

## Jewish Concepts and Values for Helping Victims and Perpetrators of Domestic Violence

*by Rabbi Elliot N. Dorff, Ph.D.*

Judaism uses many resources to determine the right or good thing to do when that is not clear and to teach and motivate moral sensitivity and behavior when it is. These include stories, proverbs, moral theories, images of God as our exemplar, prayer, study, and, most especially, law. In a book of mine, I describe how each of those sources works in Jewish moral thinking and action.<sup>1</sup> In that same book, I have a chapter on how Jewish law has treated family violence, and so those who would like to see the results of the usual, legal approach to these issues within Jewish sources should look there.<sup>2</sup> That material, though, is based on some fundamental Jewish concepts and values, and this essay will identify those so that the theological and moral grounds of Judaism on issues of domestic violence will be clear.

### A. Jewish Concepts and Values that Forbid Domestic Violence

**1. Each of us is created in the image of God.** Three times the Torah announces in its opening chapters that every human being is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27; 5:1; 9:6). The last of those verses—“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in His image did God make man”—indicates that part of the meaning of being created in God’s image is that we may not murder other human beings, for that would diminish the presence of the image of God in our midst. But it is not only murder that is interdicted; it is, as the corollary values described below indicate, any action that harms or disrespects another person.

Further, as Rabbi Akiba asserts in the Mishnah, it is not only our biological, moral, and spiritual roots in the divine image that must guide us, but our *awareness* of those roots: “Man is beloved, for he is created in the image of God. He is exceedingly beloved, for it was made known to him that he was created in the Image, as the Torah states, ‘In the image of God He made man’ (Genesis 9:6).”<sup>3</sup> Thus we have no excuse to ignore this aspect of human existence in thinking about our own self-worth and in our interactions with other people.

To act in accordance with the basic value of each person as an image of God does not require that we like everyone or approve of what everyone does, but it does demand that we treat them with respect for the divine value they embody. Thus the Torah demands that even with regard to someone who has committed a capital crime and is hanged for that crime, we must remove the body and bury it before nightfall “for an impaled body is an affront to God” (Deuteronomy 21:23). Thus even if someone does terrible things, the Torah recognizes the divine image in that person, an image that imparts ultimate worth to every person.

**2. We may not injure each other.** An immediate corollary of recognizing the divine image in each person is that we may not injure others. The Torah itself demands the death penalty for striking either of one's parents (Exodus 21:15). And even though the Rabbis found ways to all but eliminate the death penalty, this shows how serious the infraction was considered to be. For all other injuries, the Torah demands compensation (Exodus 21:18-19). Indeed, for permanent injuries, the Torah requires retribution rather than compensation—"eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise" (Exodus 21:24-25) —but the Rabbis converted that into monetary payments as well. The Rabbis also recognized that injuries involve not only the damage of the injury itself, but a setback in four other respects as well: "One who injures another person is liable on five counts (that is, responsible for paying for five factors): for the injury itself, for pain, for healing, for loss of time, and for embarrassment" (Mishnah, *Bava Kamma* 8:1). The next parts of that chapter of the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the later codes then spell out exactly how to evaluate what the perpetrator must pay for each of those aspects of the injury and whether they apply to temporary injuries as well as permanent ones, but what they all make clear is that injuring someone is punished and is thus prohibited. According to the Torah and later Rabbinic sources, courts may impose lashes for trespasses of the law, but in doing so even they had to take due care to preserve the dignity of God and of the culprit, who is, still, God's human creature: "He [the culprit] may be given up to forty lashes, but no more, lest being flogged further, to excess, your brother be degraded before your eyes" (Deuteronomy 25:3). Nowadays, when Jews live under the jurisdiction of national legal systems that treat Jews as equal citizens and do not carve out separate civil and criminal authority for Jewish courts over Jews, even Jewish courts no longer have the authority to beat others; and individuals have even less authorization to do so. The Israeli system of justice does not include such a penalty either.

**3. On the contrary, we must respect each other.** Another implication of being created in the image of God is that we must respect every other human being. The Hebrew term for this value is *kevod ha-briyyot*.<sup>4</sup> It includes both Jews and non-Jews, and it includes people of all genders, every age, and every level of ability or disability. The underlying theological basis for the honor due to all other human beings is, as the Rabbis say, "All that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created, He created for His own honor" (B *Yoma* 38a, based on Isaiah 43:7).

