

**NEARLY EVERYTHING WE WISH
OUR NON-JEWISH SUPERVISORS HAD KNOWN
ABOUT US AS JEWISH SUPERVISEES.**

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Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) developed out of a Protestant setting. Much of its thinking and writing is heavily laden with Christian orientation and terminology. Sharing a general theological framework, most Christians read these words and think of the same – or similar – ideas. However, Jews neither start with nor share the same theological beliefs. Jewish students perpetually ask themselves, “If the premise isn’t true for me, can the conclusion still contain meaning?” Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Often, the resulting conflict leaves Jewish students feeling alienated from their CPE supervisors and peers. Few CPE supervisors realize that although everyone is reading the same material there are (at least) two “nations” present that are processing it differently. This article by two National Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC) Board-Certified Rabbis presents twelve key points about Judaism and Jewish thought to help non-Jewish CPE supervisors and chaplains in their work with Jewish supervisees and patients (residents, et al).

Winston Churchill is credited with succinctly stating an interesting problem: *we are two nations separated by a common language*. Of course, Churchill was referring to the United Kingdom and the United States ; however, his observation is also true of the two “nations” - or religious systems - of Judaism and Christianity. Most of us (Jews and Christians, alike) take for granted that when we use the same language, we mean the same thing. In actuality, sometimes, we do, but often, we do not. This assumption of “same language = same meaning” is understandable given the reality that Jews and Christians share thousands of years of history and some of the same sacred literature - Jews call it the Hebrew Bible¹ and most Christians call it the Old Testament. Despite this, too often this assumption is erroneous.

For students of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), this issue of language is no small matter. When students are asked to read such authors as Paul Pruyser, Henri Nouwen, Stanley Hauerwas, and Dorothee Soelle (to name but a few examples), Jewish students often have to struggle with concepts that are grounded in specific Christian premises at the same time that they are trying to process the applicability of the pastoral content assigned. Often, these authors use value-laden terms, like grace, atonement, messiah, and salvation. Sharing a general theological framework, most Christians read these words and think of the same – or similar - ideas. However, Jews neither start with nor share the same theological beliefs. This means that Jewish students are perpetually asking themselves, “If the premise isn’t true for me, can the conclusion still contain meaning?” Sometimes it does, sometimes it does not.² Often, the resulting conflict leaves Jewish students feeling alienated from their CPE supervisors and peers - as though they are strangers in a strange land. Few CPE supervisors realize that although everyone is reading the same material in the same language, there are (at least) two “nations” present who are processing it differently.

¹ The Hebrew Bible is also known as the *Tanakh* or the Hebrew Scriptures

² This point is also expressed by Jewish CPE supervisor Rabbi Julie S. Schwartz when she writes: “Each CPE term and nearly all of CPE’s history involves a Protestant worldview which must be confronted, considered and then evaluated for its appropriate integration by a Jew.” Julie S. Schwartz, “Nearly There and Almost Included: Judaism and Pastoral Supervision”, *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry*, 2000, Vol. 20, p.162.

This article is an initial attempt by its authors to present “Nearly Everything We Wish Our Non-Jewish Supervisors Had Known About Us As Jewish Supervisees”. Each of us has taken at least 4 CPE Units and is a Board Certified Chaplain by the National Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC). One of us is a Conservative Rabbi and an ACPE Supervisor and the other is a Reform Rabbi and a Director of Pastoral Care and Chaplain at a senior care center.

We are offering our framework in an effort to support Jewish supervisees who are seeking enhanced personal growth and pastoral formation through CPE as well as Jewish patients (residents, et al) who are hoping for religiously-sensitive care by non-Jewish chaplains. We intend to accomplish our purpose by presenting several key points about Jews and Judaism that are true of the thinking of most Jewish supervisees and patients (residents, et al).

Within Judaism, as in any religious system, there is a wide spectrum of thought among its adherents. This is as true for Judaism as it for Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and other religious systems. To ensure that this article articulates the viewpoint of mainstream Judaism - concepts that are generally acceptable whether the supervisee observes Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal or cultural practice - we have spent six years canvassing and receiving counsel from colleagues across the Jewish religious spectrum throughout North America. Please remember that we are not saying that “only” Jews think this way, but that most Jews absolutely do think this way.

