IN 1946 REFORM RABBI JOSHUA LOTH LIEBMAN PUBLISHED Peace of Mind, an inspirational best-seller that declared psychology to be as important as religion to Americans’ spiritual growth. Traditionalist intellectuals, led by the neo-orthodox thinker Will Herberg, were appalled at the incursion of psychotherapeutics into the religious sanctum. They denounced Liebman’s provocative thesis, trumpeting their certainty that traditional religion and psychotherapy did not mix. [1] Their contention, however, met a unique challenge in the 1950s when a young Hasidic rabbi from Milwaukee began working his way through medical school in order to become a psychiatrist.

Standing at the crossroads of religion and psychotherapy, mussar and Twelve Step recovery, the Jewish and the mass market, Abraham Twerski is a rare case study of intellectual and cultural interchange between Judaism and American society. Twerski’s work has not yet been examined as a historical and cultural phenomenon. [2] Therefore, I want to introduce Abraham Twerski as a suitable and even tantalizing subject for scholars and, in so doing, to propose that this Hasidic psychiatrist signifies a major, twentieth-century American shift in the venerable tradition of mussar, Jewish ethical teachings. My essay explores two questions: What changes in the Jewish view of human nature are embodied in his writing? Which elements of American thought and culture does he adapt and incorporate into the mussar tradition? Working in the heart of what one historian has dubbed an “Alcoholic Republic,” Twerski adopted the concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous, through which he gained new insight into both the human condition and Jewish tradition. [3]

Background

Abraham Twerski was born October 6, 1930, one of five sons of Jacob Israel Twerski and Leah Halberstam, both of whom came from distinguished Hasidic families. Immigrating to the U.S. from Russia in 1927, the Twerskis settled in Milwaukee. Jacob served as rabbi of a local congregation until 1939, when he established his own congregation, Beth Yehudah, in his home. All five of the Twerski sons were ordained. The eldest, Shlomo and Motel, worked respectively as a scholar in Denver and an accountant in Brooklyn. The youngest are twins, Aaron, an authority on product liability law who teaches at Brooklyn Law School, and Michel, who succeeded Jacob on his death in 1973. [4]

Abraham was supposed to succeed his father and, as a boy, he was entranced by the procession of people who came to the rebbe for advice and consolation. He, too, wanted this kind of relationship with people, but he recognized that in America clergymen were ceasing to be the sole dispensers of spiritual comfort. Dreading the prospect of being an overseer of ceremonial functions with little pastoral engagement, the younger Twerski resolved upon a different path. "If I had to become a psychiatrist to do what I had to do as a rabbi," he recalled, "then that's what I was going to do." [5]

In 1959, after assisting his father for seven years and graduating from Marquette University Medical School, he left the pulpit to enter the University of Pittsburgh Western Psychiatric Institute, where he completed his psychiatric training in 1963. In 1972 Twerski founded the Gateway Rehabilitation Center in western Pennsylvania, a leading center for the treatment of drug and alcohol abuse. When his father died the following year, Michel took the family pulpit while Abraham expanded his psychiatric ministry. He began writing psycho-spiritual self-help books in 1978 and ultimately produced over twenty books in this genre, some for a general audience and some specifically for Jews. A few of Twerski’s books have sold
over 100,000 copies; in Orthodox bookstores his writings often occupy an exclusive section. [6]

America versus Mussar

From the beginning of his career Twerski had to reckon with powerful trends in American society. He came of age during the time of wonder drugs like the anti-psychotic, Thorazine and the tranquilizer, Librium. Like many others, Twerski at first believed that the pharmacological revolution produced “the means to eliminate all emotional discomfort.” [7] But he began to reconsider this premise after being struck by a magazine advertisement boasting that a brand of milk came from contented cows.

Contentment is then the ideal goal for a cow. Is the same to be said of human beings?... I believe there are essentially three categories of animate beings: animals, angels, and humans.... Animals go after whatever they crave, their only deterrent being pain or the threat of pain. Angels are the opposite of animals. They are pure spirit. They have no drives or desires. They do what they are instructed to do. Human beings are composite beings [with] all the impulses, drives, and cravings of an animal [but] we have a spirit, an ability to develop a mastery over our animal bodies.” [8]

To elaborate his conception of human nature, Twerski treats the readers of Self-Discovery in Recovery, Jewish and non-Jewish, to a Hasidic story. A student of the Baal Shem Toy complained of being frustrated because the harder he strove to come close to God the farther he seemed to be. The Baal Shem prompted the young man to consider a father teaching a child to walk. The child feels frustrated because the father refrains from supporting him so that he will support himself. "Spirituality has its frustrations," Twerski summarized, "because not only do we never arrive at an end point, but quite the contrary, the end point appears to progressively recede. In this sense we can’t ever become totally content.” [9]

