

New York Jewish Healing Center  
Contact: Janet Sherman  
Ph: (212)399-2320 x203  
fax (212) 399-2475  
e-mail: jsherman@jbfcs.org

### ORANGE COUNTY, CA:

Jewish Healing Center of Orange County  
Contact: Mel Roth  
Ph: (714)445-4950  
fax (714)445-4960  
e-mail: jfsocmroth@earthlink.net

### PHOENIX, AZ:

Shalom Center for Education, Healing, and Growth  
Contact: Sharona Silverman  
Ph: (602)971-1234  
fax (602)971-5909

### PITTSBURGH, PA:

Healing Center (in formation)  
Contact: Gayle Rosner Abrams and Rabbi Larry Heimer  
Ph: (412)421-6912  
fax (412)648-6871  
e-mail: Gabrams18@aol.com

### ROCHESTER, NY:

Jewish Family Service (healing center in planning stages)  
Contact: Brent Porges  
Ph: (716)461-0110  
fax (716)461-9658

### ST. LOUIS, MO:

Jewish Family and Children's Service (in cooperation with Cong. Shaare Emeth)  
Contact: Sharon Weissman  
Ph: (314)993-1240  
fax (314)993-0238  
e-mail: shweissman@aol.com

### SAN DIEGO, CA:

The Jewish Healing Center  
Contact: Marlene Hyde  
Ph: (619)291-0473  
fax (619)291-2419

### SAN FRANCISCO, CA:

*Ruach Ami*: Bay Area Jewish Healing Center  
Contact: Rabbi Eric Weiss  
Ph: (415)750-4197  
fax: (415)750-4115

### TAMPA, FL:

The Jewish Healing Center (Tampa JFS)  
Contact: Erni B. Goldstein  
Ph: (813)960-1848  
fax (813)265-8239  
e-mail: tjfs@gte.net

### TORONTO:

The Toronto Jewish Healing Project  
Contact: Etta Ginsberg McEwan  
Ph: (416)944-3359  
fax (416)968-1996  
e-mail: Etta@interlog.com

### WASHINGTON, DC:

Washington Jewish Healing Network  
Contact: Carol P. Hausman, Ph.D.  
Ph: (202)966-7851  
fax (202)966-5422  
e-mail: washheal@aol.com

## CONFERENCE Notes

April 2-4, 2000

Los Angeles, CA

### "Re-imagining Illness, Re-imagining Health"

Lee & Irving Kalsman Conference

Sponsored by:

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Call: (213) 749-3424

May 7-8, 2000

Boston, MA

### "The Synagogue as a Healing Center: A Dynamic Team Leadership Approach"

Contact:

UAHC-CCAR Committee on Religious Living

Phone: (212)650-4193

May 24, 2000

Toronto, Canada

### "Don't Rely on Miracles, Recite Psalms"

Sponsored by:

The Toronto Jewish Healing Project

Call: (416)944-3359

June 1, 2000

Philadelphia, PA

### "Rabbi Devora Bartnoff Memorial Conference on Judaism and Emotional Health"

Sponsored by:

JF&CS of Philadelphia with the Jewish

Federation of Greater Philadelphia

Call: (215)540-3737 x300

# ENDORPHINS, SHMENDORPHINS!

## Some Thoughts about Jews, Humor, and Healing

BY RABBI SIMKHA Y. WEINTRAUB,  
Rabbinic Director, NCJH

### Humor is a gift not of the mind, but of the heart.

LUDWIG BOERNE (1786-1837),  
German Jewish political essayist and  
champion of Jewish emancipation,  
in his Memorial Address on Jean Paul,  
December 2, 1825

*From the "everybody's a doctor"  
category:*

"Ladies and gentlemen," the manager of a thriving Yiddish theater announces, "I am terribly sorry to have to tell you that the great actor, Yankel Leibovitch has just had a fatal stroke in his dressing rooms, and we cannot go on with tonight's performance."

A woman in the second balcony immediately jumps up and cries out, "Quick, give him an enema!"

"My dear lady," says the manager, "the stroke was fatal!"

"So give him an enema!" she shouts, even more emphatically.

"Madam, you don't seem to understand. Yankel Leibovitch is dead. An enema can't possibly help."

"So, would it hurt?"