We recognize that not all CPE supervisors are either Jewish or Christian. However, since CPE developed out of a Protestant setting, much of its thinking and writing is heavily laden with Christian orientation and terminology. Further, we live in a Western society where Christian undertones predominate. Consequently, depending upon its specific context in this article, the term “Christianity” may refer to Christianity specifically, or be a synonym for “non-Jewish.”

1. In Judaism, we partner with God.

To begin, Judaism teaches us to partner with God in an effort to perfect – or repair - the world.³ We perform those tasks that God has either relinquished the right to do on earth or that God chooses not to do in order to allow us free will. Either way, Judaism teaches that each of us is on this planet to facilitate God’s will on earth. Martin Buber echoed Jewish sages throughout the ages when he wrote: “every person born into this world represents something new, something that never existed before, something original ... [otherwise] there would have been no need for you and I to have been born”. Therefore our “foremost task is the actualization of [our] unique, unprecedented and never-recurring potentialities, and not the repetition of something that another, and be it even the greatest, has already achieved.”⁴

In our pastoral care context, this translates into an acknowledgement that although God is the Divine healer, we are the essential intermediaries through which this healing

³ The expression that many Jews use is the Hebrew term *tikun olam* - literally, “repair of the world.”

⁴ Martin Buber, *The Way Of Man* (New York: Citadel 1966), p.16.

occurs. This is well illustrated by a story from the Talmud.⁵

In an age where pain was thought by some to be “precious,” and where the pious were expected to accept suffering willingly because they would receive their reward in the World-to-come, Rabbi Hiya bar Abba fell ill. His colleague, the famous Rabbi Yohanan visited him and said: “Are these sufferings acceptable to you?” Rabbi Hiya replied to his colleague: “neither they nor their reward.” Rabbi Yohanan then said to his ill colleague, “give me your hand.” Rabbi Hiya gave Rabbi Yohanan his hand and Rabbi Yohanan cured him.

Next, we learn that the same Rabbi Yohanan, the man who had effected his colleague’s cure, fell ill. A third colleague, Rabbi Hanina, visited him. Rabbi Hanina asked Rabbi Yohanan the same question: “Are these sufferings acceptable to you?” Rabbi Yohanan replied to Rabbi Hanina, “neither they nor their reward.” Rabbi Hanina then said to his ill colleague, “give me your hand.” Rabbi Yohanan gave Rabbi Hanina his hand and Rabbi Hanina cured him.⁶

This talmudic story begs the question: if Rabbi Yohanan had the earthly power to cure other people, why could he not cure himself? The Talmud provides this response: just as prisoners cannot free themselves from their incarceration, so prisoners of wounded bodies, ailing spirits, and devastated souls cannot heal themselves. If even the healer, Rabbi Yohanan, needed another person to facilitate his healing, so do we.

The wisdom of Jewish sages challenges those of us who think that we are strong enough, resourceful enough, and centered enough to recover from various stages of infirmity without assistance from one or more other individuals. To ensure this assistance from within the community, visiting the ill (*bikur holim*) is an expectation of all members of the Jewish community, not just of the professionals. Our talmudic rabbis taught that when each of us visits someone who is ill, we carry away one-sixtieth of that beleaguered individual’s illness. (In response to why sixty people cannot cure someone, they replied that the first visitor takes away one-sixtieth of an ailing person’s existing condition. The second visitor takes away one-sixtieth of that person’s remaining illness, *ad infinitum*).⁷

2. Judaism is a theology of deeds.

Following God’s revelation of the Torah,⁸ the assembled Israelite community unanimously responded to God with the words, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.”⁹ The basic premise is that all Jews are called to add to the store of goodness in the world in ways that are appropriate to the context of our lives. In fact, the Talmud teaches us to begin our work whether or not we anticipate being able to complete it.¹⁰

These messages come to Jews in many different forms from many different

⁵ The Talmud is the vast compendium of Jewish thought developed in the post-Biblical world between c. 200 Before the Common Era (BCE) and 600 in the Common Era (CE). There are two Talmuds, the Babylonian Talmud that is the more authoritative, and the Jerusalem Talmud that is the more authoritative, and the Jerusalem Talmud.