The American perfectionist ideal of personal contentment crested in the postwar psychology boom that attracted Twerski even as it grated against his traditional Judaism. Popular books like Joshua Liebman's Peace of Mind and Norman Vincent Peale's Power of Positive Thinking (1952) spurred public belief in the ability of psychology to unlock the mysteries and exorcise the demons of the soul. [10] "A number of years ago,” Twerski writes, "books with titles such as, Peace of Mind or Peace of Soul became popular. Many people were led to believe that ‘tranquillity’ is something like nirvana which is within human reach. I have no doubt that this misconception was responsible for some people seeking this kind of tranquillity in drugs, whether illicit or prescribed." [11] Although Twerski inaccurately characterized Peace of Soul, which was an orthodox Catholic refutation of psychotherapy by Fulton Sheen, he was right to identify the postwar boom in inspirational literature with an almost utopian optimism about the human prospect. The mussar tradition in which he was raised collided with optimism of this kind.

Mussar, which embraces psychology and ethics, starts with the premise that "human beings are created with a yetzer tov (good inclination) and a yetzer hara (evil inclination)," and these, Twerski explains, “are constantly at odds,” locked in “an ongoing struggle throughout a person's lifetime.” [12] The great human vulnerability to the temptations of the yetzer kara can be combatted by following the mitzvot, which are designed to keep the minds of men and women focused on the spiritual high ground, on their divinely inspired possibilities rather than the base dictates of the senses. In its development as a distinct genre of Jewish writing and thought, mussar tended toward a dim view of human nature, emphasizing the potency of the yetzer hara, the mighty efforts required to defeat it, and, in some of the darker works, the hellish punishments that would meet the morally lazy soul. [13]

In many respects, Twerski's understanding of the human condition conforms neatly to classical mussar. He acknowledges an intellectual debt to such masters of mussar as Israel Salanter and Israel Meir Kagan (the Chofetz Chayim), and he stresses the ethics of the Baal Shem Toy. Above all, there is Moses Chayim Luzzatto's masterpiece Mesillat Yesharim (The Path of the Upright), which had a particularly strong influence on his moral education. Twerski considers Mesillat Yesharim "the primer for spirituality" which "is to the soul what oxygen is to the body." [14] Luzzatto dramatically personifies the yetzer hara as a warrior dedicated to deluding and misleading the human mind (ish milchamah hu u-milumad
b'armemiut), causing it to mix up moral categories and to resist change and growth. He likens human confusion to a labyrinthine garden (Ha I'mah zeh domeh? 'gan hamivuchah); the only way the bewildered soul can find his way out is by listening to one who occupies a position of discernment and who warns, "This is the path, take it!" [15] Twerski grew up with this idea of the yetzer hara as Satan, the Tempter, "an angel created by God with a mission to divert people from observing and fulfilling the will of God." [16] Like Luzzatto, he shows special concern for the ways in which the yetzer hara confuses the mind, transforming it into a moral nemesis: "If you cannot resist temptation, that may be bad enough, but at least you may feel the pangs of your conscience and decide that doing something wrong is just not worth it. But if you deceive yourself that what you are doing is really right, then you may never have a chance to correct your behavior. If you have some desires that would result in your doing wrong, don't delude yourself that wrong is right." [17]

Encountering Alcoholism

Mussar's drama of evil and good impulses at war, of muddled self-justification defying clear-sighted self-awareness, found a novel stage in the theater of American alcoholism. In the 1960s Twerski began to encounter the human wreckage of an alcohol- and drug-oriented culture, and he gained a new perspective from the personal struggles of the addicted. One of his earliest books, Caution: "Kindness Can Be Dangerous to the Alcoholic begins with a moving dedication to "Isabel," a woman whose story made a deep impression on Twerski: "As a first-year psychiatric resident, I was assigned to the walk-in clinic. One day a woman came in asking for help. The woman gave the high points of her history. When she was twenty-four, married, and with a baby, she was drinking so heavily that her husband asked for a divorce. Recognizing that she was not fulfilling her functions as a wife and mother, she gave her husband the divorce and custody of the child. Free of all restraints, she now indulged in alcohol even more heavily."

Accustomed to the fiercely family-oriented world of Hasidism, the young Twerski must have been impressed by this woman's decision to abandon her child and husband in order to pursue the decadent pleasure of drinking. Making her story even more compelling, Isabel's degradation was a descent from the top of the social ladder.

Even at sixty-one, when I first met her, Isabel was an attractive woman. She must have been stunning in her younger years, when she was much sought after as a companion, being wined and dined by the social elite. As the years went on and alcohol took its toll, Isabel's social life deteriorated drastically. Between the ages of thirty and fifty-seven, she had more than 65 hospitalizations for "drying out." Her behavior had become so intolerable that her family eventually detached themselves completely from her, even refusing to respond to calls from the hospital. She made several token visits to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), but she never took the program seriously. Eventually she ended up in the skid-row flophouses....