Rabbi Illa'i said:

By three things may a person's character be determined:

*B'kosso/By his cup* <sup>1</sup>

*B'kisso/by his purse* <sup>2</sup>

*B'kasso/and by his anger.*

And some say: By his laughter also.

(BABYLONIAN TALMUD, ERUVIN 65B)

(1) By the effect of drink on the mind, or by the amount consumed.

(2) By the sums of money spent on charitable causes or the manner of giving.

**T**his Rabbinic aphorism of some 2,000 years ago rings true to our own take on human nature, because a person's approach to drink, generosity, and anger management do say an awful lot about character. Clever Rabbi Illa'i certainly wanted to highlight these three indicators, which are linked in the Hebrew by shared consonants and a handy alliterative ring!

But a person's laughter, it turns out, cannot be ignored in the character assessment. It would have been possible to leave the three easy-to-remember components of Rabbi Illa'i's statement alone, but the Talmud seemed to understand what we, too, sense: that the way a person laughs, or the way a person triggers laughter in others, speaks to their character, and, we might add, to their state of spirit.

Years ago, scientists began documenting how a good laugh works against stress. Apparently, after a slight elevation in heart rate and blood pressure during the laugh itself, there's an immediate recoil: muscles relax, blood pressure sinks to below pre-laughter levels, and the brain may well release endorphins, which foster a sense of relaxation and well-being and can dull the perception of pain. Some studies have demonstrated that a good laugh temporarily boosts levels of immunoglobulin A, a virus-fighter found in saliva. And a hefty *hardy-har-har* also provides a muscle massage for the face, the diaphragm, and the abdomen.

But do we need these studies to laugh? Some of us may, indeed—we've been so burdened by our situation or stifled by civility that we need incentives to crack up, even just to chuckle. But let's not forget a few important facts:

★Life is funny, even hysterically so. There is humor in the Oncology Center, in the ICU, in a blood transfusion, even in the house of *shiva*. It may not always be accessible on our radar screens, but it is there, because people are there, and God is there, and they both need and value a good laugh.

*"The One enthroned in heaven laughs."* —PSALM 2:4

Not to say that there aren't solemn moments and downright serious places—God knows there are—but even in these, there can be laughter. There must be laughter, or we can get lost.

★Humor is one spiritual tool that has enabled Jews, individually and collectively, to endure their not infrequent experiences of suffering and dislocation. Comedy, after all, is about getting a new perspective, stepping back from a situation and playing up its incongruent, ironic, and/or absurd aspects. It may lend us a degree of control over our experience or it may free us up to let go of that which is beyond our control. And often, the funniest thing is that Jew right there in the mirror:

*This determination of self-criticism may make clear why it is that a number of the most excellent jokes....should have sprung into existence from the soil of Jewish national life....I do not know whether one often finds a people that makes so merry unreservedly over its own shortcomings...*

—SIGMUND FREUD, WIT AND ITS RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS, TRANSL. 1917, III, PAGE 705.

Find a meeting of Jews who don't kibbitz and they've simply been in this country too many generations!

When something isn't funny, we may need to make it so in order to survive, in order to get from Monday to Tuesday. Many of us have known people who seem to have this gift, who can step back and laugh at what is otherwise a very difficult, even unbearable experience. But are they genetically different than you and me? (No.) Can we not learn some of these skills? (Of course!) Do we not have more of them than we realize? (Answer excitedly: "Yes, rabbi, oh, yes!")

**S**o—I hereby give you permission, within all those constraints of propriety and timing, to expand your repertoire of humor, in the interests of feeling better and helping others to do the same. There are specialists (wouldn't you know?) who have materials to help you "find the funny," (see resource page) but here are seven "Jewish healing humor strategies" specifically designed for the patient enduring a stay in the medical center:

**DISCLAIMER:** These may not work for everybody, every setting, every day. Get help if you need it (remember, there's power in being the patient!) and let us know what other strategies you develop so we can share the wealth.

★ **Madlibs:** Take a handy text—dietary instructions, patient's bill of rights, pamphlets on chemotherapy, whatever—and copy a section of it over, leaving a blank where many of the nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs appear. Ask staff or visitors to give you, as needed, nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs, and fill them in, as necessary. Announce when the public reading of the treatise will be, and post the composition afterwards.