⁶ Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 5b.

⁷ Babylonian Talmud *Nedarim* 39b.

⁸ The five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy.

⁹ Exodus 24:7

¹⁰ Mishna *Avot* [“Wisdom of the Ancestors”] 2.16. The Mishna was compiled c. 200 CE (in the Common Era).

sources. In addition to our Torah and Talmud, they are reiterated throughout our liturgy and culture as well as throughout the writings of our modern sages. For example, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel called Judaism “the theology of the common deed.”¹¹ Heschel further pointed out that the Bible does not teach “You shall be full of awe for I the Lord am holy;” it teaches: “You shall be holy for I the Lord am holy.”¹² Heschel then asked rhetorically, how can a human being, “dust and ashes,” be holy? And he answered: Through doing God’s *mitzvot*, God’s commandments.¹³ For Heschel, “to be” was inseparable from both “how to be” and “how not to be.” In other words, “You shall *be* holy” and “You shall *do* holy” were the same.

In our pastoral care context, the fact that it is God who does the actual healing doesn’t preclude our doing our part with our talent, intellect, skill and our compassionate caring, empathetic ears, hearing hearts, gentle gestures of concern, wise words, and yes, our helpful hands during moments of distress.

3. In Judaism, deeds take precedence over creeds.

In terms of “belief statements”, Judaism does not have creeds that must be accepted by all Jews, which would parallel the ways that Christians accept Jesus as the Christ/Messiah. The closest example to a creedal statement is the Biblical verse, “Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone” [or the Lord is one].¹⁴

Heschel taught that: “A Jew is asked to take a leap of action rather than a leap of thought.”¹⁵ Zucker observes: “although now, ritualized daily prayer as a way to consciously engage in dialogue with God is a regular part of my life - as it is for many Jews, there was a time when I did not follow this practice – along with many other Jews. I remember mentioning this to an Episcopalian colleague one day following an interfaith ministerial meeting. He looked shocked, or perhaps disappointed, and then he turned to me and asked, ‘how then do you keep in touch with God?’ It was an important lesson for me, because I had to articulate what I already knew in my heart which was that I keep in touch with God through my daily actions that attempt to improve the world and not, through what I believe.”

Jews are considerably less concerned than Christians are about the state of their belief. In fact, a seeming contradiction within Judaism as a religion is that non-belief in God, and certainly the lack of a systematic belief system, is not incompatible with being Jewish. According to contemporary theologian, Rabbi Neil Gillman, “Most Jews . . . have never given much thought to clarifying just what we believe about God, nor do we feel that our religiosity is any the worse for it...”¹⁶ Clarifying and systematizing what Jews believe in has not been as intrinsically important to Judaism as it has been to Christianity. Although space here does not allow for a full explanation, one can be Jewish, and belong to a synagogue, and still not have a firm belief in God.

The late Harry Kemelman brings this point home in the popular weekday “Rabbis-as-detective” series. In a wonderfully illustrative point in *Monday the Rabbi Took Off*,

¹¹ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *I Asked For Wonder* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), p.88.

¹² Leviticus 19:2.

¹³ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God In Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Noonday, 1955), p.290.

¹⁴ In Hebrew, the *Sh'ma* or Deuteronomy 6:4.

¹⁵ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Quest For God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* (New York: Crossroad, 1954), p.106.

¹⁶ Neil Gillman, *Sacred Fragments* (New York and Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), p.xx.

fictional “Rabbi Small” is asked if he believes in God. “Rabbi Small” replies that “It’s a difficult question” to answer because “it involves three variables.” These variables include, “do you mean at this moment in time, or the I of yesterday, or the I of three years ago? And what do you mean by ‘believe’? That’s another variable. Do you mean in the same way that I believe that two and two make four? Or the way that I believe that light travels a certain number of miles per second, which I myself have never seen demonstrated but which has been demonstrated by people whose competence and integrity I have been taught to trust?... And finally, the third variable – God. Do you mean a humanlike figure? Or an ineffable essence? One who is aware of us individually and responsive to our pleas for help? Or one who is so far above us that [God] can have no interest in us?” The “rabbi” concludes with this statement: “I suppose I have the feeling of belief and certainty some times and lack it at others.”¹⁷