The tenacity of Isabel's bout with alcohol made her recovery mysterious and profoundly challenging to Twerski's sense of human existence: "At the time she consulted me, Isabel had been sober for four years.... Isabel's motivation for sobriety continued to elude me, and although I continued to see her until her death at seventy-four, I never did discover any specific reason for her turning her life around. All I can conclude is that within every person there is a nucleus of self-respect and dignity which, no matter how deeply concealed, exists obstinately." [18]

Perhaps evocative of the dramatic redemptionist mood of Hasidism, the story of Isabel drew Twerski into a world that would redefine his understanding of human nature and broaden his range of experiences beyond anything imaginable to his ancestors. Having stepped outside of his father's Midwestern shtibl, the younger Twerski headed therapeutically into the netherworld of alcohol and drugs. As he himself understood, he was confronting a situation of malaise amid affluence that increasingly defined American life in the postwar era. The descent of Isabel from wealth and prestige must have struck Twerski as a parable of American spirituality, which required individuals so often to cope not with dire want but with bewildering excess.
Twerski's early encounters with the phenomenon of addiction coincided with misgivings about classical psychoanalysis. Admiring Freud's insights into the psychodynamics of the unconscious, especially the concept of repression of intolerable feelings, Twerski nonetheless gave up on psychoanalysis as a therapeutic method. [19] He recalled a conversation with his father that took place when he was training in psychiatry. "I explained some of the theory of psychoanalytic treatment, and that a course of treatment might take several years before results were evident. It was obvious from Father's reaction that he did not think too highly of a treatment that could not produce results for several years." His father then told him a folk tale about a clever Jew who saves his community from expulsion by promising the local nobleman that something he desired would come to fruition in four years if he were to trust in the Jew. The trick relied on the probability that anything might happen within such a long period of time to ease the situation for the Jews. The elder Twerski told his son, "any treatment that takes so long a time is bound to coincide with some changes in the patient's life.... The variables that can occur in a four-year period are legion. How can one attribute any change to the treatment?" [20] Twerski's decision not to practice psychoanalysis was based on a fairly traditional conviction that immediate action had redemptive potential, even without a sophisticated understanding of one's psychological problems. Hence his advice to readers: "Sometimes the best psychotherapy is when we are told to make some changes in our behavior instead of looking for deep-rooted sources for our problems." [21]

Alcoholics Anonymous, an indigenous American movement, provided Twerski with a new framework within which to combine his psychiatric training and Hasidic background. AA was founded in 1935 by two alcoholics, both from Vermont, one a failed New York stockbroker and the other a doctor in Akron, Ohio. "Bill W.," the broker, was an ambitious man driven to prove his worth in the business world. He made a lot of money on Wall Street in the 1920s and lost it after the stock market crashed. His personal trajectory, from stolid Yankee origins and a good marriage to a life of fast money, failed business, and drunken binges, gave AA a foundational story that exposed the tragic consequences of the American dream for individuals without a spiritual grounding. At the moment when Bill W. bottomed out, he experienced a spiritual illumination that was reinforced by an intense reading of William James's observations on spiritual malaise and awakening in The Varieties of Religious Experience. Fortified philosophically by James and practically by a small network of recovering drinkers he met in Akron through his Ohio counterpart, Bill W. turned his conversion experience into weekly meetings with a group of fellow alcoholics in the parlor of his Brooklyn home. Four years after he and "Dr. Bob" founded Alcoholics Anonymous, the group published a book by that name which outlined the Twelve Steps for personal recovery. [22]

After vehement religious debates within the fledgling organization, in which conservatives demanded and liberals refused an explicitly Christian statement of belief, the Twelve Steps were formulated as a non-sectarian monotheistic creed. [23] Focusing on humanity's ultimate and utter dependence on divine help, the first of the Twelve Steps recognizes the gravity of the alcoholic's problem while others delineate a careful agenda of moral and spiritual reformation. [24]

Derived from mainstream Christianity but tempered by a pragmatic, grass-roots ecumenicism, the Twelve Step program is the first case of a spiritually-focused organization to which Jews could belong without compromising their Judaism. [25] The significance of the religious dynamic in Alcoholics Anonymous was captured in Abraham Twerski's comment that he discovered in AA meetings the kind of sincere and even selfless fellow-feeling that was often absent from synagogues. He was moved by the example of men and women who would willingly be awakened in the middle of the night to go out and help a fellow alcoholic. Recovering alcoholics, Twerski observed, "will often exhibit a sense of responsibility far superior to that of the non-alcoholic in relationship to their families, friends, and God." [26] In the almost heart-rending existentialism of AA Twerski saw a primordial religious experience, a dead reckoning with the helplessness and interdependence that define human life.