★ **Good-bye, IV:** Compose a eulogy—at least 250 words—for whichever medicine, piece of medical equipment, or feature of the medical environment you would most like to bury. Share it with family and friends and, if at all possible, with medical staff. Enhance it. Update it. Post it.

★ Urge people who let you know they're coming to visit (family and friends, but also medical staff, if possible) to **bring laughs** in the form of jokes, cartoons, tapes, CDs, videos. Print the jokes and put them up on the wall. Ask your neighbors in for laugh-fests. Once you let it be known that you are hungry for humor, it will quite likely flow in your direction. Remember that humor, like hope, is a muscle: it needs exercise to grow strong. And the more you laugh (and share that laughter with others) you may be surprised to find your own sense of humor flourishing along with your health...or at least your outlook.

★ Enlist family members and/or roommates in creating **practical jokes** to play on medical staff: offer tomato juice instead of blood to the phlebotomist; provide your IV nurse with a turkey baster; pretend your IV pole is a dog and walk it up and down the halls; write or draw quips on key portions of your anatomy prior to surgery; dress for dinner or for a holiday like Purim (masks are always fun); turn those ubiquitous plastic gloves into balloons (a little magic marker turns them into stunning Thanksgiving turkeys); find your own absurdities and play them to the hilt.

★ Make a list of the names of staff, drugs, procedures, and places in the medical center, and locate rhyming possibilities (for example, "Schwartz" and "warts.") Compose **brief rhyming tributes** to individuals, treatments, or locations, and present these, orally and in writing, at various junctures during your stay. Post them for handy reference and public education purposes.

★ **The patient as photojournalist:** Reframe your hospital stay as a safari to a distant jungle, or a journey to an alien planet. With a Polaroid, if possible, photograph everything—portraits of everyone who comes into your room (ask the residents to smile, ask the nurses to stop smiling), pictures of every piece of strange machinery, close-ups of the lunch tray, and so on. With the assistance of unsuspecting visitors, arrange and re-arrange the photographs on the wall, and put blank paper under them, inviting people to compose captions. Invite patients down the hall to the opening. Serve leftovers.

★ With help from concerned dear ones, assemble a box of **dress-up props**—yarn wig pieces, Groucho glasses/mustache ensemble, hats of various origins, plastic animal noses, scarves, impossible neckties, etc. At no special moment, just when you happen to think of it, put these on in order to draw a smile from others, or better yet, set a rule that whoever wants to speak with you has to wear something from this box in order to gain the privilege. You should certainly include the easily accessible medical garb and paraphernalia like plastic gloves, tongue depressors, etc. Context is all when it comes to laughs.

**So, if humor can reduce stress, great! If it eases pain, terrific! If it fosters recovery, awesome! Even if it brightens one moment, grab it! As the good Dr. Weintraub says, if it might be helpful and it's definitely free, I imagine God wants you to try it!**

## *"Humor is the red thread in the gray linen."*

J. ROSENFELD,  
Quoting Twerski, *Davke*, 1952, xiii, 379

### *Yearning for the old country:*

Two immigrants meet on the street in New York. "How's by you?" asks one. "Could be worse, and you?" "Surviving. But I've been sick a lot this year and it's cost me a fortune. In the past five months I've spent over three hundred dollars on doctors and medicine." "Ach, back home on that kind of money you could be sick for two years!"

*A joyful heart  
makes for good health,  
Despondency dries up the bones.*

BIBLE, PROVERBS 17:22

### *It can be hard to ask the rabbi for help:*

It was a dark and stormy night, and Goldberg, 87 years old, knew the end was near. "Quick! Call the priest!" he said to his dear Sophie. "Tell him to come right away!" "The priest, Sam? You must be delirious! You mean the rabbi!" "No," Goldberg says, "I mean the priest. Why disturb the rabbi on a night like this?"

# TOOLS AND TEXTS: AN EXPLORATION OF THE MORNING PRAYER SERVICE

One of our many valued readers, Leslie Gordon, sent us her personal rendering of the traditional daily morning service, or *Shaharit*. Here, we share an excerpt from Leslie's service, consisting of three prayers. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with the text of the *Shaharit* service, we have added a portion of the three traditional prayers in both transliteration and translation. We encourage you to find and look over the full prayers, so that you will understand the basis for Leslie's interpretations. Her desire to both honor the traditional prayers and to find ways of making them relevant in her own life reminds us to continue to plumb the depth of our texts in order to make them belong to us in personally significant ways. If you would like a copy of Leslie's complete service, please call our office.

