Halakhah and Psychology

• David B Levy and Carrie Levinson
as per request of Rabbi Benjamin Zeilingold for
in class student presentation

LCW
227 West 60th St.
NY, NY 10023
Autumn 2012
Bibliographic record from Touro College Catalog; also see Shemoneh Perakhim on Parental habituation of good character traits in children
Although the Nazis considered Freud a degenerate and founder of a Jewishly obscene science Nazis practiced a psychoanalysis based on eugenics
10 hits of 360 in Rambi on Psychology

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Entry
1 Psychologische und soziologische Theorien zu Vorurteil und Diskriminierung
1 Psychology and Jewish law
1 Psychology and Judaism: a bibliography
1 Psychology and Judaism: retrospect and prospect
1 The psychology and religion of tahorah and holiness
1 Psychology and the Bible: what hath Freud wrought?
1 Psychology, Haikal, and organ transplantation
1 Psychology, hermeneutics, and the Bible
1 Psychology - Moses and monotheism - the future of Freud's illusion
1 The psychology of antisemitism: conscience-proof rationalization and the deferring of moral choice
Psychology and Jewish law in Rambi

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Prominent Orthodox Jews in field of Psychology

- Abraham J. Twerski
- Yaakov Greenwald
- Moshe Halevi Spero
- Miriam Adahan
- Rael Strous MD
- Seymour Hoffman
- Nina Guy
- Benny Feldman
- Judith S.B. Guedalia
- Yaacob Dafna
- Rabbi Mordeccai Halperin MD
- Dr. Benzion Shereshewsky
- George Szekely
- Ilay Averbuch
- Rabbi Yair Israeli
- Yigal Ginat MD
- Ilya Averbuch MD
Abraham J. Twerski (1930-)

- Ordained rabbi and psychiatrist
- Lectures extensively on chemical dependency and other topics such as stress, self-esteem and spirituality
- Opened Gateway Rehabilitation Center in 1972
- A number of his books are available in the LCW library
  
Rabbi Doctor Yaakov Greenwald (Grinvald)

- Author of *Eitzos V’Hadachchos*, which documented letters on psychological issues written between himself and the Steipler Rav (Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky)

http://www.mishpacha.com/Browse/Article/2220/Adviceline
Moshe Halevi Spero

- Clinical psychologist and professor
- Author of *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Jewish Ethics: Halakhic Perspectives on Professional Values and Techniques* and *Judaism and Psychology: Halakhic Perspectives*
- Coined the term *halakhic metapsychology* after grappling with the possibility of conflict between Jewish theology and psychoanalytic theory and with issues involving transference and countertransference in the work of a religious therapist with religious patients

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/author/S/M/au5504198.html
Halakhic Metapsychology

• Spero looked to reconcile psychology and halakhah since some accused psychoanalytic therapy of encouraging prohibited actions

• Since, according to Spero, halakhah is a way of knowing reality, psychology can be encompassed by it because it is another way of knowing reality

• With examination of the yetzer hara (“evil impulse) and the declaration that humans have the choice not to act by it, Spero says that self-examination is a moral choice

• If self-examination is required to fully exercise one’s moral free will, psychoanalysis must be halakhically permitted

Confidentiality

• The basic Jewish source in which the concept of confidentiality is found is Lashon Hara: “It is prohibited to be a talebearer amongst your people nor may you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor.” (Leviticus 19:16)

• So, do not talk negatively about people (even if what you know is true), but if you know someone is planning to harm someone else you must inform on them – there is an obligation to do so

Confidentiality in Psychotherapy

- In general, therapists must abide by professional confidentiality; that is, not revealing, in public, confidential information a patient has told the therapist (including the patient’s family or in court)
- Promislo’s four conditions can be useful to determine whether the privilege of confidentiality can be guaranteed (and many of these are principles implicit in halakhah)

Promislo’s Four Conditions

1. All communication begins with the patient’s belief that it will not be disclosed.
2. Confidentiality promotes a full and satisfactory relationship between therapist and patient.
3. Such relationships ought to be fostered, although this would not be commonly accepted if it were learned that therapists generally held back information bearing on public safety.
4. The injury a therapeutic relationship would suffer by disclosure must be greater than the benefit such disclosure would produce for the protection of others or for quick litigation.

