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TRAINING MANUAL

VOLUME TWO

*For those visiting Jewish men and women
incarcerated - In prison*

An Aleph Institute Publication

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1 Prisoners: Uncovering the Problems

Session 1, Part A

Volunteer Training, Part 2

Welcome to Volunteer Training Part 2. Here you will learn more about some of the problems faced by prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families. You will also hear about the various programs that the Aleph Institute has developed to help address these problems.

The training is divided into three sessions. Each session has two parts, "A" and Part "B." A addresses needs and problems. Part B focuses on some solutions and related Aleph Institute programs. The chart on page 8 explains each part.

At the end of the three training sessions is a self-evaluation activity. This will help you to decide if you want to focus on In-Prison, Family, or Aftercare help. It will also help you decide which programs best suit your gifts, talents, and interests. After this, you will be ready for Part 4 training on one or more ministry areas (In-Prison, Family, or Aftercare) and specific Aleph Institute programs.

Taking Part

Digging Deeper

Note carefully the feelings expressed in the following poem:

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore— And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over— like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags like a heavy load

Or does it explode?

—Langston Hughes

1. What feelings does this poem express about unfulfilled dreams?

2. Drawing from what you saw in the video, explain how prison conditions could lead to these feelings.

3. One result of unfulfilled dreams is loss of hope. How could you help give a prisoner hope?

Prison is only one part of the criminal justice process. At this stage of our training, we will not focus on the details of process. But you do want to be somewhat aware of the process a prisoner or prisoner's family may have gone through before you met them.

To get a brief overview of how the criminal justice process works, see page 35.

Beneath the Surface

Each person in prison is unique. What that person is today is the buildup of years of experiences, choices, relationships, teachings, and misteachings. These factors are different for every person. All of them have helped shape the person's opinions and values, which in turn shape his or her behavior. These factors help determine the way a person misbehaves.

These factors may also help explain why a lopsided percentage of prisoners come from minority and/or low economic groups. For example:

- Although Blacks make up only 12 percent of the U.S. population, they make up about 46 percent of the prison population.
- Hispanics make up only 6 percent of the U.S. population, yet 10 percent of the male prison population.
- More than half of male prisononers had incomes below poverty level at the time they were sent to prison.

The "tough breaks" in people's backgrounds do not excuse their wrong choices and behavior. We are not ignoring their need to take responsibility for their own lives.

Common Traits

No two prisoners are alike. But many of them share common traits or experiences. Knowing what these are can help you understand how to touch prisoners' deepest needs.

- Two-thirds of prisoners come from broken homes
- 95 percent of the men in prison had no loving father figure as a role model
- Two-thirds have prior prison records
- Two-thirds abuse themselves with drugs and alcohol
- 80 percent of women prisoners have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused
- 50 percent of men prisoners have been physically or sexually abused
- 45 percent of men prisoners were out of work when they were arrested
- One-half never went beyond a sixth-grade education
- 60 to 80 percent cannot read or write well enough to get along well in society

Low Self-esteem

Such experiences can contribute to low self-esteem and anger at those the prisoners feel have hurt them. Many prisoners think of themselves as failures, and have little hope that the future can be any better than the past.

A study of prisoners with tattoos found that more than 70 percent of them had tattoos that said "Born to Lose" or something very similar.

Everyone's perception is that person's reality. People act on what they believe to be true. We want to provide prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families with a way of thinking that is based on reality.

Digging Deeper

Every one of our experiences draws out positive or negative feelings. These feelings can then develop into attitudes that shape the way we see ourselves. We then tend to bring these attitudes into our other experiences, which again reinforce positive or negative feelings. And the cycle continues.

For example, suppose that when Jan was a child, her father slapped her. Jan thought, "Since Daddy hit me, I'm a bad girl." If this happened several times Jan may have developed an attitude that she's a rotten, worthless person. Now that she is older, her low self-esteem may lead her into relationships with men who abuse her. She believes she's getting what she deserves.