"This Morning prayer service is my final project for *Chochmat HaLev's* "Immersion in Jewish Spirituality" program. Over the course of the year my spiritual practice, and indeed my sense of gratitude for being alive, has grown tremendously from trying to pray each morning. The format which I use for this morning practice is a meditative one which our teacher, Nan Fink, taught on the program's first retreat.

Although the format is very simple, I often had difficulty completing the service because I got distracted by other thoughts, which were usually negative. I realized that as a disabled woman, some of the prayers did not express my connection to the Divine or express what I needed to communicate in prayer. While the process of praying, at its core, needs

to be ever changing, the act of writing my own version of each prayer has helped me focus on the meaning and value of these prayers. I still have difficulty getting through the entire service, but reciting a few of these prayers enables me to have a more positive outlook, which prepares me to have a good day.

While I strongly encourage others to write their own prayers, I believe this prayer service could be extremely valuable to some, especially those with disabilities. My version of these prayers is based on English translations/interpretations. Writing a version based on the original Hebrew might be another project. Please feel free to change the language for the Divine to what best suits your needs."

## Morning Prayer Service

Personal Interpretation by LESLIE GORDON



### PRAYER UPON AWAKENING • *Modeh/Modah Ani*

*Modeh/Modah a-ni l'fanekha  
meh-lekh hai v'ka-yahm  
sheh'heh'heh-zarta bi nish-ma-ti b'hem-la  
rabba eh-mu-na-tehkha.*

I thank you, God,  
Creator of life, Eternal One,  
for restoring my soul with love  
filled with Your eternal trust.

Thought: Oh God, You have given me another day to live and struggle through.

Prayer: May I feel connected to the Source of all Being. May I be grateful for my life. *Modah Ani*, Living Spirit of the Universe, I am thankful for my life, body, soul, for my family, friends, community, and for all of nature, I am thankful for my faith in You, Divine Energy of All.



### PRAYER FOR THE BODY • *Asher Yatzar (excerpt)*

*Ba-rukht A-tah Adonai  
Eloheinu Me-lekh Ha-olahm  
Asher ya-tzar et ha-a-dam b'hokh-mah  
U'va-rah vo n'kah-vim, n'kah-vim  
Ha-lu-lim, ha-lu-lim....*

Blessed are You,  
Adonai, our Ruler of the Universe  
who formed human beings with wisdom  
creating pores, orifices and hollows,  
openings, channels, and ducts...

Thought: I'm usually not very happy to be in this body when I wake. Sometimes this is my first thought. My body doesn't work well and sometimes hurts. When I remember that my body is my vessel for life, a precious opportunity for me to be in the world, I am grateful.

Prayer: Praised be Yah, the Life Force, Living Spirit of the Universe, who has given me this wondrous body, with all of its strengths and limitations, so that I may experience life and be in this holy world.



### PRAYER FOR THE SOUL • *Elohai Neshama (excerpt)*

*Elohai  
n'sha-ma she-na-tata bi t'ho-ra hi  
A-tah v'ra-tah, A-tah y'tsar-tah  
A-tah n'fah-tah bi  
V' A-tah m'shahm-ra b'kir-bi....*

Elohai/my God  
The soul You have given me is pure.  
You have created it, You formed it,  
You breathed it into me,  
You guard it within me....

Prayer: Praised be Yah, Living Spirit of the Universe, May I remember that the spirit and soul You have given me is pure. Though I make mistakes my essence is good and holy. With each breath, may I have the opportunity for goodness.

(footnote: Chochmat HaLev is an independent center of Jewish Meditation in Berkeley, California. The phone number is 510-704-9687 or look for [www.chochmat.org](http://www.chochmat.org)).

*Let's get our priorities straight!*

Gelman is crossing the street and gets hit by a car. The driver jumps out, places his jacket under Gelman's head and shouts to the gathering crowd, "Somebody call an ambulance!" Then he looks at Gelman empathetically and asks, "Are you comfortable?" Gelman answers, "I make a nice living."

