



# Tikvat Rachel

"Rachel's hope for all her children,  
both born and unborn."

Tikvat Rachel is a post abortion healing experience for Jewish men and women. Until today, our community members who have wanted help with this issue have had two options: 1) to participate in welcoming Christian programs that don't meet our unique spiritual needs, or 2) suffer without healing and support. Jews who have unresolved issues after abortion now have a place to process their experience in a wholly Jewish environment.

Tikvat Rachel offers a healing pathway for Jews who seek a confidential, safe, accepting, and Jewish program to address the deeply personal issues that arise after abortion. We base the program on the Jewish concept of Teshuvah and its promise of repentance, and redemption in Judaism. For the post abortive Jew, Teshuvah provides a way back from interpersonal isolation and a life of self imposed exile to a welcoming Jewish community and a life centered in God's love and glory.

The material in this program can be very challenging. It is best to explore it in a safe environment so that you have the emotional and spiritual support necessary for a successful healing. Please avail yourself of our weekly confidential and anonymous support call, when we go through the material page by page together and you have the opportunity to share your experience, thoughts and feelings. This sharing allows a healing to occur, and helps others to heal, too. The call takes place every Thursday night at 9 pm ET. The call begins at 9 pm and ends at 10 pm. The call in number is 605-475-4842. Pin number is 480201.

We look forward to helping you find peace of mind, peace of heart, and peace of soul.



Part One

Program Title  
The Jewish Abortion Experience  
Abortion and Judaism



**A voice is heard on high, wailing, bitterly crying.  
Rachel weeps for her children. She refuses to be consoled  
For they are gone. Jeremiah 31:14**

## Program Title

Who was Rachel?

Rachel lived from (? - 1553 BCE) Fourth of the four Matriarchs. She was the second daughter of Laban; second - but favored - wife of Jacob. Originally childless, she eventually gave birth to Joseph and Benjamin, but died in the course of her second childbirth. Rachel is buried in Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem.

Rachel's original weeping was due to her barrenness. Her efforts to conceive over many years, the many years of disappointment and heartache over her inability to have children, gave her a deep appreciation for children and the generations that would follow.

Legend has it that Jacob buried Rachel on the roadside near Ramah because he foresaw that his descendants would pass by on the way to exile and she would weep and intercede for them. "A voice is heard on high" suggests that Rachel's lamentation has ascended to the heights of heaven.

Rachel's Tomb is located in the city of Bethlehem, just south of Jerusalem. For centuries, it lay on a deserted roadside, and Rachel's descendants would come here to pour out their hearts to her - the mother who dwells in a lonely wayside grave in order to be there for her suffering children.

Rachel is a continuous source of comfort to her children—praying for her children and eliciting the divine promise of her children's return to their Promised Land.

## Program Title

Who was Jeremiah?

Jeremiah was born in the year 650 B.C.E. His prophetic call came to him in the reign of Josiah, King of Judah, in 626 B.C.E. He witnessed the fall of Ninevah and the annihilation of the Assyrian Empire in 606; and the death of Josiah, Judah's righteous king in 605. Jeremiah lived through the two sieges of Jerusalem in 597 and 586, with the attendant destruction of the Jewish state and the consequent transportation of the greater portion of his people to the rivers of Babylon.

Jeremiah references Rachel's weeping 1000 years after her death because he senses her grief over the fact that her descendants are slain or exiled. The Lord consoles Rachel by promising that all of her toil and pain including her death, required of her to produce children who would perpetuate the Jewish people, was not futile and that her descendants would come back and revive their national life. Zion would be restored.

So, Rachel's crying as referenced by Jeremiah is for the exiled Jews who are her descendants.

This is truly relevant to the Tikvat Rachel Project! Perhaps she cries again because of the many Jewish children who have perished from abortion, as well as the great numbers of Jews who have exiled themselves from the God of Israel.

We foresee that through Tikvat Rachel God will return Jewish individuals from their self-imposed exile from Judaism and restore a portion of Israel.

## The Jewish Abortion Experience

In many Jewish circles, abortion is framed as a completely sensible, acceptable, and preferable way to avoid the shame, embarrassment, and inconvenience that often accompanies unplanned or problem pregnancy.

Our community offers little support for single parenting or adoption as alternatives to abortion, leaving us with no real choices. This lack of immediate support, pressure from the baby's father to abort, anticipated anger from our parents, and financial, social, or professional worries influence the abortion decision.

Being Jewish and post abortive, you probably feel very much alone with the memories of your experience. Observant or unobservant, affiliated or unaffiliated, secular, orthodox, or somewhere in between, our Jewish friends, family and community may speak of abortion in the political sense, but the subject of personal abortion decisions and the painful thoughts and emotions that arise from one or more unplanned pregnancies and subsequent abortions are considered 'radioactive'. No opportunity for safe and honest sharing has existed, leaving post abortive Jews to struggle alone without support and understanding.