In the stories that follow, try to put yourself in that person's shoes. Try to imagine what you would be thinking and feeling if you were that person. Then answer the questions that follow. Some helpful insights are given after each set of questions. But *don't peek* until you have tried to answer them yourself as best you can.

Alice's Story

As a small child she was molested many times by her stepfather. He warned her not to tell other people, or they would think she was bad. As a teenager, Alice was sexually active. Then she decided to make money from sex, and turned to prostitution. She always hated it because it made her feel dirty. But she felt it was the only thing she could do well. And at least people paid attention to her. Some even talked of love.

1. As Alice, describe your feelings:
2. How do you feel about others, particularly volunteers?
3. How do you feel about G-d?
4. How could a volunteer best assist you?

Helpful Insights

People who were sexually abused as children often suffer from feelings of worthlessness, self-hatred, and guilt. The abusing adult often forces children to keep silent by telling them that they are bad or that other people will think they are bad.

As a result, abused children are often made to feel guilty and "dirty"—that they are somehow to blame for the sexual abuse. Such guilt can last for many years.

Because they often feel that no one can love them, victims of sexual abuse may look for attention in other ways. Alice continues to use sex for attention and some sense of accomplishment (she feels it is the only thing she does well). But inside she is probably crying for someone to genuinely love and value her.

Julio's Story

Julio was the oldest child in a family of six children. He doesn't even know who his father was. His mother wasn't around much; she had to work two jobs to pay the bills. When she *was* home, she couldn't pay much attention to Julio, with five other children to worry about.

Julio missed a lot a school because he had to care for his younger brothers and sisters. He tried to do well, but it was hard to keep up with his classmates.

Finally, Julio just gave up and dropped out. To kill time he hung around with an older gang, who got him involved in dealing drugs. This became his way of life.

1. As Julio, describe your feelings:

2. How do you feel about others, particularly volunteers?

3. How do you feel about G-d?

4. How could a volunteer best assist to you?

Helpful Insights

Abandoned by his father, Julio never had any loving male role model. Although his mother may have loved him very much, financial strains forced her to be away from the family most of the time. Julio may have felt unloved and unimportant— feelings that can be crushing to a child.

Julio probably received no positive encouragement in school. When he struggled to keep up with his school work, his teacher may have failed to give him the personal attention or help he needed.

Maybe the teacher wasn't even aware of the problem. But whatever the reason, the lack of attention probably reinforced Julio's feeling that he wasn't important—that he was "no good."

No one really *believed* in Julio. When he stopped believing in himself, he also stopped trying to accomplish anything worthwhile. He lost hope.

Rick's Story

Rick got into trouble the first time when he was 16. He and some friends hot-wired a car and went joy riding around town. The owner reported the car stolen, and the police caught all of them.

Rick was ashamed and embarrassed, and he never planned to do anything like that again. But once people found out he was a "juvenile delinquent," they didn't trust him. When he flunked a test, his teacher said, "That's what I'd expect from you." No one would give Rick a part-time job. So he went back to stealing. Now 25, he's been in and out prison several times.

1. As Rick, describe your feelings:

2. How do you feel about others, particularly volunteers?

3. How do you feel about G-d?

4. How could a volunteer best assist you?

Helpful Insights

Psychologists sometimes use the term, "self-fulfilling prophecy." What they mean by this is that a person becomes what he or others *believe* him to be. In Rick's case, after he and his friends stole the car, people labeled him a juvenile delinquent

Rick was truly sorry for what he had done. But now people expected bad behavior from him, so they did not trust him. Rick may have felt unfairly tagged, trapped by a negative image that other people created.

Rick may have felt angry, afraid, hopeless, worthless. He may have felt that no matter how hard he tried to live a good life, people would always see him as "bad." Perhaps feeling that it was useless to fight the image. Rick decided to live up to it.

Again, be sure to point out that circumstances and mistreatment from others do not excuse a person's wrong actions. But volunteers need to take the time to understand the different factors involved in those actions.