He was attracted as well by the pragmatism of the Twelve Steps. With roots running back to the American Puritan tradition of rigorous self-examination and public spiritual testimony, the AA system offered a practical, non-analytic therapy that resonated with traditional Judaism much more than conventional
In treating addicts, Twerski discovered the limitations of the psychoanalytic emphasis on understanding the origins of one's behavior. Patients would continue to drink while they inquired with their therapists into the possible reasons for their drinking. The Twelve Step program took the opposite approach, demanding that the person start his or her transformation by stopping the bad behavior. “There is an important similarity between the Torah approach to behavior and the Twelve Step program approach,” Twerski realized.

One does not enter into a discussion or argument with the yetzer hara. Whatever reasons you can propose for one position, the yetzer hara will give several logical reasons to the... When the Israelites received the Torah, they accepted it with the declaration of “We will do and we will listen (understand).” The principle is stated here: First do as you are instructed, whether or not you understand why. After you have done what you are told, you may try to fathom why. [27]

Twelve Steps to Mussar

The resemblance Twerski perceives between mussar and Twelve Steps is a dominant theme in his writings. In I Am I, a unique volume of what might be called psycho-responsa whose title comes from an intriguing epigram of the Kotzker Rebbe, Twerski answered the distressed appeal of a rebbetzin suffering from severe weight problems. The woman was bulimic until she became a mother, at which point she started overeating chronically. Troubled by emotional instability since adolescence and desperate to stop her compulsive eating, she decided to attend an Overeaters Anonymous meeting. Her husband, however, objected to this on the grounds that the group was a non-Jewish religious organization. To the rebbetzin’s personal and marital dilemma, Twerski replied, “the twelve steps of AA or OA are not in any way incompatible with Jewish philosophy or halakhah.” “It is true that group meetings are often held in churches, but this is primarily because they have not been invited into synagogues.... Some of the terminology that is used in the twelve step programs may have a non-Jewish flavor, but this does not reflect on the content.... The substance of the twelve steps seems to be not only compatible with Jewishness, but seems to be taken in toto out of classical Jewish ethical works.” [28]

In advocating the Twelve Step way to a Jewish audience, Twerski braces himself against gut-level resistance to an external entity with apparently sordid attributes. “The traditional belief that ‘shikker iz a goy,’” he writes, has led rabbis and community officials to perceive AA meetings as appropriate for churches but not for synagogues or other Jewish facilities. [29] To refute this stereotype, Twerski cleverly presents the theme of alcoholism not as a modern American phenomenon but rather as part-and-parcel of rabbinic discourse. He refers to Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, who cites Midrash Tanhuma on the drunken man whose family escorts him to witness an obviously drunk and degraded man. To his family's dismay, he bends over the fallen man and whispers in his ear, "My good man, where did you get such fine wine?" [30] To those who would claim that the problem of addictive behavior is secondary or even peripheral to the observant Jew, Twerski answers, "one cannot consider oneself to be truly observant if one neglects mussar.” And for Twerski mussar entails dealing with “the psychological mechanism of denial [which] can blind a person to even the most obvious self-destructive behavior.” [31]

In Twerski’s therapeutic lexicon, heshbon hanefesh [32] and “a thorough personal inventory” axe synonymous. The equation rests on the fact that both concepts bear the same psychological load, each demanding strict self-examination for moral and spiritual weaknesses. In Self-Improvement? I’m Jewish! Twerski gently introduces presumably orthodox readers to the therapeutic language of recovery by intertwining Twelve Step philosophy with traditional texts and interpretation. Citing Talmudic passages on the value of studying Torah and praying in a group, Twerski urges Jews to embrace the AA model of working in groups as a means of recovering from self-defeating behavior. [33] Similarly, he integrates biblical exegesis with such AA concepts as "one day a time." [34] To explicate Genesis 29:20, describing Jacob's seven years laboring for Rachel as being "like a few days," he uses a more literal translation of yamim achadim as "singular days." Given Jacob’s great love for Rachel, Twerski asserts, "like a few days" poses an incongruity, because being apart from one’s beloved makes time seem longer, not shorter. The word singular, however, captures the experience, for it suggests "the only way Jacob was able to tolerate the long separation was by surviving one day at a time.” [35] Near the end of Self-
Improvement? I'm Jewish! Twerski explicitly commends the Twelve Steps even while acknowledging that its insights are all contained in Torah.

Innovating Mussar

Twerski's effort to identify mussar and Twelve Steps raises the question of whether his work represents a significant change in the mussar tradition or a repackaging of it in a contemporary form. Twerski himself considers his work mussar, but he is ambiguous and perhaps uncertain about whether it is unique. "If it's innovative," he says of his writing, "it is in a sense of expanding on and elucidating what some of the early mussar people said. I've taken what they said and packaged it in a way with concepts that can be applied and accepted and understood by the contemporary person. Maybe that's innovative but it's not revolutionary." While Twerski's work is faithful to traditional mussar in some respects, it deviates from and perhaps embellishes it in others.