**4. The extra level of respect we should have for our spouses.** If we must have respect for everyone, it certainly should be true for those closest to us, including especially our spouses. The Babylonian Talmud (B. *Yevamot* 63a; B. *Sanhedrin* 76b) says this:

Rabbi Hanilai said: A man who has no wife lives without joy, blessing, and good... In the West [that is, in Israel] they said, "Without Torah and without [moral] protection." Rabbi Ulla said, "And without peace."...The Rabbis say: "Of him who loves his wife as himself, and honors her more than himself, and brings up his sons and daughters rightly...the Scripture says, 'You know that your tent is in peace' (Job 5:24)."

The honor a man is to have for his wife extends to their sexual relations as well, for sex, after all, is—or should be—an expression of love and intimacy. In every relationship one must treat other human beings as the creatures of God they are, but in a relationship that signifies special care and concern one must be especially mindful of doing so.

This means, minimally, that sexual relations, if they are to adhere to Jewish concepts and values, must not be coercive. While it may well be the case that one partner wants to have sex more than the other at any given time, and while partners may acquiesce to each other to please one another as part of a long-term relationship, sexual pleasure should always be in the context of a relationship that is at least respectful and ideally loving of the other partner. If one member of the couple, then, does not want to engage in sexual activity, or does not want to do so in a particular way, those wishes must be honored.

**5. Shame.** The opposite of respect and honor is shame. As the Mishnah cited above (M *Bava Kamma* 8:1) makes clear, someone who assaults another is liable for compensating the victim for the embarrassment involved as well as for the other four factors involved in the injury. In that way, the Rabbis were declaring in concrete, legal terms that assault of anyone is objectionable not only for its physical and monetary effects, but also for its psychological import.

This is true for any kind of assault, but especially sexual abuse. The Torah makes this exceedingly clear: "If two men get into a fight with each other, and the wife of one comes up to save her husband from his antagonist and puts out her hand and seizes him by his genitals, you shall cut off her hand; show no pity."<sup>5</sup> Despite the special justification the woman had for shaming her husband's assailant, the Torah demands drastic steps in retribution for the degradation she caused—although the Rabbis transformed this to a monetary payment that she must pay.<sup>6</sup> (Incidentally, note that, the Torah recognized feelings of shame and embarrassment are experienced by men who are sexually abused, just as they are by women. Still, the Torah's case is obviously unusual. Most cases of shaming through violence involve men harming women for the purpose of establishing and maintaining power and control over them.

The Talmud, when determining the payment to be exacted for the shame involved whenever one person assaults another, uses this case as the paradigm for what embarrassment means. This passage in the Torah is also used by the Rabbis to forbid shaming anyone, including cases that unfortunately are much more common than the one the Torah discusses. So, for example, the Mishnah establishes monetary liability for a man who shames a woman in public, even if she herself does not see it as particularly embarrassing:

There was a case where a man uncovered a woman's head in the marketplace [thus disgracing her]. She came before Rabbi Akiba, and he fined the man four hundred *zuz*. The defendant said: "Rabbi, grant me time [to pay]," and he gave him time. The defendant kept an eye out for her, and when she was standing at the entrance of her courtyard, he broke a cruse containing an *issar's* worth of oil in front of her. She uncovered her head, scooped up the oil with her hand, and applied it to her hair. He had set up eyewitnesses against her, and he came before Rabbi

Akiba and said to him: "Rabbi, to one such as this I must pay four hundred zuz?" Rabbi Akiba replied: "You have said nothing [with legal consequence]: a person is not permitted to injure himself, but if he does so, he is free of liability; if others injure him, they are liable."<sup>7</sup>

The Mishnah speaks of social shame. When we are sexually abused, we are humiliated even more, for we feel that our sense of self has been invaded, that our honor has been compromised in the most fundamental way possible. The Jewish tradition understands the Torah to ban not only sexual penetration, but any form of illicit fondling or inappropriate behavior for the purpose of gratifying sexual desire, or, more commonly, for purposes of power and control.<sup>8</sup>