*When it comes to our health, some issues seem eternal...*

Keppleman goes to a famous New York specialist for a consultation about his medical problems. "How much do I owe you?" asks Keppleman. "My fee is \$450," the doctor replies. "\$450! That's Outrageous!" "Well, in your case, I suppose I can adjust my fee to \$350." "\$350 for one visit? You gotta be kidding!" "Well, can you afford \$250?" "\$250! Highway Robbery!" Very irritated, the doctor says, "Just give me a hundred bucks and never call on me again!" "I'll give you \$50, take it or leave it!" Fuming, the doctor says, "Why in the world did you come to the most expensive doctor in New York?" "Listen, when it comes to my health, nothing is too expensive!"

*What would a collection of Jewish jokes related to sickness be without this classic one liner of Henny Youngman's, may he rest in peace?*

Guy goes to a doctor. Doctor says, "You're sick." Guy says, "I want another opinion." "OK," doctor responds, "You're ugly, too!"

We agree with Dr. Rabbi Weintraub that humor is healing. If you would like to see more humor in upcoming issues, or have some jokes to share, please let us know.

For more information on the positive power of humor, send a stamped (77 cents) self-addressed envelope to: The HUMOR Project, Inc. 480 Broadway, Suite 210, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 or visit their web site at <http://www.humorproject.com>.

*We have included a return envelope for your convenience in making a tax-deductible contribution to make Jewish healing and Jewish healing resources more readily available to those in need. Thank you.*

**Healing of Soul, Healing of Body, Spiritual Leaders Unfold the Strength and Solace in Psalms.** Edited by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, CSW. (Jewish Lights 1994). A source of solace for those who are facing illness, as well as those who care for them. These Psalms and the inspiring commentaries that accompany them offer an anchor of spiritual support.

**When The Body Hurts, The Soul Still Longs to Sing.** A prayer booklet of heartfelt blessings for times of illness (written by Jewish laywomen). A loving gift for anyone needing spiritual uplift in the midst of illness.

**With Healing on Its Wings.** Masorti Publications, London. A healing collage of selections from the Shabbat and weekday liturgy, Genesis, Psalms, Talmud, medieval and contemporary Jewish literature.

**A Leader's Guide to Services and Prayers of Healing.** This helpful guide walks you through some of the central practical issues involved in planning and running a service of healing, whether it be free-standing or incorporated into a traditional service. Sample service included.

**MiSheberakh Card.** This card has been artfully redesigned with a short introduction and full Hebrew text; it offers separate masculine and feminine transliteration accompanied by an English translation on an attractive fold-over card that is small enough to fit in your pocket.

**Evening and Morning: A Circle of Prayer.** A beautiful *bikkur holim* gift, containing traditional prayers to say at bedtime and upon awakening, transforming moments of anxiety into comfort and reassurance, and giving expression to vulnerability, fear, hope, and gratitude. Attractively designed prayer card includes introductions, original Hebrew, moving translations, and selected transliterations.

**The Laws of Life: A Guide to Traditional Jewish Practice at Times of Bereavement.** Masorti Publications together with the New North London Synagogue. In the midst of bewilderment and grief there are often difficult responsibilities to be met. This sensitive booklet helps mourners, family, and friends cope with practical arrangements and learn about the insights and structures that Judaism has to offer.

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*As this publication contains a representation of God's name, please treat it with the proper care and respect.*

## *In This Issue*

**PURIM**, like Hanukkah, is not a biblical holiday, but a Rabbinic one. Similar to Hanukkah, the holiday of Purim reflects some historical realities and responses like wandering and exile, majority/minority relations, and the like. But our response to the threat of annihilation in this instance is to celebrate with masks and noisemakers. By drowning out the name of the wicked Haman during the communal reading of the Purim story, by dressing in funny costumes and being silly, we play with the relationships of laughter and fear—of humor and rage. Silliness becomes an unexpected, yet meaningful way to relate to pain

and suffering. Many of us who are confronting illness and loss can relate to this "topsy-turvy" experience.

In this issue, Debbie Perlman writes about the masks of illness, and Rabbi Simkha Weintraub teaches us to look for humor in the most unexpected places. We have also included some classic jokes (several donated by our friend and comedy maven, Len Belzer), just to bring you some smiles....And for a moving look at the traditional morning prayer service, we offer you a personal rendering of three of the morning prayers by one of our readers, Leslie Gordon.

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