To begin with, Twerski's thought tests on the assumption that psychological explanations are a vital supplement to the purely religious conception of human behavior. Traditional mussar, which was fully formed and elaborated centuries before the birth of the social and psychological sciences, was not begging modern philosophy or secular theory for help in deciphering and reforming human conduct. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Israel Salanter made some preliminary steps toward integrating the concept of the unconscious into mussar. He recognized the presence of dark, invisible forces beneath the level of conscious thought, which could belie and at any moment ruin even the most pious person. In seeing the disjunction between conscious and unconscious dispositions, Salanter lined up with the emerging theorists of human psychology in continental Europe. Nevertheless, his innovation was inchoate and did not really alter the traditional Jewish approach to human behavior, which insisted on the need to battle the Evil Urge with counteractive habits.

By contrast, Twerski's mussar depends fundamentally on psychological categories in spite of his rejection of psychoanalysis as a therapeutic tool. The back cover of Getting Up When You're Down, published by Shaar--"The Judaic Imprint for Thoughtful People"--makes a virtual declaration of the necessity of modern psychological knowledge: "Modern medical science now knows that depression and many related emotional conditions are not bad words at all. Nor are they symptoms of weakness. Not only is it not helpful to say, 'snap out of it,' or 'don't be so moody,' or 'why don't you cheer up?'--such judgments betray an abysmal lack of understanding that most such moods are physical problems that can be remedied with the proper understanding and treatment."

Although he would be the first to admit that Torah contains all the wisdom people need if only they knew how to look for it, Twerski can be vocal about the narrow-mindedness of those who summarily reject psychotherapy. "When a person consults a psychiatrist or psychologist about a problem," he encourages his readers, "he has already taken a major step toward its solution: he has recognized that there is a problem and has admitted that he needs help." Most of Twerski's responsa give fairly traditional mussar advice, on the importance of Kivud av v'em (honoring parents), looking at one's own lapses before criticizing others, and so forth. But, in one case he saw fit to upbraid a traditional Jew for his anti-psychiatric prejudices. The case involved a young yeshiva bocher who suddenly and inexplicably went through a radical mood swing. His father adamantly refused to take the advice of family friends to get the young man psychological help and a diagnosis. Twerski attributed the father's resistance to fear of a possible diagnosis of mental illness and concern about the effect on a shiduch (marriage contract) if the man's problem became known and was construed as a sign of genetic defectiveness in his family.

While sympathizing with the man's dilemma, Twerski nonetheless warned against concealing psychological problems: "withholding treatment cannot be justified." Moving from the particular to the general, he emphasized how important it was for Jews to confront the reality of psychic disturbances in their communities. "The incidence of the group of related psychiatric disorders-depression, phobias, anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder--among Jews is quite high," he instructed, "and it is rare to find a family that does not have a case." Failure to deal objectively with these problems will usually make them worse, putting potential spouses and children at risk. In a case like this, the halakhah
dovetailed with psychotherapeutics, for, as Twerski reminded his readers, there is an obligation upon witnesses to inform a potential spouse's family of a significant irregularity in the behavior of a mate. [39]

Mental Physiology and Mussar

Much as it is impossible for a psychiatrist to ignore or overlook obvious psychological problems, so Twerski's training in the biochemistry of the brain inevitably led him to abandon the strict and often austere moral economy of traditional mussar. He cannot simply exhort, in the ancestral way, about human laziness. If a person seems incapacitated by depression, Twerski must investigate the possibility of a biochemical problem before resorting to the conventional prescription of mussar-the performance of mitzvot. Even such a seemingly ordinary activity as drinking coffee, Twerski has noted, can destabilize a person suffering from anxiety attacks or one who is not responding to treatment for a severe agitated depression. [40] The old mussar formula of "intellect + will [greater than] emotions," though not completely outmoded by modern psychology, cannot stand uncontested and unamended in the Jewish world as it once did. "In spite of our colloquialisms that emotions originate in the heart," Twerski observes in the illustratively titled, Who Says You're Neurotic: How to Avoid Mistaken Psychiatric Diagnoses When the Problem May Be a Physical Condition, "all emotions reside in the brain, as do also our reasoning, intellect, judgment, and memory." [41] (Here we see the inversion that science has performed on the traditional moral concept embodied in the phrase "meditations of my heart"-hegyon libi. [42])

Twerski himself only gradually moved away from the older mussar view of human willfulness to what would now be considered a scientific understanding of psychological blocks that impede and stultify constructive behavior. "In my earlier days of doing psychotherapy, treating persons with a negative self-image was most distressing," he recalled--"I would become angry because it seemed to me that the patient preferred to wallow in the mire of his fantasied worthlessness, in spite of my best efforts to confront him with the truth about himself." Over time he realized that a logical critique was often of no avail in helping patients overcome self-defeating behavior rooted in self-deprecation. "The trick in therapy," he concluded, using the English equivalent of the word mussar employed (tachbulah) to describe both the evil urge and methods to defeat it, "is to remove the distortion" of view that hindered psychological and moral growth. [43] Starting out with an old-fashioned moralism that emphasized the stubborn will as chief stumbling block to self-improvement, Twerski ended up with the premise that psychological blocks were essentially involuntary and therefore tantamount to physical disabilities, albeit ones subject to remedy.