In another weekday novel, “Rabbi Small” explains that Jewish people can walk in God’s ways and still have doubts about God’s existence. “After all, you can’t always control your thoughts.” Further he says, faith “is not a requirement of our religion... I suspect it’s a kind of special talent that some have to a greater degree than others.”¹⁸

Since belief in God is not a sine qua non for being part of the Jewish people, a Jew who claims to be “not-religious” may still be recognized as fully Jewish by other mainstream Jews. Non-Jews should not underestimate the power of Jewish cultural and ethnic ties. When Jews say they are “not-religious”, it does not mean that they are assimilated into our Western, Christianized world and certainly, it does not mean that they are open or ripe for conversion. It may simply mean that they are observant of some Jewish rituals and not observant of other Jewish rituals; for example, they may not keep the laws of *kashrut* (Jewish dietary laws) or they may not light Sabbath candles on Friday or Holiday evenings.

4. Talking about God is newer to many Jews than working with God.

When it comes to “God talk” in the form of verbal, academic theology, most Jews lack the experience and expertise of most Christians. Indeed, the whole realm of theological discussion is relatively new for Jews and, for the most part, more of a non-Jewish than a Jewish enterprise. Peruse a Christian – or a secular - bookstore, and you will see shelves-upon-shelves of books dealing with Christian theology. You will not see a similarly large selection dealing with Jewish theology - even in a Jewish bookstore (although the number of books on the subject is increasing).

This is not to say that Judaism is completely devoid of theological discussion. A number of major medieval, modern and contemporary Jewish thinkers have written on God’s attributes or on God’s roles in the world,¹⁹ however, most Jews are unaware of these writings. Most Jews figuratively stutter when it comes to God-talk. Rabbi Gillman has suggested that one of the reasons that Jews are beginning to speak and write about theology now is to be able to dialogue with non-Jews who have more verbal facility with

¹⁷ Harry Kemelman, *Monday the Rabbi Took Off* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Crest, 1973 [1972]), p.186.

¹⁸ Harry Kemelman, *Sunday the Rabbi Stayed Home* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1969), p.58.

¹⁹ See *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter 1971). For a brief overview of contemporary American Jewish belief, the interested reader is referred to the wide-ranging discussion published a few years ago, David Berger, Saul J. Berman, David R. Blumenthal, and others. “What Do American Jews Believe? A Symposium,” *Commentary* 102:2 [August 1996]: pp.18-96.

the subject. However, we ask you to keep in mind that most Jewish CPE students - including clergy and seminarians - are only just beginning to discover Jewish language in this area.

For most Jews, talking about the good deeds that we have offered the world is in fact, synonymous with talking about God. Often, the significance of this cultural and theological conversational pattern escapes the attention of our non-Jewish supervisors and peers.²⁰ This is especially true of those non-Jews who place a high value on “humility”. Often, they label Jews “competitive” or “boastful”. Certainly, it is possible that individual Jews may be competitive or boastful, but it’s more probable that in those contexts, they have been sharing what they have been culturally taught to share with each other, namely what they have been doing. In Judaism, discussing deeds is normal and expected and it constitutes a theological statement of where they are vis-à-vis God.

Now match this to a CPE philosophy that teaches students not “to do” but “to be” - and a conflict develops. Jews who feel discouraged from talking about what they do - by CPE supervisors who simultaneously ask them to talk about God - are placed in a contradictory and often, an untenable situation. It is just this conflict which many Jewish students are unable to articulate, but which they feel. And often, it makes them feel defensive in a CPE environment that then responds pejoratively.

Think about turning the matter on its head. If you are a non-Jew, how would you have felt if your CPE supervisors had repeatedly told you that “You have too much ‘faith’, stop believing so much!” How many of you would have felt disconcerted – and even defensive - at that repeated admonition? Similarly, telling Jews to “be” and not to “do” runs contrary to Jewish thinking. Taylor adds: “It took me a number of CPE units before I could articulate and reframe ‘being’ as a deliberate and a conscious strategy. That made it a form of action, therefore a choice, therefore a ‘deed’, and therefore Jewishly OK.”²¹

5. God, God’s Presence and Lord are synonymous appellations for Jews.

As everyday terms for the Divine Presence: *God, God’s Presence and Lord* are heard and understood differently by Jews than by many Christians. For example, for Jews, “Lord,” is a synonym for God whereas for some Christians, the term refers to Jesus. For Jews, “God’s Presence” means a spiritual presence. Since God never assumes human form, God’s Presence doesn’t carry any of the personal and corporeal “Jesus-is-here” connotations that it does for many Christians. In addition, God never means “God-the-Father”, “God-the-Son”, or “God-the-Holy Spirit”. God, God’s Presence and Lord always mean the totally unified, indivisible, unseeable Divinity who possesses absolute sovereignty and is supreme over the entire world.