**6. The duty to save lives—our own and other people's.** Jewish law sees saving a person's life as so important that it supersedes every other commandment in the Torah save three (namely, murder, incest/adultery, and idolatry). That means that one must save a life even if one has to violate any but those three commandments in order to do so. The Rabbis derive this imperative from the Torah's command, "You shall keep My laws and My rules and live by them; I am the Lord" (Leviticus 18:5), which the Rabbis interpret to mean "'You shall live by them' means that [minimally] you should not die for them."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, based on the verse, "Do not stand idly by the blood of your brother" (Leviticus 19:16), the Rabbis deduced the command to come to the rescue of other people who, for example, are drowning or being accosted by highway robbers.<sup>10</sup>

The duty to save other people's lives falls on each and every one of us, and so if we witness violence or its effects, or if we are asked for help to stop it, we may not turn away and ignore it but must rather intervene to save the lives at risk. We must insure that we do not endanger our own lives in the process, but we have a clear Jewish duty to try to extricate people from a dangerous situation.

**7. Holiness.** Finally, assaults of others represent the exact opposite of the holiness that we Jews are to aspire to achieve in general in our lives, but especially in our families. "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2) establishes for us the high bar that we must seek to achieve—namely, to be nothing less than God-like. Again, "All the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). Assault of others, whether physical, sexual, or verbal, undermines that divinely mandated Jewish mission. We are to act to sanctify God's name (*kiddush ha-shem*), not to desecrate it (*hillul ha-shem*). Jews must not engage in sexual abuse. To do so violates the standards by which a holy people covenanted to God should live and warrants excommunication from the People Israel. Jews are expected to behave better than that.

Why does the Torah speak of sexual abuse as "defilement" and "abomination" (Leviticus 18:24-30) in addition to its usual language of transgression? In part, it is because the Promised Land was itself seen as alive and violated by such conduct, but surely the words refer to the human beings involved too. One's bodily integrity is compromised when one is sexually abused. Sexual abuse is experienced not only as an assault upon one's body, but also—and usually more devastatingly—as an onslaught upon one's person. One has lost one's integrity—

not only in body, but in soul. One no longer feels safe in the world; at any moment, one can be invaded in the most intimate of ways. The abuse is thus indeed a defilement: what was sacred and whole before is now desecrated and broken. The command to strive for holiness in our lives requires us to act otherwise—not to shatter lives, but to heal and improve them.

## **B. Jewish Concepts and Values Relevant to People Who Have Experienced Abuse**

**1. *The duty to save one's own life and those of others.*** This duty, described above, applies as much to those who experience abuse as to those who witness it. This imperative overrides any other obligation, as the following paragraphs in this section will make clear. For some victims of abuse saving their life may mean attempting to leave the relationship. For other victims of abuse leaving the relationship may actually increase their likelihood of being murdered. We need to ensure that those experiencing abuse are aware of the assistance available to them, so they can opt to access help if it is safe for them to do so. Depending on the community, victims may wish to seek the aid of Jewish Family Service, rabbis, secular domestic violence programs, and/or governmental authorities (the police, social service agencies, etc.) in order to plan for their safety and explore their options. Safety planning may help them extricate themselves from an abusive situation or be safer while remaining in an abusive relationship.

The duty to save one's own life allows for victims to access shelter programs even if they are not kosher and even if they will not enable the residents to observe Shabbat fully. That is because the duty to save lives supersedes these other commandments. In such facilities, observant Jews can become vegetarian and abide by as many of the Sabbath rules as possible within the bounds of the facility and the program. The shelter could also be asked to provide kosher food for residents who observe Jewish law. Alternatively, agencies may establish shelters in individual apartments so that residents can observe their own religious practices. Jewish agencies can respond to the duty to save the lives of abused Jews by establishing shelters of their own or by providing resources for people to live on their own.

**2. *Shame.*** Although they have done nothing wrong and are not to blame, many victims feel shame for themselves and their families. Sometimes this is fed by a feeling of at least partial responsibility for the abuse, a feeling that is not justified. Even when victims know that the fault lies in someone else, they often are reticent to make the abuse public for fear that that will embarrass the whole family, including themselves. They may also fear bringing shame to the Jewish community. We must be clear that the abused are not the ones who should be ashamed. Moreover, the Jewish tradition asserts that saving your own life and that of your children takes precedence over any embarrassment that revealing the abuse may cause to the person who is abusive or to anyone else.