His enthusiasm for the methodology of AA led inexorably to this realization, for the organization's operating principle was to replace the old and largely inefficient moralistic approach to drinking with a more nuanced and empathic concept of addictive behavior. Recognizing the inherent limitations of moral exhortation and admonition in dealing with addicts, Twerski preached to his fellow therapists: you cannot rely on the assumption that people are necessarily in control of themselves. [44]

The idea that habitual conduct may overwhelm the mind-not simply challenge but overwhelm it-is something alien to classic mussar, even though this literature often betrayed a pessimistic sense of the intractability of habit. Mussar's major premise was, and had to be, that the rational mind is God's gift enabling men and women to discern and defeat the evil urge. The twentieth-century understanding of the limits of rationality, purveyed in Twerski's case through the field of mental physiology, undermined at least this one of mussar's cornerstones. Luzzatto himself pleaded for a more intellectually sophisticated understanding of human behavior than the brute behaviorism of "the recitation of many Psalms, very long confessions, difficult fasts, and ablutions in ice and snow" was bound to promote. [45] Had he lived two centuries later, he most certainly would not have disregarded the insights into mind and emotion with which Twerski's generation contended.

One of the insights at the heart of modern psychology was that of the malleability and interdependence of physical and emotional states. An incident with one of his patients moved Twerski to insist on the most comprehensive, holistic approach possible in the treatment of people. The case involved a woman suffering from emotional stress, which she could not think of as a serious problem. As a result, she
developed physical symptoms of sudden and inexplicable pain, the only kind of problem that would be considered worthy of emergency help at 1:00 a.m. When doctors took a battery of tests and found nothing, they incorrectly told the woman that there was nothing wrong with her: "If nothing had been wrong with Beatrice, she would not have felt the pain or have been short of breath.... The doctor reached a faulty conclusion because of the kind of mentality prevalent in many medical schools and among many physicians, which considers the human being to be a conglomerate of organs, much like a complicated piece of machinery...Pain does not necessarily mean something is wrong with an organ. Pain means that the person is hurting." [46]

Drawing on some of the founding observations of modern psychology, Twerski elaborated on the nature of the unconscious as a regulator of physical states. "The human unconscious is unbelievably shrewd and efficient," he writes--"The conscious mind is simply not to be trusted with the regulation of breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, and metabolism. It is only the much wiser unconscious that can be trusted with the very essentials of life." [47]

Although Twerski's understanding of the mind-body, physio-psychological connection adds a new dimension to mussar, it does not contradict many of the essential tenets of that tradition. His analysis of the psychology of self-mastery, for example, starts with an awareness of the often involuntary nature of a response such as anxiety. But after the initial feeling arises, Twerski would maintain, it is up to the person to see how he or she is handling that emotion, in order not to act destructively toward others or oneself. In addition, God must be relied on through prayer, to take care of that which is beyond human power to fix. In traditional mussar, the yetzer kara is identified as the source of the "bad" emotion. For Twerski, the yetzer kara kicks in after the physiological response does, using techniques like denial and rationalization to prevent a person from looking clearly at a problem. [48]

Americanization

Twerski's concept of the unconscious leaves him standing with one foot in the world of the Baal Shem Toy and the other in the world of William James. In an exegetical exercise, he cites the Mishnaic statement that every day a voice comes from Mount Horeb saying, "Woe to those who forsake the Torah." [49] The Baal Shem Tov, he continues, asked, "Since no one has ever heard this voice, what good is it?" and answered his own question by saying that the soul hears it even though people don't hear it as an audible sound. "Today, with our knowledge of subliminal stimuli, the Baal Shem Tov's explanation is easily understood," Twerski interpolates--"The Divine voice is subliminal, and although we perceive it, we are not aware that we are perceiving it." [50] This description of the connection between the Divine and the Unconscious sounds very much like the one in William James' Varieties of Religious Experience (1902), which elegantly presented an American transcendentalist interpretation of the subconscious as a conduit for the divine. [51]

Twerski's psychological orientation gives his thought an empathic quality and an optimism typical of American inspirational writing in the postwar era though foreign to classical mussar. For all that he distances himself from the "peace of mind" genre of the 1940s and 1950s Twerski focuses on the same theme that motivated Joshua Loth Liebman's writing: the importance of self-acceptance. Liebman's credentials as a founder of America's therapeutic culture must be based not so much on the homage he paid to psychology as on the eloquent and forceful articulation he gave to the human problem of self-deprecation. Liebman insisted that spiritual growth depended on self-acceptance. [52] Twerski's work revolves around the same point.