6. Only the unified, indivisible, unseeable God is Divine.

Articulating the Jewish position concerning Jesus is undoubtedly one of the most sensitive areas that Jewish CPE students encounter. Many non-Jews take offense when Jews say that Jesus has no theological standing for Jews. For Jews, the historical Jesus was a Jewish man and a child of God in the same way that each of us is a child

²⁰ This cultural and theological pattern is so ingrained in the subconscious of Jews that often it escapes their attention as well.

²¹ Bonita E Taylor, “Jewish Perspectives for Clinical Pastoral Supervision,” *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry*, 2001, Vol. 20.

of God. But, Jesus was no more than that. For Jews, Jesus, was not, and is not, Divinity.

This is an important point because while some Jews occasionally debate among themselves who “really” is a Jew, there are a few points which all Jews across the denominational spectrum accept as true: “God” always means the totally unified, indivisible, unseeable God who possesses absolute sovereignty and is supreme over the entire world. Individual Jews may differ in how they understand God’s attributes or God’s Presence - and some may even choose to deny God’s existence - but all Jews agree that God has never walked the earth in human form and that we are still waiting for the Messiah to come – the first time. Individuals who label themselves “Jews for Jesus”, “fulfilled Jews”, “Messianic Jews”, “Hebrew Jews” or similar terms are mixing religious systems; they are engaged in syncretism. Just because they call themselves “Jews”, does not make them Jewish. We wonder how many Christians would accept as “Christian”, individuals who called themselves “Christians against Christ.” By accepting Jesus as the Christ/Savior, one is, by Jewish definition, a Christian.

Sometimes, non-Jewish CPE supervisors or peers offer Moses as a parallel figure to Jesus, and akin to Buddha or Muhammad. We understand that - as the founders of their respective faiths, Jesus-as-Christ is central to Christianity, Buddha is central to Buddhism, and Muhammad is central to Islam. Without Jesus-as-Christ, there would be no Christianity, without Buddha, there would be no Buddhism, and without Muhammad, there would be no Islam. However, without Moses, there still would be Judaism! Moses is not the parallel figure to Jesus, Buddha or Muhammad. Certainly, Moses was a teacher and prophet par-excellence, but Judaism would have existed and would continue to flourish even if we could prove that Moses never actually existed.

Another important reality for Jews is the difference between Jesus, the “historical man” and Jesus the “name”. We accept that Jesus the “historical man” was benevolent and holy. However, for nearly two thousand years, Jews have been persecuted, martyred, and murdered in the “name” of Jesus. So, it is hard for many Jews to see representations of Jesus (or other emblems of Christianity) and not associate it - consciously or sub-consciously - with Jewish crisis and tragedy. This is driven home when we continually hear: ‘Jesus loves you’ but you will be damned if you do not accept Jesus as your savior.”

The issue may be further compounded because even if the CPE supervisor understands - or accepts - the significant differences in how Jewish students relate to profound Christian symbols, too many CPE peers do not understand it and/or are offended by it. Too often, it creates a tension that exists as an unspoken and unresolved interfaith issue that divides the peers from one another.