**3. *Defamation (lashon ha-ra).*** The same is true for defamation. Jewish law is very strict in its ethics of language: we must not only refrain from telling lies (that is, intentional untruths) about a person; we must even avoid telling negative truths about other people. If victims reveal that they are being abused, does that constitute prohibited defamation? That answer is "No," for the one time that one not only may, but should, tell a negative truth about another person is in a

circumstance in which there is a practical need to do so—where, for example, a potential employer needs to know about a candidate’s weaknesses for a job as well as his or her strengths. In cases of abuse, the practical need to share this information with those who can help to extricate a victim from it is even more compelling, for here a person’s or family’s lives and emotional and physical integrity are at stake, and not just one’s job. So victims should not worry about violating Judaism’s ban on defamation; the law is specifically written to permit such language when it has practical import, particularly when people’s lives and safety are at risk.<sup>11</sup>

### **C. Jewish Concepts and Values Relevant to Batterers**

**1. *We have the capacity to do good.*** The Jewish tradition does not believe that we are born with Original Sin—that is, that we are inherently sinful. Instead, Jewish sources portray us as being born morally neutral, with an inclination to do good (*yetzer ha-tov*) as well as an inclination to do bad (*yetzer ha-ra*). God, being loving, does not throw us out into the world without a clue as to how to behave; God instead gives us a Book of Instruction (the literal meaning of the word “Torah”) so that we can know what we should do, and God also gives us the ability to act according to that knowledge. People who are emotionally, physically or sexually abusive to their partners are making a choice to behave that way. They too have the capacity to do good.

**2. *We are not perfect.*** With that, we do sometimes act badly. We are not angels. Thus three times a day Jewish liturgy has us say, “Forgive us, our Father, for we have missed the mark; wipe the slate clean, for we have sinned.” Furthermore, the Jewish calendar devotes an entire season of the year—the Ten Days of Repentance, beginning with Rosh Hashanah and ending with Yom Kippur, as well as the full month of Elul beforehand for preparation—to focus on what we have done wrong, how we can make amends, and how we can act better in the future. Obviously, this is easier to do for minor faults and harder to accomplish when one has a pattern of seriously injuring others through such activities as stalking, terrorizing, and raping women. Still, the Jewish tradition asserts that even such people are not beyond repair.

**3. *The process of return (teshuvah) is both open to us and required of us.*** When we do bad things—and abusing others physically, sexually, or verbally certainly counts as examples of that—we have the duty to return to the proper path and thereby to the good graces of people and of God. Note that the Hebrew word for this is properly translated “return,” not “repentance,” for the latter word comes from the Latin for punishment (with cognate words like “penalty” and “penitentiary”), while the focus of the Hebrew word is changing one’s ways. That process is demanding; there is no free forgiveness in Judaism. (For that matter, Christian theologians tell me that there is no “cheap grace” in Christianity either.) Specifically, in order to fulfill the demands of the process of return, one must do all of the following:

- a. Acknowledge the wrong;
- b. Have and show remorse;
- c. Publicly confess the transgression.
- d. Ask for forgiveness from the aggrieved party or parties;
- e. Provide restitution to the extent that that is possible; and
- f. Refrain from committing the wrongful act the next time the opportunity arises.<sup>12</sup>

**4. *The limits of the process of return.*** Sometimes people with the best intentions in the world and with considerable effort can achieve all but the last of the steps of return. That is, they can recognize what they have done wrong, have remorse for it, apologize for it, and seek to repair the damage they have caused, but the sin is simply too ingrained in them for either society, those they victimized, or the culprits themselves to trust that they will act differently if put into the same situation again. Unfortunately, this is often true of those who batter their spouses. In those cases, another Jewish value asserts itself, namely, “Do not put a stumbling block in front of the blind” (Leviticus 19:14), which the Rabbis interpreted to include not only those who are physically blind, but also those who are intellectually and morally blind.<sup>13</sup>

Spousal abusers should do what they can to mend their ways, but they may not trust themselves—and their spouses or children may not trust them—to act differently if they return to their former contexts. In that case, divorce may be the only solution, with limited, if any, visiting rights with the children.

#### **D. Steps that Clergy, Educators, and Others Should Take with regard to Abuse in Their Communities.**

**1. *Learn to recognize abuse.*** If you fail to recognize the signs of abuse in your congregation, school, camp, or youth group, the abuse will undoubtedly continue. The opportunity to protect people from future abuse is often lost due to ignorance, denial, or fear of interference. Professional schools should mandate training for their students, and professional organizations should provide continuing education for their members in how to discern potentially abusive situations, take family histories that include instances of abuse, provide religious counseling for abusers and their victims, and know which other professionals within the community should be called upon to help in both preventive and curative actions.