Many prisoners may have spent years suffering from—and trying to make up for—deep hurts. They need someone who cares enough to try to understand those hurts and painful feelings.

Touching Deep Wounds

As you can see, a person's behavior and thinking may be built upon some very deep hurts. Again, one's past does not excuse his or her wrong actions. But you can see how important it is to take the time to listen and get to know a person. Do not be too quick to assume you know what the problem is.

Person-to-Person Teaching

Much of the time, our thinking cannot change until we have some positive experiences and positive relationships to overcome the negative ones. Truth is best taught and caught through real experiences and real people.

3

Families: Uncovering the Problems Session 2, Part A

Forgotten Victims

Although they remain on the "outside," family members of prisoners are often forced into their own prison. Chances are they never expected their loved one to end up in prison. It wasn't something they prepared for.

Prison upsets the entire family—often drastically. Wives may suddenly become the only breadwinner. Husbands may take on new responsibilities. Children lose a parent and role model. Parents of a prisoner may suffer people's spoken or unspoken blame: "Where did you go wrong?" Families are often shattered by guilt, anger, and fear.

Digging Deeper

In your group, discuss some of the struggles, needs, and feelings faced by families of prisoners. Then together draw a picture that represents some or all of these areas. Share your drawing with the larger group.

A Listening Ear

With families, as with the prisoners themselves, one of the best gifts we can give them is a listening ear. As we listen carefully and seek to understand, we will be better able to know and meet others' real needs. And as people express their thoughts and feel understood, they are often able to work through their problems in the process.

Building a Relationship

People in an African village purchased a television set. For weeks, all of the children and adults gathered around the TV set to watch the programs. All morning, afternoon, and night they watched it. After a couple months, the set was turned off and never used again.

"Why don't you watch television anymore?" a visitor asked the chief.

"We decided to listen to the storytellers," the chief said.

"Doesn't the television know more stories?" the visitor asked.

"Yes," the chief answered, "but the storyteller knows us."

(This story is found in *Stories for the Journey*, by William R. White.)

Digging Deeper

In this story, what is the difference between sharing information and building a relationship?

Being There

An important part of helping prisoners' families is taking the time to build relationships. Losing a mate, parent or adult child to prison causes all kinds of insecurity and fears about the future. You can help by sincerely caring for the person and looking for ways to serve.

Remember that you are seeking to serve the whole person. Sometimes you need to meet physical needs before you can touch a person's deeper spiritual need.

Our Order of Needs

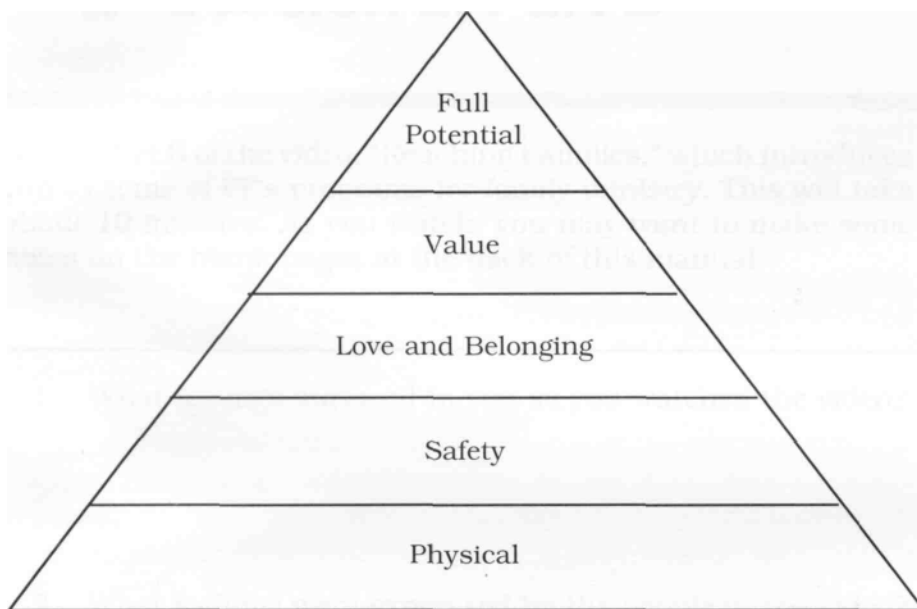
Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a specific ranking of needs in people’s lives. Certain basic needs must be met before people will be moved to satisfy their other needs.