Confidentiality in Psychotherapy

• In general, the therapist has a halakhic obligation to maintain professional secrecy
• When the patient forfeits the right to confidentiality because of a threat to the life or welfare of him/herself or others, the therapist is first obligated to explore alternatives to disclosure, and if there aren’t any, must only disclose what/to whom it is necessary
• 3 criteria: (1) does patient have a plan, weapon, or know where the person she is angry at live?

Confidentiality in Psychotherapy

- The therapist cannot appeal to his prior commitments (sans oath) to professional secrecy when his/her knowledge is demanded by a court and when this knowledge will help prevent even a less than life-threatening loss.

- If there has been an oath taken, it is inviolable, but the therapist is urged to come forward and obtain absolution from the oath.

Confidentiality in Psychotherapy

• Discussion of clinical material in a conference format or with students is permissible because this is done for the ultimate benefit of the patient; however, nonessential identifying traits should be disguised.

• Death terminates the privilege of confidentiality in many places.

• Halakhah extends this privilege, but defers in certain cases to the dina de-malkhutha (law of the country) or the call of beth din (rabbinical court).

Selected Reading in the LCW Library


### III. MENTAL HEALTH

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Report of the Investigation Committee on Protection of Hospitalized Mental Patients against Sexual Assault and Abuse
Justice (Ret.) Dr. Benzion Shereshefsky
George Szekely, M.D.
Ilya Averbuch, M.D.
Rabbi Yair Isneili
Rabbi Mordechai Halperin, M.D.

Protection of Hospitalized Mental Patients against Sexual Assault and Abuse
Justice (Ret.) Dr. Benzion Shereshefsky

Protection of Hospitalized Mental Patients against Sexual Assault and Abuse: a Critical Review
Yigal Ginat, M.D.

Exaggeration on the Road to Progress
Ilya E. Averbuch, M.D.

http://www.nefesh.org/

**About Us - Our History**

NEFESH was founded in 1992, to bring Orthodox Jewish professionals and rabbis together to address mental health issues that we deal with daily on a professional and communal level. We have since grown to over 750 members worldwide, including United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Israel, Brazil, Belgium and Argentina. Between three and four hundred people have attended each of our fourteen annual conferences, which have taken place in New York, Miami, Baltimore, Norfolk and Israel. Our rabbinic advisors, led by Rav Dovid Cohen, Moreh D’Asrah, and Rabbi Abraham Twerski, M.D., and our rabbinic liaison, Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, Ph.D., provide guidance on issues that affect us as mental health professionals.

**Who We Are**

NEFESH-International is an interdisciplinary organization of Orthodox Jewish mental health professionals providing leadership and interdisciplinary education in the field of personal, family, and community mental health. Our diverse members are Torah-observant psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, marriage and family therapists, professional counselors, psychiatric nurses, chemical dependency counselors, psychotherapists, guidance and pastoral counselors, and graduate students. Affiliates include Orthodox Rabbis, Jewish educators, attorneys, and allied professionals.

NEFESH provides an opportunity and vehicle for mental health professionals, Rabbanim, and educators to network and collaborate in meeting our common challenge - to enhance the emotional well being and achdut of Kal Yisroel. Together we are developing timely and effective approaches that are based on widely accepted mental health principles, within a Torah perspective and halachic framework. We address critical issues facing us as professionals and confronting Jewish families and communities.
Multicultural Counseling and the Orthodox Jew

Eliezer Schnall

The cultural diversity literature largely ignores the effects of religion, and especially psychotherapy. The author reviews the meager and mostly anecdotal accounts related to the literature of several related disciplines, including counseling, social work, psychology. The objective is to identify the barriers, institutional and personal, that must be overcome by individuals who need to receive adequate mental health care and to suggest recommendations for clinical practice.

Research suggests that minority groups tend to underutilize mental health services provided by the majority culture, and even those who do enter psychotherapy often terminate prematurely (Margolese, 1998). Orthodox Jews are no exception. When surveyed, 90% of Orthodox mental health professionals reported that the mental health needs of their community are poorly met (Feinberg & Feinberg, 1985).

Wikler (1989) pointed out that the cultural diversity literature...
Popular Orthodox books in Psychology

Torah Therapy
Rabbi Elimelech Lamdan

A Practical Guide to Rabbinic Counseling
Yisrael N. Levitz, Ph.D.
Abraham J. Twerski, M.D.

Reuven P. Bulka and Elimelch Lamdan
http://www.feldheim.com/a-practical-guide-to-rabbinic-counseling.html