To grow and mature, he writes, "it is first necessary to realize that groundless assumptions of inadequacy are at the root of many of our problems. If we can only discover that we are really much better than we think we are, we maybe able to enjoy a happier and more productive life." [53] This insight was a foundation stone for Twerski, one he laid early in his career as an inspirational writer. His first book, Like [Yourself.sup.*] ([and.sup.*] others will, too), contends that many psychological problems, aside from those with a biochemical cause, come from one major personality trait: negative self-image. [54]
Even though the emphasis on proper self-esteem seems more congruent with American optimism than with Jewish irony, Twerski speculates on the traditional sources of his orientation.

My clinical emphasis on the importance of attaining a positive self-concept and avoiding self-flagellation may have had its origin in an anecdote about the Chafetz Chayim (Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen) which Father repeated many times. One time the Chafetz Chayim was riding home to Radin and had the driver stop to pick up a man walking along the road. Along the way, the man mentioned he was journeying to visit the Chafetz Chayim, to which the Chafetz Chayim replied that he didn't see why the man was going to such effort because the Chafetz Chayim wasn't so special. The man then slapped the Chafetz Chayim in the face. Later in Radin the man met the Chafetz Chayim and immediately bowed down, asking for forgiveness. The Chafetz Chayim said there is no need for this, as the man was defending him. "But I did learn something new from this experience. I have always pointed out how wrong it is to belittle others. Now, I know it is also wrong to belittle oneself." [55]

The lesson of the Chofetz Chaim notwithstanding, Twerski knows that his emphasis on self-acceptance departs from the mainstream of mussar. In trying to fathom why this should be so, he speculates that perhaps in earlier generations the problem of low self-esteem was less urgent. After Darwin and Freud, however, humanity faced a crisis in the form of psychological determinism and the denial of special creation. These theories, Twerski concludes, had an effect on the self-esteem "of even the Torah-true Jew." [56]

So, in contrast to the darker and more stoic sensibility of mussar classics like Mesillat Yesharim, Abraham Twerski's postwar American therapeutic brand includes a softer touch and more empathetic disposition. Using the confessional format as a way of establishing emotional rapport with his readers, Twerski openly describes his own confrontation with unpleasant inner impulses and his all-too-human deduction that he must be an unworthy person to harbor such feelings. In grappling with this crisis of self-esteem, Twerski ultimately found an answer in the Talmud (B. Shabbat 89a) which explained that people have been given the mitzvot precisely because they have been endowed with animal impulses. "The discovery of animalistic traits within myself," he explains to his readers, "was no reason for me to consider myself to be a 'bad' person."

Many people are indeed incapable of tolerating themselves, because they harbor self-directed feelings of negativity. Their discomfort with themselves may be so great that they employ a variety of tactics, some of them quite drastic, to escape or to deny their identity as they perceive it.... These people are in actuality fine, competent, and likable people.... Instead of seeing themselves as they really are, they somehow develop a distorted image of themselves, and it is this distorted image, which they assume to be the real image, that becomes intolerable. [57]

The accessible, nurturing tone of Twerski's writing was acknowledged by Betty Ford, who wrote in praise of I'd Like to Call for Help, But I Don't Know the Number, "Abe Twerski provides us with an understanding of our spiritual side.... It's like a conversation with a warm and trusted friend." [58]

Mussar's New Look

In this very typical example of Twerski's style, we can begin to catalogue the innovations he introduces into the mussar mode. First, while clearly grounded in the morality of traditional Judaism, Twerski focuses his readers' attention not so much on moral injunction, as in classic mussar, but on psychological equilibrium. Second, in his mass-market books, like the one from which the passage above is taken, his citation of the Talmud and other Jewish sources injects a distinctly Jewish and Hasidic element into the genre of modern spiritual guidebooks. Third, the tone and content of his writings is empathic rather than hortatory. Twerski's popular books naturally include stylistic elements that are foreign to traditional Jewish writing. When writing for the general public, Twerski uses secular reference points and makes fewer references to God than in his writing for the Jewish market. He also departs from the convention of not spelling out "God" (for fear that the general reader might think "G-d" signified a curse). [59]
The challenges of adapting mussar to the American mass market also stimulated Twerski to introduce a novel pictorial dimension into some of his most popular books: Charlie Brown and the other characters of the "Peanuts" comic strip. "We owe a debt of gratitude to the creator of Charlie Brown, Lucy, Linus, Snoopy, and their friends for helping us understand ourselves a bit better," Twerski writes of Charles M. Schulz, whom he lauds for possessing "an intuitive grasp of human nature and an uncanny ability to condense the most sophisticated psychological concepts into a few cartoon frames." [60] Twerski became convinced of the therapeutic value of cartoon humor when he once tried in vain to convince a patient that he had a drinking problem. Finally, Twerski showed the man a few "Peanuts" comic strips of Charlie Brown missing a football time and time again but rationalizing that things were going to be different this year, rather than learn from his mistakes and try to change. The patient was able to recognize his own weaknesses in the comic strip. "Charlie Brown had been able to reach this patient in a way that I could not," Twerski observed--"As a psychiatrist I appeared formidable and threatening.... However, Charlie Brown was innocent and harmless.... Insights that come from the patient rather than from the therapist are always more effective." [61] Twerski also puts other comics to therapeutic duty, such as those of cartoonist Bill Hoest portraying patients speaking to their analysts: "This inferiority complex I've got.... I assume it's not a very good one, is it?" or "You've restored my ego to the point where I now feel the need of a more prominent doctor." [62]