After the abortion, sometimes immediately or even decades later, feelings of guilt, depression, rage and regret surface. Processing these feelings requires recognizing that a loss has occurred and moving through the process of grieving.

Members share their feelings so that the healing process can begin.

## Abortion and Judaism

Halakhic law on abortion was developed and written after the destruction of the second temple and the rise of rabbinical power in Judaism, beginning in about 70 CE. The Law rose out of the published works of the Talmud. The Tosefta, a supplement to the Mishnah, also commented on the status of life in the womb.

The general conclusion of the rabbis from that time forward was that all forms of human life are sacred, from the formation of genetic material, ie conception, until the decomposition of the body after death, and that fetal life is sacred and must be treated with great care. Our tradition of prohibiting the taking of innocent life starts with the Noahide law, which included the life of the fetus.

Although modern rabbinical opinion on abortion allows great latitude about abortion decisions, originally, our rabbinic tradition found only one exception to the prohibition against harming the unborn child, that of breech birth which, if not remedied, would kill both mother and child. The Halackhic requirement to save the mother's life by taking the child's life was restricted to this grave imminent danger. Today, this exception is void because of cesarean section delivery, which allows the child to be safely removed from the uterus, leaving very few cases where the life of the mother requires an abortion. If a life threatening condition arises during pregnancy, the baby can be removed form the uterus and placed in neonatal intensive care. Both mother and baby are saved. Ectopic pregnancy remains a valid reason to utilize abortion.

The mistaken rabbinical judgement that life began at birth resulted from a lack of scientific tools like modern genetics, biochemistry, and ultrasound that now proves that life does begin at conception.

Science gives us objective understanding of the biblical foundations for protecting life in the womb, but our conscience and intuition give us subjective understanding. Whether deemed to be legal in Judaism by some, unthinkable by others, or sanctioned by the government, we know that abortion destroys something precious and irretrievable. We regret it, and seek help.

**Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of man within man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God He made man. And you, be fruitful and multiply; swarm upon the earth and multiply thereon.”**

**Deuteronomy 30:19, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore, choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed.”**

Members share their thoughts about Jewish law and abortion in the past and today.

## Part Two

The Spiritual Wound After Abortion

Jewish Definitions of Sin, Repentance and Teshuvah

Jewish Definitions of Redemption, Salvation and Forgiveness



**From the depths I have called You, O Lord. Oh Lord, hearken to my voice; May your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. O God, if You keep [a record of] iniquities, O Lord, who will stand? For forgiveness is with You, in order that You be feared. I hoped, O Lord; yea, my soul hoped, and I wait for His word. My soul is to the Lord among those who await the morning. Israel, hope to the Lord, for kindness is with the Lord and much redemption is with Him. And He will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.**

**Psalm 130**

## Spiritual Wound After Abortion

Jewish parents who choose abortion incur a spiritual wound that is the rupturing of the connection with our Creator, broken when we separate from His will for us and act on our own, against our conscience and against the will of HaShem.

Our spiritual health is derived and sustained from the intangible but powerful connection with God. Our conscience is our moral compass, pointing toward or away from HaShem and His everlasting power and love. When we live within the moral law that forms the basis of our covenant with Him, we receive gifts of the spiritual relationship with Him.

These gifts include a sense of positive purpose in our lives and our creative actions. We are filled with a feeling of being loved and cared for, a sense of ease in the world, and inner contentment, security, and happiness.

However, when we reject His moral law and sacrifice our eternal relationship with Him for a temporal outcome, the wound occurs, stopping the flow of positive spiritual energy. We lose the gifts of the spirit and suffer guilt, shame, inner doubt, confusion, pain, isolation, and fear. This emotional pain and mental anguish which are the bleeding of the spiritual wound, often compel us to seek relief in the form of drugs, alcohol, excess food, prescription medication, compulsive working, exercise, etc., all of which bring only temporary relief. Even professional therapy has little effect while this essential spiritual component remains unaddressed.

Members share about their personal anguish and the ways they have used to cope, and together pray the following prayer.

**Hear our voice, HaShem our God, pity and be compassionate to us, and accept - with compassion and favor - our prayer, for God Who hears prayers and supplications, are You. Blessed are You, HaShem, Who hears prayers.**

# Jewish Definition of Sin, Repentance, and Teshuvah

## What is sin in Judaism?

- 1) According to Jewish Philosophy sin is a harmful deed. The philosophical perspective on sin and punishment is expressed by King Solomon in Proverbs (13:21) "Evil pursues iniquity" -- the adverse effects of sin are the natural consequences of acts that run contrary to the Creator's design for life.
- 2) According to Jewish Prophecy sin is death. Prophecy defines "life" as connection with God. Sin--man's turning away from God--is a disruption of this connection. Hence, sin is death.
- 3) Torah sees sin as folly. Torah recognizes that the soul of man would never willingly and consciously do sin, which would cause its own death. Instead, it is man's human component ( or the outer soul rather than the inner soul) [ man's fallen nature ] that pursues sin, and Torah allows atonement through a guilt offering.
- 4) But there is a fourth perspective that is God's alone: sin as the opportunity for "return" (teshuvah).<sup>1</sup>

## What is repentance in Judaism?

Repentance is the indispensable condition on which the salvation and redemption of the people of Israel, as well as of every individual person, depend.

