

## Some Notes about Jewish Spiritual Assessment

*Very Much A Work in Process*

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**Jewish spiritual assessment** entails a shared exploration of an individual's life -- its structure, meaning, purpose, direction, challenges and blessings -- through the values, vocabulary, norms, and resources of Jewish tradition and community.

Participants may include:

Rabbi/*Moreh/ah Derekh*  
Jew  
*Haver/ah* / Companion

It may be broached/approached in various ways -- some examples:

- open-ended questions (as when R. Johanan and colleagues, in *Talmud, Berakhot 5b*, asks the sufferer, "Are your sufferings beloved to you?");
- the use of stories (personal, biblical, Hassidic, etc., etc.);
- the analysis of *mitzvot* and their personal resonance (Rabbi Simcha Weinberg's annual "spirituals");
- the exploration of Psalms;
- original writing to set a spiritual agenda (Hassidic *kvitlach*);
- the interpretation of the present juncture of the Jewish year and its meaning for the individual (e.g., Pesah, High Holidays, weekly Torah portion, etc.)

It may result in a Jewish spiritual profile that may include descriptives such as:

vulnerable (*pagi'a*) and exposed (*m'guleh, 'arom*)  
strengthened (*hit'azer oz*) and shielded (*hugan*)

despair (*ye'ush*) and hopelessness (*hoser tikva*)  
hope (*tikva*) and trust (*bitahon*)

bitterness (*m'rirut*) and sadness (*atzvut*)  
joy (*simha*) and contentment (*sameah b'helko*)

disconnection (*hafradah*) and loneliness (*b'didut*)  
relatedness (*kirva*) and at-oneness (*ahdut*)

disintegration, disarray (*m'vulbal, hit'porerut*)  
 and fragmentation, crushed (*m'kuta, m'duka*)  
 re-instated (*shav al kano*) and reinforced, rebuilt (*m'zuyan*)

abandonment, neglect (*'azoov, zilzul*) and rejection (*saruv, mius*)  
 attended (*nishgah*) and received (*m'kubal*)

falling downward (*n'filah*) and plunging (*nital*)  
 soaring (*hit'rom'mut*) and climbing (*alah*)

overwhelmed (*nitzah, ayum*) and compressed (*dahus*)  
 awe-struck (*maleh yir'at kavod*) & expansive (*r'hav yadayim*)

encycled (*hukaf*) and linear (*m'surgal*)  
 spiralling up (*sh'vil p'tiltal*) and painterly (*tsiyyuri*)

wounded, attacked (*pagua*) and besieged (*tsur*)  
 bound up (*kashur, masur b'lev*) and released (*shihzur*)

obscured, ignored (*satum, nitnaker*) and devalued (*hafhet erekh*)  
 known (*yadua, muvan*) and validated (*kuyam*)

withdrawn (*n'sigah*) and imploding (*parotz p'nimah*)  
 exploring (*hoker*) and overflowing (*shif'a, r'vayah*)

alienated (*'ituk, harhakah*) and aberrant (*galuz, soteh*)  
 familiar (*mukar*) and normal (*bari b'ruah*)

starved (*ra'ev*) and desperate (*no'az*)  
 nurtured, satisfied (*s'va ratzon*)

meaninglessness (*hoser mashma'ut*) and emptiness (*reikut*)  
 significance (*hashivut*) and fullness (*shefa*)

chaos (*tohu va-vohu*) and aimlessness (*hoser matarah*)  
 wholeness (*shleimut*) and direction (*kivun*)

guilt (*ashmah*) and missing-the-mark (*het*)  
 return, responsiveness, responsibility (*t'shuvah*)

These understandings are critical to both the immediate Jewish spiritual response and to designing and maintaining an ongoing relationship/ intervention and are intended to further:

- a holistic, flexible understanding of the person/situation;
- a sense of challenge, purpose and direction that is shared by the different parties;
- and
- an opportunity to “differentially diagnose” and continuously re-shape agenda, foci, and strategies.