The most basic level is that of physical needs. These are the things we really can't do without: food, water, air, sleep. These could truly be called our life-or-death needs.

The second level of need is safety. The third is the need to be loved and to belong. The fourth is the need to know we are esteemed, or valued by others.

At the highest level is what Maslow calls "self-actualization." We refer to it here as reaching our full potential. This is the need to reach beyond what we are and become all we can be.

The diagram below illustrates our order of needs.



As helpers, we need to see how meeting spiritual needs fits in this model. A mother with three children and no money for groceries certainly needs to know that Judaism can bring a lot of meaning to her life. But what is most important to her right now is food to feed her family.

4

Families:

Seeking Solutions

Session 2, Part B

Digging Deeper

In the stories below, try to put yourself in that person's shoes. Try to imagine what you would be thinking or feeling if you were that person. Then answer the questions that follow. Some helpful insights are given after each set of questions. But don't peek until you have tried to answer them as best you can.

Gina's Story

Gina's husband was just sentenced to five years in prison. What is she going to do now? She has never had a job. She feels she doesn't have any skills. And her husband gambled so much, they are already way behind on all their bills. Gina doesn't even have any food in the house, and the kids have to eat. The rent's due next Tuesday. She's starting to panic and wants help right now!

1. Gina feels:

2. One way to help:

3. Discuss the issues here:

Helpful Insights



When a person goes to prison, the spouse can feel overwhelmed by the problems that suddenly fall on her shoulders. If the wife has been at home with the children, she may panic at the thought of getting a job—especially if she has no special training.

Often her top concern is survival—a place to live (money to pay the rent), food to eat. She may be entitled to welfare, but not have any idea how to go about getting aid. You can help by walking through the process with her.

It may take weeks to process an application for financial aid. To meet her emergency needs, you might get help from community programs. Also, help her to think through her job options.

Brenda's Story

Brenda visited her husband, Gunther, at prison yesterday, and it was awful! First, she set off the metal detector, and the prison staff made her take everything out of her pockets. She even had to take the barrettes out of her hair!

Then they searched her *and* the baby. Brenda actually had to undress him so they could check for drugs or other illegal items. Brenda doesn't think she could ever go back there. They treated her as if she were the criminal instead of Gunther.

1. Brenda feels:

2. One way to help:

3. Discuss the issues here:

Helpful Insights



Visiting prison for the first time can be a frightening, stressful experience. You can help by learning the procedures and explaining to family members what to expect.

Security measures vary from prison to prison. Visitors may be searched—an embarrassing experience to most people. Prison officials may be suspicious of anything that looks as though it could conceal drugs or other contraband (forbidden items). This includes loose-fitting clothing.

Prisons also have different restrictions on what can be taken to the prisoner. Find out beforehand if children's drawings or family photographs will be allowed in. It could be very upsetting to get there and have personal items like that taken away.

Explain that these rules are for security and protection. Most prison officials are not heartless toward prisoners' families.

Prison will never become an enjoyable place to visit. But with some advance preparation, you can help ease the shock and embarrassment for family members.

Danny's Story

Six-year-old Danny is trying hard to be a big boy and not cry. But he's afraid.

"I wish I knew where Mommy is. Why did she go away? I ask Daddy where she is, but he just bites his lip and says Mommy will be gone a long time. He and Aunt Sue whisper about her, but I can't hear what they say. Mommy, why did you go? Is it because of me? Are you sick? Please come home. I'm so scared without you!"