## What is Teshuvah in Judaism?

To return to an ideal state of closeness with God and with our highest, most noble priorities in life.

All transgression and sin are the natural and inevitable consequence of straying from God and His laws. It is within the power of every person to be redeemed by resolutely breaking away from wrongdoing and turning to God, whose loving-kindness is ever extended to the person on the spiritual healing journey of Teshuvah.

The short term elements of Teshuvah are confession, regret, charity, service to others, avoiding circumstances that may make possible repeating the behavior, asking forgiveness from God and any person who was harmed, and restitution. This work begins the long term process of inner personality transformation, self forgiveness, and a deeper relationship with HaShem based on a life of surrender to His love and direction.

Group members pray together:

**Bring us back, our Father, to Your Torah, and bring us near, our King, to Your service. Influence us to return in perfect repentance before You, Blessed are You, HaShem, Who desires repentance.**

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/2830/jewish/What-Is-Sin.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2830/jewish/What-Is-Sin.htm)

# Jewish Definition of Redemption, Salvation and Forgiveness

## What is redemption in Judaism?

Redemption in Judaism refers to God ending the exile of the Jews from Israel through their individual repentance through Teshuvah.

Prayer for Redemption

**Behold our affliction, take up our grievance, and redeem us speedily for Your Name's sake, for You are a powerful Redeemer. Blessed are You, Hashem, Redeemer of Israel.**

## What is salvation in Judaism?

Salvation in Judaism is freedom from the bondage of sin and the reestablishment of personal communication with God. It is a determined commitment to ongoing Teshuvah.

**“Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth him of the evil” (Joel 2:13).**

## What is forgiveness in Judaism?

Forgiveness is a divine response to any mortal who earnestly seeks atonement for his/her shortcomings. Daniel said: **“To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness for we have rebelled against Him.” (Daniel 9.9)**

King David expressed this fundamental concept when he called onto God in the moment of spiritual abyss: **“Great is our reverence for You because it is Your will to forgive.” (Psalms 130.4)**

Tachanun (Supplications) is a time immediately following the Amida when we pray silently and privately, our faces down on our forearms, asking God to grant our individual requests. This is a chance to pray spontaneously, without following a script, to talk to God directly about the most personal and pressing matters. Tachanun is our most intimate moment with God.

And David said to God, **“ I am exceedingly distressed. Let us fall into HaShem's hand for His mercies are abundant, but let me not fall into human hands.”**

Group members pray silent Tachanun prayers to God.

Group members pray together:

**Forgive us, our Father, for we have erred; pardon us, our King, for we have willfully sinned; for You pardon and forgive. Blessed are You, HaShem, the gracious One who pardons abundantly. Amen.**

## Part Three

Pre Abortion Lies  
Post Abortion Syndrome  
Mishaberach Prayer



**Men like the opinions to which they have been accustomed from their youth; they defend them, and shun contrary views: and this is one of the things that prevents men from finding truth, for they cling to the opinions of habit. Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed 1:31**

## Pre-Abortion Lies

We were told that Judaism allows abortion for any reason, and that we were doing the right thing.

We were told that we had a legal right to choose to end our pregnancy and that because it was legal, it wasn't wrong.

Our own mothers and sisters told us abortion was the right solution..

Rabbis and therapists counseled us that abortion was our only option, that it would fix our problems.

We thought our careers and our lifestyle were more important than our responsibility for the child in our womb.

Our boyfriends told us they would leave if we kept the baby, but they left anyway after the abortion.

Our parents told us they would disown us and throw us out if we didn't get an abortion.

The abortion doctor denied that the baby was a human being.

The abortion doctor said it was only a 'blob of tissue', but we intuitively knew that it was a baby.

The doctors said that we had to abort the baby, that medically indicted abortion was acceptable.

We were told that we would be glad that we had the abortion, but years later we still deeply and secretively regret it.

No one told us that we would feel guilt, shame, and depression as a result of our abortion, and so we denied and minimized our feelings for years, feeling victimized, isolated, angry, abandoned, and unloved.

We dare not mention our negative feelings to our Jewish friends and family lest we be chastised or ostracized for speaking the truth about our abortion experience.

Group members share experiences about these lies.

## Post Abortion Syndrome

Suicidal Ideation and Attempted Suicide (60% of women with post-abortion problems report suicidal thoughts, Aborting women are 6 times more likely to commit suicide in the following year than are delivering women).