**2. *Do not assume that you can handle the situation alone.*** While clergy can be critical in helping victims and perpetrators of abuse in the ways explained below, they should not try to do this alone. If abuse is going to be stopped and its effects ameliorated, professionals of various sorts must be called upon. .

**3. *Know and obey your government's requirements to report abuse to legal authorities.*** Many states have enacted laws that require clergy and teachers, as well as physicians, to report child abuse to legal authorities, but the law may be different with regard to adults abusing other adults. It is important to know the laws in your area and to know to whom reports should be made, if anyone.

Sometimes clergy or teachers become aware of abuse through the confession of a congregant in a private counseling setting, and that raises questions of confidentiality. The law of most jurisdictions follows the California *Tarasoff* case in specifically requiring professionals to break professional-client confidentiality when the congregant's plans to threaten the safety or physical

welfare of anyone *in the future*, and it protects professionals from lawsuits complaining of such a breach of confidentiality.

In any case, rabbis and teachers everywhere have a legal responsibility to be on the alert for instances of family violence and to report such cases to legal authorities when civil law requires it. Failure to do so may subject rabbis or teachers personally, as well as the religious or educational institution for which they work, to both civil and criminal prosecution. Insurance companies are increasingly restricting their coverage so that they can avoid liability for such suits, thus making the institutions and their personnel all the more legally exposed.

**4. Recognize that the abuser may be a colleague.** Rabbis, cantors, and Jewish educators as well as clergy of other faiths have unfortunately been involved in some highly-publicized cases of abuse of various sorts. Due process, of course, must be applied in any investigation of such allegations, and the presumption of innocence must be preserved. If child, spousal, or other abuse by a rabbi, cantor, or educator is confirmed, however, other Jewish professionals on the staff and in the vicinity must be prepared to hold the abuser accountable, and support the safety and healing of the survivor.

In addition, steps must be taken to heal the community, help it avoid such incidents in the future, and bring the perpetrator both to justice and to the process of *teshuvah*. The needs of the victim are primary, but compassion needs to be extended to the injured religious community and the perpetrator as well.

**5. Take specific steps to prevent and alleviate this problem:**

(a) In addition to the steps described above, everything that synagogues and other Jewish communal agencies do can strengthen families, including sermons and lessons on family issues, based on, for example, the dysfunctional families in many Bible stories, telling us what to avoid, and family worship services, social events, and social action projects. In addition, synagogues and Jewish federations should support efforts, typically by Jewish Family Service agencies, to establish safe houses with kosher facilities for victims of abuse. As a joint effort of synagogues and Jewish Family Service, synagogue services should be made available to residents in such facilities, and, conversely, experts in this area from Jewish Family Service should be called upon for preventive and educational programs within our synagogues and educational institutions. The FaithTrust Institute can assist with creating policies, providing training, and instituting measures that prevent further abuse.

(b) *Use the power of the religion and the community to deter abuse.* Even in America, where synagogue membership is voluntary and synagogues typically seek more members, synagogues might excommunicate those who abuse others by denying them the privileges of membership until they go through a process of return. In addition, rabbis should not hesitate to use theological language in explaining to abusers that such behavior is not only a violation of a



Jewish communal norm, but a transgression of God's will as embedded in Jewish law and values.

(c) *Counsel adult survivors of abuse.* Adults who abuse others were often abused themselves as children. If they are going to be able to break the cycle of abuse, they will need considerable counseling, instruction in good patterns of family interactions (since, by hypothesis, while growing up they never saw first-hand how families can handle their tensions in a healthy way), and positive reinforcement for dealing with problems in non-abusive ways. Synagogues can, for example, form support groups for adult children of abuse, with opportunities to express their rage and to learn how to create a healthy family life; Jewish Family Service may be of aid in establishing and staffing such groups.