1. Danny feels:

2. One way to help:

3. Discuss the issues here:

Helpful Insights

Children can be the ones most damaged when a parent goes to prison. One hard decision for the remaining parent is what to tell the child. There is no set answer. Much careful thought should go into the decision.

Children do not always have to know the whole truth. But it is best not to lie, such as telling the child that Mommy or Daddy is in the hospital instead of in prison. A deceived child could go through serious shock and bitterness upon discovering the truth later on.

It is not up to you to tell the child about the prisoner-parent. This responsibility lies with the parents. Of course you could be there at the time to give support and help answer questions.



Gayle's Story

Gayle saw Janie when she walked to the grocery store today. Janie was on the other side of the street. Gayle called to her, but Janie turned away. Gayle knows Janie heard her.

A lot of Gayle's neighbors have turned their backs on her since her son went to prison. But Gayle thought Janie was different. Now she feels that she doesn't have a single friend in the world. They all act like it's *her* fault that her son messed up.

1. Gayle feels:

2. One way to help:

3. Discuss the issues here:



Helpful Insights

Many prisoners' families face rejection and prejudice—from employers and even from friends. Sad to say, even synagogues may fail to help prison families.

Sometimes the best help you can give at times like this is a listening ear and a caring heart. It hurts deeply to feel abandoned by friends on top of feeling abandoned by the prisoner. Hurt often comes through as anger. Don't be judgmental. Help the family member talk out his or her feelings. It helps to know that you are there, even if all others turn away.

Carol's Story

Carol is tired of her job. She's thankful to have it—at least it pays the bills. Or some of them, anyway. But her husband, Mannie, could be in prison for a long time, and she doesn't want to be stuck at this job forever. She wishes she had gone to college instead of getting married so young. Look where it got her—stuck in a boring job with nowhere to go.

1. Carol feels:

2. One way to help:

3. Discuss the issues here:

Helpful Insights

Prisoners' wives should be encouraged to take positive steps to improve their lives while they are on their own. They may be able to take vocational training. Community colleges often offer low-cost courses in job skills. Scholarships may be available. Perhaps the synagogue could help in some way, one may contact the local Jewish Children and Family Services, who usually have a career development center.

Lynn's Story

Jack moved in with Lynn a few months after her husband, Clifford, went to prison. It was Clifford's idea. He and Jack are like brothers, and he thought Jack could help take care of Lynn by paying part of the rent and utility bills. He's right, Lynn thinks. She couldn't make it without Jack's help.

But one thing led to another, and soon Lynn and Jack were involved in a sexual relationship. Lynn insists their relationship isn't just sexual. She says she really cares for Jack. He's always so tender, so caring—just the opposite of Clifford.

She hasn't said anything to Clifford about the relationship. But it's difficult to even write or visit her husband now. She's not sure she wants Clifford to ever come home.

1. Lynn feels:

2. One way to help:

3. Discuss the issues here:

Helpful Insights

Suddenly left as the only breadwinner, a prisoner's wife may wonder, "How am I going to live?" Having a male friend or relative move in with her is seen as sinful to most people. But to the wife suddenly out on her own, it may seem like a matter of survival.

Help her to think through her other options without being judgmental of the one she chose. She may truly fear she has no other way out of her problems.

A common problem among prisoners' spouses is sexual frustration. Usually they don't feel free to talk about this problem unless their relationship with a volunteer is quite close. Be patient, and continue to show that you care and are willing to listen. When the time seems right, express Torah principles, and check this with your Aleph director, on how to proceed.

Ann's Story

Everything started to fall apart all at once. The car won't start. The toilet backed up. And Ann can't afford to call a plumber.

The last check she wrote bounced—and she doesn't even know what she did wrong. Rick used to take care of all these things before he went to prison. Then everything just fell into Ann's lap. She doesn't feel she can handle anything right now!