‘A part of me died’ feelings after the abortion.

‘My abortion ruined my life’ feelings after the abortion.

Guilt (results from violating one’s own sense of right and wrong).

Anxiety (headaches, dizziness, pounding heart, abdominal cramps, muscle tightness, difficulty sleeping, etc.).

Sleep disorders (women are more likely to be treated for sleep disorders after having an abortion compared to giving birth (nearly twice as likely in the first 180 days afterwards).

Avoidance behaviors (of anything remindful of pregnancy and children).

‘Numbing’ (the unconscious vow to never let anything hurt this badly again can hamper the ability to enter fully into an emotional, intimate relationship).

Re-experiencing events related to the abortion (persistent thoughts and flashback memories or nightmares involving themes of lost or dismembered babies).

Preoccupation with becoming pregnant again (representing an unconscious hope that a new pregnancy will replace the baby that was aborted).

Anxiety over fertility and childbearing issues (being convinced that God will punish by withholding future pregnancies).

Interruption or disruption of the bonding with present and/or future children (under-bonding or over-bonding with other children, whether born before or after the abortion)

Self abuse/self destructive behaviors (eating disorders, alcohol and /or substance abuse, cigarette smoking, abusive relationships, failure to take care of one’s self medically, social isolation).

Sexual Dysfunction (promiscuity, loss of pleasure from intercourse, increased pain, and aversion to sex).

Group Members share experiences about these feelings and behaviors.

## Mishaberach Prayer

This is often considered the most traditional prayer for one who is ill. It is usually recited during the Torah service at synagogue. Offering to say it at someone's bedside is also very comforting and healing. The individual's Hebrew name is often included in this blessing. The name is inserted in the blanks provided and it usually includes the person's mother's Hebrew name, as well.

**He Who blessed our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon - may He bless and heal the sick person ( patient's Hebrew name ) son/daughter of ( patient's mother's Hebrew name ) because ( name of supplicant ) will contribute charity on her behalf. In reward for this may the Holy One, Blessed be He, be filled with compassion for her to restore her health, to heal her, to strengthen her, and to revivify her. And may He send her speedily a complete recovery from heaven - for all her organs and all her blood vessels, among the other sick people of Israel, a recovery of the body and a recovery of her spirit, swiftly and soon. Now let us respond: Amen.**

Group members say Mishaberach prayers for each other.

Part Four

Personal Stories



**“The Holy One, blessed be His name, said to Elijah, ‘Behold, the precious gift which I have bestowed on my world: though a man sinneth again and again, but returneth in penitence, I will receive him’”**

**(Yer. Sanh. 28b) Kings 7:46**

## **Personal Stories**

Group members share personal abortion stories with each other.

Part Five

Anger Towards Ourselves  
Anger Towards Others  
Taking Responsibility



**Because there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.**

## Anger Towards Ourselves

Anger towards ourselves often occurs after an abortion.

Anger at ourselves for having the abortion and setting up a life afterward of guilt and psychological and emotional suffering, and perhaps physical problems as well.

Anger at ourselves for believing the lie that abortion was an acceptable remedy for our life problem.

Anger at ourselves for lacking the courage to resist the pressure put on us by others.

Anger at ourselves for not gathering the information about gestational milestones and learning the actual reality of our unborn child's development.

Anger at ourselves for destroying an innocent Jewish life.

Anger at ourselves for drifting so far away from our Jewish heritage and falling prey to the secular opinions in our peer group.

Anger at ourselves for having sexual relations without taking responsibility for the pregnancy.

Anger at ourselves for losing our baby.

Group members share about the abortion experience and about the anger felt towards themselves.

## Anger Towards Others

Anger towards others often occurs after an abortion.

Anger at therapists, friends, social workers and medical personnel, rabbi, sibling or mother for counseling us to have the abortion.

Anger at the father of the baby: the boyfriend, acquaintance, or husband for coercing us to have the abortion.

Anger at family and friends for not offering support and encouragement for the pregnancy.

Anger at others for intentionally drawing us into sharing an abortion experience so that they feel less guilty about their own, even though they knew of the guilt and shame it would cause.

Anger at others for refusing to listen to our anguish after the abortion.

Anger at others for disappointing us and abandoning us after promising to be supportive after the abortion.

Anger at others for insisting that their interests were more important than the life of our child..

Anger because of personal, emotional, possibly financial blackmail, threats, abuse or violence.

Group members share about the abortion experience and about those to whom they feel anger.

## Taking Responsibility

The decision to terminate a pregnancy is a result of an abandonment or forgetting of Jewish life principles. Perhaps these principles were never taught, or ideas and views contrary to Judaism were generally accepted in our Jewish circles. Abortion became acceptable, made possible by an unawareness of any moral responsibility to avoid it. Afterwards, the anger perpetuates a chronic state of blame. Guilt and shame fester underneath a facade of happiness.