7. Vicarious Suffering/Atonement are not part of mainstream Jewish thinking.

In Judaism, individuals are personally responsible for all of their actions. This includes taking personal responsibility for misdeeds. Jews do not seek salvation through the intervention of others who suffer for them. As Trude Weiss-Rosmarin explains, the “idea of ‘vicarious atonement,’ that is to say, the payment of the penalty not by the

sinner but by a substitute, is irreconcilable with Jewish ethics.”²²

It is true that concepts of vicarious suffering and vicarious atonement have been known in Judaism and have surfaced periodically in Judaism’s history. However, by biblical days, they already had been rejected by mainstream thought. In the biblical period, the opposition to vicarious suffering and vicarious atonement is most pointedly articulated by the prophets Ezekiel²³ and Jeremiah²⁴ as well as in Deuteronomy where it states “parents shall not be put to death for children, nor children put to death for parents: [persons] shall be put to death only for [their] own crime”.²⁵

This is a particularly important point because if we are responsible for our own deeds and atonement, then it follows that we do not inherit sin nor are we born tainted with a need to be redeemed. No matter how often we may enjoy hearing “Amazing Grace,” we do not share the theological perspective that we are lost wretches with a need to be found. In fact, Jewish tradition invites us to start each day with a prayer from the morning liturgy, which begins “My God, the soul that you have given me is pure. You formed and breathed it into me.” This phrase, “my God, the soul that you have given me is pure” is a direct quotation from rabbinic literature.²⁶ Since we are born with a pure soul, we have no need for a freely bestowed and unearned divine gift - God’s grace²⁷ – to save us from damnation. On the contrary, we believe that we can save ourselves by learning to invoke our good inclinations to fight against our bad inclinations.²⁸

8. In Judaism, Forgiveness and Repentance are personally achieved.

The prophet Ezekiel says it clearly: *when we have transgressed we need to develop a new heart and a new spirit.*²⁹ Weiss-Rosmarin offers: “Forgiveness is predicated on ethical regeneration, and salvation can only be procured through unremitting efforts of mending one’s ways ... there are no intercessors other than ‘repentance and good deeds’”³⁰ In Judaism, forgiveness does not have to be offered unless it is first requested by the transgressor and then, appropriately earned by that transgressor. Jews petition God for forgiveness for wrongs committed against God and a person that we have wronged for forgiveness for transgressions committed against that person.³¹

Stated succinctly, redemption involves all of the following three facets: Repentance, Prayer, and Good Deeds. *First, Repentance:* to be “forgiven,” Judaism teaches us that we must admit to and stop our wrongful acts and demonstrate change. *Second, Prayer:* Judaism invites us to get in a “right relationship” with those we have wronged, whether human or Divine. *Third, Good Deeds:* we are taught to add to the store of goodness in the world, often through charity or acts of kindness.

²² Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, *Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Jewish Book Club, 1947), p.54.

²³ Ezekiel 18.

²⁴ Jeremiah 31:29-30.

²⁵ Deuteronomy 24:16.

²⁶ Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 60b.

²⁷ Cf. Ephesians 2:8; Romans 3:21 ff, 4:4ff.

²⁸ Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 5a.

²⁹ Ezekiel 18:30-32.

³⁰ Weiss-Rosmarin, p. 61, quoting Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 32a

³¹ Mishna *Yoma* 8.9.

9. Jews require different religious and spiritual awareness and resources.

Sometimes, in trying to be “inclusive”, non-Jewish CPE supervisors or peers say that they come from a Judeo-Christian background. In our experience, too many Christians think that Jews do as well. Jews do not. Even if “Judeo” were “Judaic” and not merely a modifier for “Christian”, it would still not be a correct designation. For Jews, Judaism is not a prototype - or merely the roots - of another religion that now has been “improved”. For Jews, Judaism is very complete in itself and it continues to have a full life of its own. And, our Hebrew Bible – one of our most hallowed and revered objects is not the “Old Testament” which has been replaced by a newer version. It is **the** irreplaceable Testament.

Since one of the goals of CPE is to assist patients (residents, et al) in using their own religious resources and in (re)integrating within their own religious communities, it is unacceptable for supervisors or chaplains to use non-Jewish Scriptures to pray with Jewish students or patients - no matter how fitting the selection may seem.

Several years ago, a Christian colleague told Taylor that when he did not say “The Lord’s Prayer” or invoke the name of Jesus or the Trinity in a prayer with a patient, he felt as though he was composing e-mail and not clicking on “send”. “How”, he wondered, “could the message be ‘received’ if it wasn’t ‘sent’?” It took weeks before he accepted the Jewish theological reality that every time he clicked on *his* “send” with a Jewish patient, i.e. he prayed in some way from the Christian Bible or Christian tradition, it was tantamount to clicking on “delete” with that patient.