1. Ann feels:

2. One way to help:

3. Discuss the issues here:

Helpful Insights

Aleph Institute volunteers should be encouraged to "adopt" prisoners' families and work together to meet their needs. Perhaps you could survey the skills and talents of your synagogue/temple members. Then when a need arises, you could call for help from the person who is skilled to meet that need.

For example, one person may know how to repair bad plumbing. Another may be able to provide transportation. Another may be willing to help with meals. Another may be able to fix cars. Another may be gifted at spiritual counseling. Sharing the burdens also allows others to share the blessing of serving people in need.

Manuel's Story

Maria's teacher called today. She said Maria's been acting strange in school for several weeks. One minute she is quiet and withdrawn. The next minute she'll get mad and shove one of the other students. Her grades are going way down, too.

The teacher asked Manuel if something was wrong. But how can he tell her Maria's mother is in prison? What would she think? Manuel wants to do *something* to help his daughter. Maria used to love school before all this happened. But what can he do?

1. Manuel feels:

2. One way to help:

3. Discuss the issues here:

Helpful Insights

When a parent goes to prison, children may go through a mixture of feelings: anger, guilt, insecurity, and embarrassment. This may show up in poor performance in school.

Encourage the father to get to know the teacher. If the teacher seems to be a warm, caring person, she may be able to help the child more if she knows what is going on. Right now Maria could use all the support she can get.

5 Aftercare: Uncovering the Problems Session 3, Part A

Prisoners' problems don't end once they are released from prison. In fact, some say that the hardest part about going to prison is getting out. For the great majority of prisoners, freedom comes with many chains.

Digging Deeper

Listen as different people from your group role play some or all of the following situations. Then discuss the questions that follow. Some helpful insights are given after the questions. But *don't peek* until you have tried to answer them on your own.

Roberto's Story

Roberto just got out of prison and has great dreams of what he'd like to do with his life. Although he has only a sixth-grade education, he wants to be a heart surgeon. When he told some friends of that goal, they just laughed in his face. Now he has told the volunteer, hoping for some support.

1. What are Roberto's problems?
2. How can you help Roberto take another look at his goals without making him feel stupid or inadequate?



3. How can you help Roberto set realistic goals for his life?

4. Why is it important to protect a person's self-esteem when giving criticism?

Helpful Insights

Newly released prisoners sometimes have unrealistic dreams for their future. You need to help them think through more realistic goals without attacking their self-esteem.

In the case of Roberto, don't tell him that his goals are impossible to reach. Gently help him to discover that for himself. This method protects his self-esteem.

You might say, "Roberto, becoming a surgeon is a very worthwhile goal. Let's look at what you need to do to reach that goal. First you need to get your G.E.D.—which is equal to your high school diploma. What do you need to do to get that?" Talk about the time commitment needed.

Next, go over the number of years he must spend in college, in medical school, in internship, and residency. Discuss the amount of money he will need and the process he must go through to get accepted to college and medical training. Once he sees the commitment he would need to make, in terms of time and study, he will probably decide on a less demanding career path.

You might want to suggest that he learn CPR or work in a hospital or clinic to see if he likes working in the medical field.

It is better to help people discover their own answers, rather than telling them what you think. And who knows, perhaps Roberto could become a heart surgeon!

Julian's Story

Julian was the leader of a drug-running street gang before he went to prison. As the leader, he controlled the other gang members. *He* gave the orders, and they had to carry them out, or else! The other members respected, served, and feared him.

After his release, Julian got a job as a janitor for minimum wage. Today his boss yelled him for not getting the bathrooms clean. Julian feels insulted being ordered to clean toilets.

He's tired of everyone always telling him what to do. He liked it better when *he* was the one who could

call the shots. And he made a lot more money at it.

1. What are some problems that Julian has to deal with?
2. How can you help Julian with these problems?
3. How can you help him resist the temptation to go back to a "job" that gave him more money and power?