The prescription for this illness begins with taking responsibility for our part in the wrongdoing, the abortion decision. Taking responsibility for our part means we are no longer victims of circumstance, but actors in our world capable of change and healing through Teshuvah

Taking responsibility for our part in the abortion decision allows us to take an honest look at the lack of understanding and awareness that led to the abortion. The abortion experience and the painful aftermath are powerful motivators to open up our mind to the reality that a life based on selfish desires is a life that brings pain and unhappiness - and it was our choice, however misguided, to live for our own selfish ends, either out of fear or arrogance.

A life based on Torah, love of God and a willingness to serve Him through charitable acts rather than selfish pursuits is how we are healed.

Taking responsibility involves waking up to a higher meaning in our lives; realizing that there is a Director; that nothing happens by chance. If nothing happens by chance, then the abortion experience was meant to teach us about our disconnection from HaShem, our over-reliance upon people and popular opinion, and the healing journey available through Teshuvah.

Our past becomes a valuable asset, necessary to move forward with hope and confidence that we can build meaningful, happy lives. leaving the negative feelings, thoughts, and attitudes behind.

Group members explore and discuss the reasons that they didn't know or understand the nature of their actions, and why they were so swayed by the advice and opinion of others.

## Part Six

Spiritual Healing Through Teshuvah  
Forgiveness Of Self For Having The Abortion  
Forgiveness Of Others Involved In The Abortion  
Forgiveness From HaShem  
Selichos



**Heal us, HaShem - then we will be healed, save us - then we will be saved,  
for You are our praise. Bring complete recovery for all our ailments, for You  
are God, King, the faithful and compassionate Healer. Blessed are You,  
HaShem, Who heals the sick of His people Israel. Jeremiah 17:14**

## Spiritual Healing Through Teshuvah

Teshuvah is a process that, in its ultimate form, empowers us to not only transcend our failings but to also redeem them: to literally travel back in time and redefine the essential nature of a past deed, transforming it from evil to good.

Teshuvah is fueled by the utter dejection experienced by one who wakes to the realization that they have destroyed all that is beautiful and sacred in life; by the pain of one who has cut themselves off from the source of life and well-being; by the alienation felt by one who finds themselves without cause or reason to live. Teshuvah is a person's amazing ability to translate these feeling of worthlessness, alienation and pain into the drive for rediscovery and renewal.

Teshuvah is based on the principle of human free will and is available to anyone for any transgression, at any time in life's journey. It is a privilege and a gift to receive from HaShem for the purpose of reestablishing righteousness and the spiritual benefits here and in the hereafter.

Certainly, the post abortive Jew can realize this spiritual transformation, and be assured that no transgression is so great that it cannot be cleansed through Teshuvah.

To begin, it is necessary to recognize the act of transgression as a negative thing with terrible consequences. Then to disavow and renounce its folly, and know that you would have acted differently had you recognized and understood the wrong action you were taking.

The short term elements of Teshuvah are regret, confession, avoiding circumstances that may make possible repeating the behavior, asking forgiveness from God and any person who was harmed, restitution, charity, and service to others. This work begins the long term process of inner personality transformation, self forgiveness, and a deeper relationship with HaShem based on a life of surrender to His love and direction.

Each individual shares their experience of despair and hope for healing through Teshuvah.

## **Forgiveness Of Self For Having The Abortion**

Forgiveness of ourselves is a spiritual process. It begins with the desperate need for relief from the extreme internal discomfort that we feel. This motivates us to first seek help, comfort and nonjudgemental acceptance from other participants in the program.

Forgiveness of ourselves is essential for healing. It requires a humbling of our prideful judgment of ourselves.

Forgiveness of ourselves stops the damaging effects of chronic self judgement, which are manifested by self destructive behaviors intended to punish ourselves for our wrongdoing.

Forgiveness of ourselves allows a compassionate acceptance of ourselves as flawed human beings who have allowed ourselves to be swayed by the opinions of others rather than listen to our own conscience.

Forgiveness of ourselves gives us permission to accept help and to heal.

Jewish law says that an individual who was raised in a non-religious atmosphere and was never accorded a proper Jewish education cannot be held fully responsible for his or her lack of observance, so it is with assured Divine forgiveness that we can forgive ourselves.

Group members share about self forgiveness and humility.

## Forgiveness Of Others Involved In The Abortion

Forgiveness of others is essential for healing.

Forgiveness of others stops the rage that consumes our inner lives.

Forgiveness of others improves our health and well being.

Forgiveness of others heals our spiritual wound. We can reconnect with God because we no longer are acting as God with our judgement of others. We place judgement and punishment into the hands of HaShem.

Forgiveness of others is a choice to live free from the long term damaging effects of resentments.

Forgiveness of others allows us to move out of the victim role and take responsibility for our future happiness, and to avoid repeating the painful and self destructive patterns that led to our life problems.

Group members pray together.