10. Prayer is offered directly to God.

Each Jew has a personal relationship with God that does not require an intermediary. Judaism does not place any special sacramental status upon the rabbi. A rabbi may serve as a priest, but it is only one of the many facets of the rabbi’s role. In fact, most rabbis would acknowledge that they are not inherently “holier” or even more “in touch with God” than those congregants who take Judaism seriously – however they define that. Indeed, although rabbis usually lead Jewish services, cantors and other Jewish spiritual leaders may also lead Jewish services.

Despite these theological truths, the words and prayers of rabbis are often viewed as holier and on a faster-track to God. In part, this perception evolved because rabbis are closely associated with Judaism’s sacred texts, traditions, symbols, rites and rituals and in part, it evolved because rabbis are seen as having specialized knowledge in interpreting God’s will.³² Since, “perception is often reality,” the theological truth that a rabbi’s prayers are not actually holier than the prayers of a congregant takes second place. The practical reality is that many congregants - in synagogues, hospitals, senior care centers, and other places where rabbis serve pastorally - believe that the rabbi is closer and more connected to God than they are. In the minds of many Jews, the rabbi is “God’s representative,”³³ the one who presents, re-presents, or represents God to them during their time of vulnerability and crisis.

11. There is a Jewish conversational style.

It is widely accepted that different ethnic groups have distinctive and meaningful

³² David J. Zucker, *American Rabbis: Facts and Fiction* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), p.277.

³³ Zucker, p.102.

patterns of conversational style that are known – almost intuitively – to their members. Jews are no exception. The patterns of conversation that are found among most Jews, especially those of Eastern European origin, differ in significant ways from patterns of conversation found among most non-Jews in America.

For example: experienced from the “outside,” non-Jewish listeners often notice that Jewish speakers tend to interrupt the flow of a conversation and therefore, judge them as being rude. In that same conversation – but experienced from the “inside” - those same Jewish speakers perceive that they are engaged and are actively and respectfully participating. Georgetown University Professor Deborah Tannen, an internationally acclaimed expert in linguistics, calls this normative Jewish behavior “high-involvement” and “cooperative overlapping.” She affirms - what Jewish speakers basically know intuitively - that talking as another person continues to talk is one way that Jews show interest and appreciation.

Also typical of Jewish conversational style are: a faster rate of speech, faster turn-taking among speakers, abrupt shifts of topics, persistence in reintroducing a topic if others do not immediately notice it, unhesitating introduction of new topics, and a preference for personal topics.³⁴ Tannen further affirms that the very sounds of Jewish-style talk, including: pitch shifts, volume changes, and voice quality and accent exaggerations signal empathy and concern even as they reinforce a shared ethnic (and sometimes, a regional) background. In conversation, Jews find all of these conversational modalities unremarkable. Tannen notes that “You show you’re a good person by demonstrating enthusiastic participation in the conversation. You offer talk as a gift.”³⁵

Jews also tend to tell stories in their conversations, often in rounds. Instead of stating the point of a story directly, Jews often dramatize it through another story while focusing upon the emotional experience of that story. Those whose backgrounds promote different ways of conversing may not “get the point” of these story-telling rounds that sometimes seem not to have a plot. They also may find the expression - and implied expectation - of personal revelation unnerving and intrusive.

Unfortunately, the very characteristics that promote good communication within one group can create a “style disconnect” within mixed groups. For example, the same “high-involvement” and “cooperative overlapping” that are so welcome and positively interpreted within Jewish groups often put-off those who are used to more restrained and less expressive ways of speaking. According to Tannen, “overlap is used cooperatively ... as a way of showing enthusiasm and interest, but it is interpreted by [outsiders] as just the opposite: evidence of lack of attention.”³⁶ On the other side of the coin, some ethnic or regional groups value pauses and silence as evidence of respect while Jews tend to interpret these conversational modalities as evidence of lack of rapport and/or interest.

³⁴ Deborah Tannen, “New York Conversational Style” in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 1981, Vol. 30, p.137. Among many characteristics, Tannen mentions specifically “faster rate of speech”, “faster turntaking” among speakers, “cooperative overlap”, “tell stories in rounds” and “preferred point of a story is teller’s emotional experience.”

