

ON RECOVERY

These are remarks presented during a service of “Rededication and Recovery” that featured testimony and the sharing of personal stories from members of our congregation directly or indirectly engaged in 12 Step Programs.

Some of the most spiritual Jews—or for that matter non-Jews—that I meet are participants in one or another of the twelve-step recovery programs. And to think about it, small wonder.

The 12 Steps are intensely spiritual, focused on honesty, integrity, self-awareness, relationship with a “Higher Power,” and more. In Hebrew those qualities and others like them adorn our sanctuary walls. There is *Yosher*—Being Honorable in our dealings, *Tikkun Middot*—Growing in Holiness, and *Yirat Hashem*—Standing in Humility before G-d, to name just a few.

The 12 Step programs are also about spiritual healing.

And for the last several years on Friday nights, as part of our *Misheberach* prayer for healing, we have included the words,

“We pray for insight and healing for those struggling with alcohol, drug abuse and other addictions, strength and courage for those in recovery.”

It is a prayer that we wrote here--and it has been adopted by congregations around the country.

Our *Tzevet Tshuvah*—Recovery Team, founded by Mindy Agler, currently chaired by Linda Stegman and now exported as a model to synagogues around the country, not only serves as a support network and spiritual resource for families in need, but also connects those families to Jewish faith and spirit.

So yes, the Program is inherently spiritual.

And as such it facilitates not only healing, but growth as well.

If you are a person of faith, of whatever faith, you almost automatically share a language of faith with others, of almost any other faith.

And people who work “the Program” are all that.

They live with faith in the Program.

And that is a source of great blessing—even of life itself.

At the same time, our Jewish heritage--as it usually does--asks us for more.

To be healthy, to grow, and to respect in full the humanity of those around us,

of course.

That's not bad for starters, but it is only for starters.

Judaism also calls upon us to be holy.

In addition to taking care of ourselves, Jews are commanded to serve G-d and the wider world around us—in some way.

Judaism teaches that a consecrated life must include service to those beyond our personal circle.

There are countless ways in which we can do this--

And we need to find and practice some of them if we are to become the people that the Highest Power of all has bidden us to become.

So we have gathered tonight for several reasons.

To hear, to honor and to support one another on our respective journeys.

To share, with great courage, our personal stories with the community so we might all better recognize, understand and help those around us who may be in need.

To gain strength and healing as we hear from those on similar paths
And to remind ourselves that as Jews, if we are to live the Highest Life,
if we are going to follow the Highest Path,
if we are going to serve the Highest Power,
there is even more to do than this.

That is a lot but that is okay. This is who we Jews are.

This is how we have become who we are--as Jews and people of faith.

And this is how we will become yet more in the time to come.

May we be blessed as we go on our way and *Shabbat Shalom*.