**Master of the world! Behold, I pardon and forgive every single Israelite - man or woman, child or adult - who has ever wronged me. I forgive them whether they sinned against me under duress or willfully, whether inadvertently or deliberately, whether by word or by deed, whether in this lifetime or in any other incarnation; whether they injured my body or caused me monetary loss, whether they offended my honor or inflicted me with any pain or anguish; whether whatever they did is known to me or not; whether I have forgotten or not. For all, I pardon and forgive every single Israelite, completely, with a willing heart and soul. Amen.**

## Forgiveness From HaShem

At this point in the program, the nonjudgemental acceptance and compassion from the group gives us enough confidence to move towards seeking and accepting forgiveness from HaShem.

God gives humans the power to learn and understand, and assists them in righteousness and helps them on the path to a happy future and freedom from the bondage of self imposed suffering.

This generosity from HaShem is noted in Psalm 51:14, “and rest a spirit of generosity upon me” meaning let my spirit do Your will, and may my sins not cause me to be held back from Teshuvah, rather let me have the power to return, and understand and know the path of truth.

King David's lapses into self will and his passage from dreadful unhappiness and guilt to redemption shows us the way. He sinned and with Divine assistance, did Teshuvah, a rigorous disciplined course of action that requires great determination and honesty. David asked God. “How will the Jews atone for their sins?”.

God replied: “When suffering will befall the Jews because of their sins, they should gather before me in complete unity. Together they shall confess their sins and recite the order of the Selichot, and I will answer their prayers” -- from Midrash.

Selichot are recited daily, beginning the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah and continuing through Yom Kippur.

These prayers are on the next page.

Group members pray these prayers together and share the feelings of forgiveness and peace that come afterwards.

They can repeat them individually during the 10 Days of Repentance.

## Selichot

O God, You are slow to anger, You are called the master of Mercy, and You have taught the way of repentance.

May You remember this day and every day the greatness of Your mercy and Your kindness to the offspring of Your beloved ones.

Turn to us in mercy for You are the Master of Mercy.

With supplication and prayers we approach Your Presence in the manner that You made known to the humble one [Moses] in ancient times.

Turn back from Your fierce anger as it is written in Your Torah.

In the shelter of Your wings may we find shelter and lodging as on the day 'HaShem descended in a cloud " [ to appear before Moses on Sinai ].

Overlook sin and erase guilt as on the day 'He [God ] stood there with him [ Moses ]'

Give heed to our cry and hearken to our declaration as on the day ' He called out with the name HaShem, ' and there it was said:

HaShem, HaShem, God, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth. Preserver of kindness for thousands of generations, Forgiver of Iniquity, willful sin, and error, and Who cleanses. May You forgive our iniquities and our errors and make us Your heritage. Forgive us, our Father, for we have erred; pardon us, our King, for we have willfully sinned; for You, my Lord, are good and forgiving and abundantly kind to all who call upon You.

Part Seven

Family Relationships



**Establish peace, goodness, blessing, graciousness, kindness, and compassion upon us and upon all of Your people Israel. Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance, for with the light of Your countenance You gave us, HaShem, our God, the Torah of life and a love of kindness, righteousness, blessing, compassion, life and peace. And may it be good in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel, in every season and in every hour with Your Peace. Blessed are You, HaShem, Who blesses His people Israel with peace.**

## Family Relationships

Abortion changes relationships in the family. Part of the healing that we seek requires us to examine how the family relationships changed because of the abortion. We need to get honest with our family members about the way we feel and learn about how they feel. We need to understand what our part is in the relationship disturbances so we can make the amends necessary for Teshuvah.

Of vital importance, though, is to balance the need for confession and clearing the air with family members with the harm that may result from being entirely honest. If the conversation about the abortion will do harm, it is not done, or it is delayed until it can be done without doing harm. A private confession only to HaShem is sufficient.

We harbor resentments towards parents and siblings for pressuring us to have the abortion.

We lose trust that our family members have our best interests at heart since they supported the abortion decision that brought us so much suffering.

Or, if the abortion was kept secret from family, our sense of shame and guilt puts a barrier up between members of the family.

Husbands who insisted on the abortion are seen as intimate enemies and are the cause of anguish and resentment.

Our feelings about the abortion change our relationship with our living children.

Family members who would have supported the pregnancy are hurt and angry that they were given no chance to help the mother and offer support and protection.

Open discussion between family members gives everyone an opportunity to face the reality of the loss of the child, who was a family member.

Group members discuss how family relationships have changed because of the abortion, challenges to sharing honestly with family members, and ways that amends can be made.

Part Eight

Mother-Child Bond  
Naming The Baby



**For you created my inmost being: you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made..... My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to me. Psalm 139: 13-16**

## Mother-Child Bond

Abortion is complicated. It is a lie that tells women to sacrifice their own child and then robs them of one of the most amazing parts of being a woman, motherhood. The bond between mother and child is a special connection; abortion destroys that bond and denies the mother and child of their relationship.