³⁵ Deborah Tannen, “Talking New York”, *New York*, September 24, 1990, p.72.

³⁶ Deborah Tannen, “New York Conversational Style”, p.138.

Beyond this, people often make erroneous judgments about the personality of individuals who express themselves according to their normative ethnic (and regional) conversational styles. Tannen points out that negative stereotypes of “pushy New York Jews” may owe considerably more to clashing linguistic patterns than to character flaws. She explains that in her research, she “found out that New York Jews have ways of talking that often have one effect (a good one) when used with one another and another effect (not so good) when used with others. Of course, some New Yorkers who are not of East European Jewish background talk this way, and so do people who are neither from New York nor Jewish. But there are many who do - enough to account for the negative stereotype.”³⁷

12. Jewish learning styles embrace challenge, debate and confrontation.

In the same moment that non-Jewish CPE supervisors (or peers) may perceive Jewish students as disrespectful, resistant, and challenging of authority, these same Jewish students may simultaneously perceive themselves as respectful and engaged in the learning process.

The principle of “*pilpul*” - seeking to better understand an issue or a question by gathering more information, and perhaps in the process, by questioning, challenging and clarifying what are presented as set assumptions is a culturally-learned Jewish trait. Jews often engage in learning through debate. We look at this side and then, at that side. We learn through what Taylor calls the method of *Yeah – but ...* or *Yeah – and....* Those of you who have seen either the play or the movie, *Fiddler On The Roof* will remember that each time *Tevye*, the story’s main character, has to make an important decision, he explores: first, on this hand and then, on the other hand, etc.

The roots of this learning style trace back to biblical-times. Consider the famous dialogue between Abraham and God concerning the cities of Sodom and Gomorra. The Patriarch questions, challenges and clarifies God’s position concerning humankind. “Shall not the Judge of all the world do justly?”³⁸ Similarly, Moses questions, challenges and clarifies his relationship to God when he asks: “Let me behold your Presence.”³⁹

These roots have been nurtured through our talmudic and midrashic⁴⁰ literature. In fact, one of the true wonders of our Talmud is that it preserves both the agreements and the disagreements of our ancient sages – often as they dialogued with each other across the centuries. This learning style is so ingrained in Jewish culture that even the most secular of Jews - those who have never studied or even seen a page of Talmud - have integrated this learning style into their repertoire.

Unfortunately, students utilizing this inquisitive learning style are often labeled resistant and feel put on the defensive. Experientially then, Jewish students often carry the added burden of being labeled “resistant” because of differing learning styles and “defensive” because of differing theological perspectives. This often has the effect of making their CPE journey feel emotionally and spiritually perilous. We encourage non-

³⁷ Deborah Tannen, “Talking New York: It’s Not What You Say, It’s The Way That You Say It”, *New York*, March 30, 1981, p.30.

³⁸ Genesis 18:25

³⁹ Exodus 33:18.

⁴⁰ The *Midrash* is a collection of rabbinic sermons and interpretations of the Bible and Jewish law compiled between c. 400- 1550 CE.

Jewish supervisors to consider that a supervisor and a student can discern whether resistance and defensiveness emanate from the student's psyche or whether it is a misinterpretation of behavior that emanates from the student's culture. Our personal experiences combined with the personal experiences of the hundreds of CPE supervisees that we have spoken to leads us to conclude that more often than not, the more Jews respond with: *Yeah – but...* and *Yeah – and ...*, the more engaged they are in learning and the more respectful and admiring they are of their supervisor and peers.

In conclusion, this article has been an initial attempt by two NAJC Board-Certified Rabbis to present some key points about Judaism and Jewish thought in a way that will be helpful to non-Jewish CPE supervisors and chaplains in their work with Jewish supervisees and patients (residents, et al). It is very consciously a brief overview of the issues, and it highlights only those concerns specified by the many former Jewish CPE supervisees and patients (residents, et al) who have been canvassed during the course of six years. There are many other areas that deserve consideration, which time and space do not allow us to develop more fully.

Accepting how Jews in mainstream Jewish communities are likely to understand Judaism and being Jewish will help bridge the gap of the *“two nations separated by a common language.”*