Some ex-prisoners have a "short fuse" when it comes to submitting to authority on the job. They may have spent years having nearly every part of their lives controlled by prison officials. Now they may resist anyone on the outside telling them what to do.

This problem especially tends to erupt when the ex-prisoner is required to do a job that he sees as humiliating. Julian could make thousands of dollars a month as a drug dealer. So he rebelled against cleaning toilets for \$4 an hour.

Many ex-prisoners need to learn good work habits and discipline. Even if they don't like their current job, usually they should be encouraged to stay with it for about a year. Other employers may not want to hire someone who appears to lack loyalty or dependability.

Remind Julian that if he does well at this job now, his good "track record" could later open the door to a more satisfying, higher paying, but still *legal job*. It may be helpful for you and Julian to list the pros and cons of both the legal low-paying job and the illegal high-paying job.

Helpful Insights

Martha's Story

Martha has been out of prison about a month. When the volunteer visits Martha's home, she is surprised at what she finds. Dirty laundry is piled up. Unpaid bills are piling up. Some even have overdue notices on them.

The kitchen cupboards are almost empty. And what is there is mostly junk food—candy, potato chips, sodas, and a couple cans of soup. On the table are ads for expensive new cars.

Martha is having a hard time adjusting to life outside of prison. While there, she didn't have many responsibilities. Prison officials made most of her decisions for her. Now it makes her nervous to have to take care of herself.

1. What are Martha's problems?
2. What might Martha be feeling?
3. How could freedom sometimes seem like bondage to a newly released prisoner?
4. How might you help Martha deal with her lack of discipline and poor decision-making skills?

Helpful Insights

Some ex-prisoners are afraid to make their own decisions. After having most of their decisions made for them in prison, they may lose much of their drive and confidence to now take responsibility for their lives.

Fear leads them to avoid decision making. But leaving things undone often leads to guilt and depression.

Martha needs to accept responsibility for her life. She also needs to gain confidence in her ability to make good decisions. You can help her think through some specific short-term goals that she can easily reach. Keep the goals small at first, and few in number. Then, as she reaches one, she will be encouraged to reach for more.

For example, her goals may include: "Today I will go to the grocery store. Tomorrow morning I will do one load of wash." Be sure to give Martha lots of encouragement and praise each time she meets a goal.

Martha also needs help to understand basic meal planning. Help her plan meals that are more healthful and cheaper than junk food. Then help her make a shopping list from those menus.

You may want to provide a low-cost, easy-to-fix, tasty, healthful meal for her. One example is

bean soup, served with whole-grain bread, a fruit or green salad, and gelatin dessert.

Martha may have some problems that you are not able to handle. You may need to suggest that she see a counselor or seek medical help.

6 Putting It All Together

Now it is time to think about where your interests are, if you don't yet know.

To decide which area of interest you are best suited for, it is important for you to understand your gifts, skills, interests, and desires. This understanding will give you greater confidence to accept responsibilities that will use your talents. It will also help you to use your time and energy in areas that will bring the greatest blessing to both you and others.

On the other hand, it is just as important that you know your weak areas. This helps you to avoid trying to be "a square peg in a round hole" and jumping into areas that could bring you great stress. A person who is tone deaf cannot be expected to sing an opera solo!

G-d has created each of us with unique gifts so that we can work *together* and support one another as we seek to serve, as the Torah tells us, "*ish es ochiv yesoiru*" *we are required to help our brother in their time of need.* No gift is more important than any other. All are needed for the effective functioning.

Your Gifts and Interests

The activities on the following pages are designed to help you to determine the areas that best fit your G-d-given nature. Please be aware that we had to keep the activities short and simple to fit within the time limits of our training. So do not take them as the final and official word on knowing your gifts.

Discovering Your Gifts

Since many of our natural gifts are similar to our spiritual gifts, separate categories are not used here. Instead, we simply refer to gifts. By this we mean your talents, skills, and interests.

G-d created us all as gifted people. He wants to use our whole personality to benefit and serve others, and so bring honor to Him.