The science now proves that this bond is rooted in sophisticated hormonal and physiological components that last for decades, and which explain the ache of loss so often felt by women who have lost their children, including children lost by abortion.

Ruth Feldman, psychology professor at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, conducted the first study to demonstrate the links between the hormone oxytocin and bonding in human mothers. The research, conducted in 2007, showed that oxytocin seems to be preparing mothers to engage in bonding behaviors. The findings also showed that oxytocin is related to the mental, as well as the behavioral, aspect of bonding.

Another tangible factor in uterine bonding is that for any woman that has ever been pregnant, some of her baby's cells cross through the placenta and into her body. These fetal cells circulate in her bloodstream long after the pregnancy is over, perhaps for as long as she lives. Those cells often take residence in her lungs, spinal cord, skin, thyroid gland, liver, intestine, cervix, gallbladder, spleen, lymph nodes, and blood vessels.

Therefore, after an elective abortion, the mother continues to have a physical connection with the baby, which is felt long after the procedure is over.

Recognizing and acknowledging this bond is an important part of healing.

Group members share about the grief over the loss of their children and the feelings associated with the mother-child bond.

## Naming the Baby

Naming a child that has been lost from abortion gives that child dignity and the integrity of being real. It allows the child to have an identity that can be grieved.

Kabbalah teaches that parents are given temporary prophecy to choose the right name for their child. Many post abortive parents have an intuitive sense of the baby's name. Though suppressed, the name becomes clear with some meditation and prayer.

To explore names visit [Hebrew Baby Names Guide](#)

Group members explore baby names and support one another in the process.

## Part Nine

Jewish Perspective On The Afterlife And The Soul  
Mourning And Grieving The Death  
The Funeral Service  
Kaddish



**May the Lord answer you on the day of distress; may the name of the  
God of Jacob fortify you. May He send you aid from His sanctuary, and  
may He support you from Zion.**

**Psalm 20**

## Jewish Perspective On The After Life And The Soul

So many of us ask, "What happens to the baby after the abortion?"

One of the fundamental beliefs of Judaism is that life does not begin with birth, nor does it end with death. This is articulated in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to G-d, who gave it."

There are numerous stations in a soul's journey, including:

1. in the wholly spiritual existence of the soul before it enters the body;
2. in the physical life;
3. in the "World to Come". No death and no evil exists there, it is entirely good and eternally infinite. It is entirely non-physical, allowing complete spiritual contemplation of the radiance of Divine wisdom. The righteous are in God's company crowned with their wisdom, knowing and understanding the truth of the Holy One. The World to Come exists alongside our world in real time now.
4. At the end of days when the messianic age is ushered in, followed by the resuscitation of the dead.

This is why the soul exists in a purely spiritual state before it descends into this world. In its pre-physical existence, the soul is fortified with the divine wisdom, knowledge and vision that will empower it in its struggles to transcend and transform the physical reality.

At times, a soul may not conclude its mission in a single lifetime. In such cases, it returns to earth for a "second go" to complete the job, ie., reincarnation. This is why we often find ourselves powerfully drawn to a particular mitzvah or cause and make it the focus of our lives, dedicating to it a seemingly disproportionate part of our time and energy: it is our soul gravitating to the "missing pieces" of its divinely ordained purpose.<sup>2</sup>

Group members share thoughts about the baby's spiritual journey before conception and after the abortion.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/282508/jewish/What-Happens-After-We-Die.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/282508/jewish/What-Happens-After-We-Die.htm)

## Mourning And Grieving The Death

Mourning shows respect for those who are no longer here. It is also a crucial stage in the healing of those who experience the loss.

Judaism views death as a two sided coin. On the one hand, when someone passes on, it is a tragedy. They have been lost to their family and friends, and there is a feeling of separation and distance that seems beyond repair. For this reason, we observe a seven day intense mourning period, during which the family sits at home and feels that pain and loss, followed by a year of mourning.

However, death is not an absolute reality. Our soul existed before we were born, and it continues to exist after we die. The souls that have passed on are still with us. We can't see them, but we sense they are there. We can't hear them, but we know that they hear us. On the surface, we are apart. Beyond the surface, nothing can separate us.<sup>3</sup>

A mourning period for the child lost to abortion offers great healing. It eases the guilt that resulted when the child was denied value and validity. The benefits of sitting Shiva may be approximated when the group members sit together to remember their children.

Some post abortive mothers and fathers commemorate their lost children through charitable giving, community service, and various memorial plaques in honor of their child. These can be made anonymously; however, HaShem sees and appreciates the effort to recognize His creation.

Group members share about the mystical experience of feeling that their child is still present as a spiritual entity, and share about different ways of mourning the loss of their child.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/248163/jewish/Why-Do-We-Tear-our-Clothes-after-a-Death.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/248163/jewish/Why-Do-We-Tear-our-Clothes-after-a-Death.htm)

## Funeral Service For The Baby

Jewish law insists that the dead be buried in the earth, but abortion makes this impossible.