(d) *Address the spiritual aspect of healing.* Rabbis and other Jews all too often underestimate the role of religious conviction in aiding the healing process. Virtually all of the Twelve-Step programs place heavy reliance on faith in God, not only because historically such programs emerged from Christian faith communities, but also because healing is assisted greatly when a person feels aided not only by other people who have the same problem but also by God. We Jews need to cease to be embarrassed by such religious language. We should unselfconsciously invoke the religious tenets of our tradition to help people who have been abused to heal the wounds of the past and to reconstruct and redirect their lives.<sup>14</sup>

### **E. The Parties Affected by Abuse and Our Response to It**

*Abusers may be women as well as men and abuse does occur in same-sex as well as heterosexual couples.* Although men batter their wives far more often than women batter their husbands, there are some instances of women abusing men, men abusing men, and women abusing women. Thus, it is worthwhile to mention here that *husband-beating and partner-beating are also prohibited by Jewish law* and are equally as reprehensible as wife-beating, and all who are abusive are in need of *teshuvah*. Rabbis and lay Jews must do all in their power to help all victims of domestic violence to be safe.

### **Key to Abbreviations in the Notes**

In all the footnotes,

M. = Mishnah (edited c. 200 C.E.)

B. = Babylonian Talmud (edited c. 500 C.E.)

M.T. = Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* (completed in 1177)

S.A. = Joseph Karo's *Shulhan Arukh* (completed in 1565), with glosses by Moses Isserles to indicate where Jewish law as practiced by the Northern European community (Ashkenazim) differed from the ways Karo had described the practice of Jew living in the Mediterranean basin (Sephardic Jews).

*Reprinted with permission of the author.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Elliot N. Dorff, *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself: A Jewish Approach to Modern Personal Ethics* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup> M. *Ethics of the Fathers (Avot)* 3:18.

<sup>4</sup> So, for example, "Great is human dignity, for it overrides a negative prohibition in the Torah" (B. *Berakhot* 19b; cf. B. *Shabbat* 81b; B. *Menahot* 37b); "Love your fellow-creatures and honor them" (*Derekh Eretz Zuta* 1:9); and the Holy One, blessed be He, has concern for the honor of all His creatures, and even wicked people like Balaam (*Numbers Rabbah* 20:14; cf. *Sifre*, "Shofetim," #192). See also B. *Bava Kamma* 79b; *Genesis Rabbah* 48:9; *Leviticus Rabbah* 17:5.

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 25:11-12.

<sup>6</sup> *Sifre* on Deuteronomy 25:12; cf. M. *Bava Kamma* 8:1; B. *Bava Kamma* 83a, 86a-b, 28a, etc.

<sup>7</sup> M. *Bava Kamma* 8:6.

<sup>8</sup> B. *Shabbat* 13a; M.T. *Laws of Forbidden Intercourse* 21:1; Maimonides, *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, Prohibition #353; *Sefer Ha-Hinukh* #188; S.A. *Even Ha-Ezer* 20:1. Some, however, maintain that intimacy without penetration is not biblically, but rabbinically prohibited. See, for example, Nahmanides on B. *Shabbat* 13a and on *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, *ibid.*; the Gaon of Vilna, *Biur ha-Gra* on S.A. *Even Ha-Ezer* 20:1.

<sup>9</sup> B. *Sanhedrin* 74a-74b; *Mekhilta* on Exodus 31:13; and for a general discussion of the imperative to save lives, see Immanuel Jakobovits, *Jewish Medical Ethics* (New York: Bloch, 1959, 1975), pp. 45-98.

<sup>10</sup> B. *Sanhedrin* 73a.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the scope and limits of the ban on defamation, see my book, *The Way Into Tikkun Olam (Fixing the World)* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2005), Chapter 4.

<sup>12</sup> For a good summary of these steps as required by rabbinic sources, see Maimonides, *Laws of Repentance (teshuvah)*, especially 2:1-2. See also my book, *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself* (at note 1 above), Chapter 6.

<sup>13</sup> See *Sifra* on Lev. 19:14, B. *Pesahim* 22b, and B. *Mo'ed Katan*, which explicitly uses that verse to prohibit striking one's grown child lest that tempt the child to strike back, thus becoming liable for a capital offense (Exodus 21:15).

<sup>14</sup> The entire Fall, 1994 issue of *Religious Education* (Volume 89, Number 4) was devoted to the cover topic, Religious Education and Child Abuse. That issue includes important articles on how religious educators (and presumably rabbis and cantors among them) can recognize child abuse when it happens, help victims to extricate themselves from the abuse, and help to prevent child abuse in the first place. Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund, James Fowler and Nel Noddings are among the writers.