Who Are You?

Think about three achievements in your life. These should be situations in which you:

- enjoyed what you did, and
- felt you did it well.

These could be recent achievements or something from your childhood or teenage years. They do not have to be things that other people recognized as achievements. These are things that gave *you* a deep sense of satisfaction.

These achievements could be great or small. That could mean anything from winning a race in your school track meet, to successfully baking a birthday cake.

For each achievement, describe what you did and what was most satisfying about the experience. Some examples are:

"I put together a Sisterhood dinner for our synagogue. It was a great success. Everyone did his or her job well. We had plenty of good food. And all the dishes were ready at the same time! The people all seemed to enjoy themselves. The Rabbi said it was a great event that drew everyone closer together."

"I won a speech contest in high school and was asked to give it at our Homecoming reunion before 1,000 people. I enjoyed being able to communicate publicly to so many people."

"I have been tutoring a high school student who was close to flunking out of school. Sometimes it has been hard to help him understand the lessons—and get him to study! But last week I felt great when he got a Bon his English test."

In the spaces below, write three of your greatest achievements. Answer the questions that follow:

Achievement 1



- Describe the achievement. Be as specific as possible.
- What was most satisfying about it?
- What talents are apparent, based on this achievement?

Achievement 2

- Describe the achievement. Be as specific as possible.
- What was most satisfying about it?
- What talents are apparent, based on this achievement?

Achievement 3

- Describe the achievement. Be as specific as possible.

- What was most satisfying about it?

- What talents are apparent, based on this achievement?

THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU

As you look over your descriptions above, certain patterns may come through. For each pair of statements below, check the one that is true about you most of the time. If you truly feel that both statements in a pair are equally true, you may check both.

Most of the time, do you:

1. like to work as part of a team, or
2. prefer to work by yourself?

3. like to be the leader of a group or project, or
4. contribute as one of its members?

5. like to be in control, giving people specific direction so that things will be done a certain way, or
6. prefer to give general guidelines, allowing others to figure out for themselves how they will get things done?

7. get the most satisfaction from seeing a task completed, or
8. get the most satisfaction from the relationships that develop among those who work together?

9. like working with large groups, or
10. prefer relating to people one to one or in small groups?

11. focus more on addressing spiritual needs, or
12. focus more on meeting practical needs?

13. like to organize people and resources to accomplish a project or goal, or
14. like to carry out plans set by someone else?

15. enjoy delegating tasks to others, or
16. prefer doing the job yourself?

17. tend to be friendly and outgoing, or
18. tend to be quiet and reserved?

19. like being involved in short-term projects where you can see some immediate results, or
20. enjoy working toward long-range projects and goals?

21. enjoy getting in front of a crowd; being in the limelight, or

- 22. ___ prefer to work "behind the scenes"?
- 23. ___ find it easier to research and teach Judaism, or
- 24. ___ help people see how Judaism applies to everyday life situations?
- 25. ___ feel drawn to working directly with people who are hurting or in distress, or
- 26. ___ prefer a more supportive task-oriented role (such as typing letters, setting up schedules, etc.)?
- 27. ___ tend to be strong in "people skills"—encouraging, counseling, listening, teaching, or
- 28. ___ tend to lean toward "task skills"—planning, supervising, working on projects?

Watch Your Priorities

As you consider getting involved in Aleph Institute, be careful that you don't take on too much. You will want to consider ordering your priorities:

1. Family/personal needs
2. Jewish Community / Synagogue
3. Job
4. Volunteer work (including Aleph Institute)

Be sure that any time you spend working with the Aleph Institute does not take you away from your higher commitments to family, synagogue, and job. You must also be careful to take care of your own needs for proper rest, exercise, food, etc. G-d has given each of us 24 hours in a day. It is up to us, to set our priorities right.

Looking at your other responsibilities, how much time can you realistically give to Aleph Institute?

___ hours per (check one): ___ week ___ month ___ quarter