Responsibility for the deceased's proper burial lies with the next of kin; however, in Mishneh Torah, Maimonides ascribes the failure to observe the laws of the Torah to duress - and the Talmud teaches that "the Merciful One absolves a person who acts under duress."

Abortion is always an act of duress or of ignorance of traditional Jewish law regarding the sanctity of human life. The abortion results in the cremation of the baby, which isn't within the realm of responsibility for the parents once the abortion has taken place.

Cremation of the baby after abortion makes mourning difficult. The process is completely impersonal, and no remains of the deceased in any form are available.

The abortion event precludes a funeral service. Parents lack this traditional way of grieving a loss, setting up a lifetime of unresolved grief.

This lack of ceremony needs to be rectified so that post abortive parents can move forward with the mourning process. Even though delayed, the mourning process is essential to the grieving process and eventual healing.

The Jewish Funeral service is a starkly simple, but emotionally meaningful farewell to the deceased. The funeral service includes:

Keriah, (tearing of the clothes) which symbolizes the rending of the parent-child relationship. For the death of a child, there is no obligation to rend after 30 days after death, but post abortive parents may want to express their separation from the child by tearing clothes.

[Psalm 23, The Memorial Prayer - Kel Maleh Rachamin, and the Eulogy.](#)<sup>4</sup>

Group members recite these prayers together, creating the atmosphere of a funeral for their lost children.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/281559/jewish/Funeral-Service-Eulogy.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/281559/jewish/Funeral-Service-Eulogy.htm)

## **Kaddish**

Abortion also precludes recitation of the burial Kaddish at the gravesite; however, recitation of the mourners Kaddish at most worship services, on Shabbat and on fasting and holy days, allows post abortive parents to honor their child and pray for the child's soul in Heaven. Reciting Kaddish also compels us to do mitzvot in order to merit the honor and respect of the deceased child, sustaining our commitment to the rigorous process of Teshuvah.

[Text of the Standard Kaddish Prayer](#)

Part Ten

Moving On And Helping Others



**Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with  
lovingkindness and tender mercies. Psalm 103:4**

## Moving On And Helping Others

The process of Teshuvah begins with Tikvat Rachel. The work is meant to provide some relief from the acute sense of loss, guilt and regret that follows abortion. We also provide a guideline for continued efforts to heal through the effective process of Teshuvah. For many post abortive parents this effort lasts a lifetime, leading to a transformative experience that makes life interesting, fulfilling and meaningful. A life filled with service to HaShem and charitable acts fills the empty soul with gratitude and wonder. Carrying the healing message to other Jewish men and women who suffer after abortion is a mitzvot well worth doing.

We learn in the Ethics of the Fathers Chapter 4 verse 17: "A single moment of repentance and good deeds in this world is greater than all of the world to come. And a single moment of bliss in the World to Come is greater than all of this world."

Through Teshuvah, we purify our character, atone for our errors of the past, and earn a place in the World to Come. No other action brings more satisfaction to the post abortive Jew than to offer the Tikvat Rachel healing opportunity to another suffering Jew.

After the conclusion of our work here, we go back into the Jewish world filled with denial of and unconcern about the loss of Jewish children through abortion, as well as the suffering of thousands of post abortive Jews.

Because Jewish communities are unwilling to acknowledge the downside of abortion, speaking out about an abortion experience and the healing opportunity of Tikvat Rachel can be frightening and intimidating. Disclosure can threaten social acceptance and standing among friends, family members, and employers. Discretion is advisable!

You will come into contact with many Jews who share your abortion experience or who know someone who has. HaShem will provide safe opportunities for you to help another suffering Jewish soul. You will be instrumental in pointing the way to this home of other Jewish men and women who have found relief at Tikvat Rachel.

It is a place where we can restore our personal covenant with HaShem. Each individual Jew who takes their place in the spiritual Jewish community through Teshuvah adds to the overall health and salvation of the Jewish people, bringing into clearer focus our true purpose: to prepare ourselves and our people for the coming of the messianic era, when we will be united with our loved ones who have passed on, including our beloved lost children.

Thank you for participating in Tikvat Rachel, our post abortion healing program. We hope and pray that you have found comfort and companionship as you explored the ideas and implemented the actions found in our program. God will bless you on your healing journey. Please continue to connect with us and each other to get the moral support needed to continue and to share our message.

We ask that you continue to call into our weekly support call to share your experience with others who seek healing after abortion. If you have the desire and opportunity to start a face to face support group, please let us know and we will help you start it. Along the journey you will meet many wonderful supportive and loving friends.

Please provide feedback about your Tikvat Rachel experience so that we may improve our work and provide the best possible source of healing to other post abortive Jews. Email or call us anytime.



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