Mussar Meets Spirituality

As striking as this audience-driven, stylistic innovation may be, another aspect of Twerski's relationship with American readers forces a more important departure from classical mussar. Twerski writes not only to an ecumenical audience but also to readers who are atheist. "Although I may quote the scriptures and other theological writings in elaborating on spirituality, this need no longer imply that spirituality can be achieved only through religion," Twerski writes, expressing what would have been both unthinkable and incomprehensible to his ancestors. "While there are specific religious references to spirituality, I invite the nonreligious reader to consider them at their face value, and if they are incompatible with his belief or nonbelief, to feel free to reject them. I trust that enough substance will remain even after this winnowing process to be of value to even an ardent atheist." [63]

It is in a passage like this that the migration from the pastoral to the psychological is most immediately apprehended. The pastor is obliged, as a servant of God, to bring the atheist into closer proximity to religion, though ever so slightly. The psychologist is obliged, unless he or she makes a point of serving clients who share a religious practice, of treating people regardless of their beliefs about God.

The apparent neutrality about atheism in Twerski's writing, however, reflects more than equanimity from the discipline of psychotherapy. It is a sign of the times, specifically the tolerance for individual differences that characterized American society in the last three decades of the twentieth century, as a result of the youth revolt of the 1960s. A juxtaposition of Twerski and Joshua Liebman illustrates the point. Although he was a dedicated liberal, Liebman left atheists out in the cold. In fact, Liebman used psychoanalysis (of the most simplistic kind) to ostracize them, contending that atheism resulted from "emotional conflict and disturbed human relationships in the early years of life." [64] This sort of peremptory judgment against atheism by a religious liberal fit well into the intellectual context of the immediate postwar era, which historians have sardonically defined in terms of President Eisenhower's statement that every American ought to have a religious faith regardless of what it is. By the time Abraham Twerski joined the ranks of inspirational authors, the therapeutic model of society that Liebman heralded had achieved dominance. The empathetic mode in which Twerski engaged with "even the most ardent atheist," which was embryonic in the 1940s and 1950s, had achieved full form by the 1980s and 1990s.

So too, as "spirituality" emerged alongside or perhaps in tension with religion after the 1960s, it entered into Twerski's brand of mussar. The concept of spirituality did for American religious life what Reconstructionism did within the Jewish world--it expanded the circle of religious participants to include non-theists. "The human uniqueness of the capacity to make a free moral choice is a major component of the spirit, and exercising this capacity is being spiritual," Twerski contends--"It is clear that even a person who does not have a religious orientation can conceptualize himself as being free, and is thus capable of
being spiritual." [65] The incorporation of "spirituality" into mussar can be seen as a complete departure from tradition in its allowance of the nonreligious—or it might be viewed as a modern equivalent of the traditional Noahidic "exception." Even in the latter case, it must be said that whereas the Noahides are encompassed in the Jewish ethical framework based on their acceptance of the absolute sovereignty of God (and six other commandments), the non-religious "spiritual" person would be annexed to the house of mussar on a slimmer though still important condition, acceptance of moral responsibility for one's actions.

Twerski's observations on "spirituality" make it clear that he invests the concept with more than transient meaning, thereby giving it a greater claim for credibility within the mussar system. Just as idolatry was (and is) Judaism's nemesis and Noahide status required the rejection of idolatry, spirituality, as Twerski understands it, acts as an antidote to the narcissism that he considers the primary form of idolatry in the modern world. Twerski tells the story of a man who walked out of an AA meeting, saying "this isn't for me" because of the references to God. He later returned with the caveat that he would accept the Twelve Step program entirely, except for the theistic clause ("the God business"). After being assigned to a sponsor who told him to pray, he replied that he could not pray to God. Twerski admonished the man, "just pray anyway, because if you want to get better you've got to pray everyday.... when I pray that tells me I'm not God." According to Twerski, even among the ancient Jews idolatry was primarily egocentric: "Jews never thought the idols had power; the only reason they went to idolatry is that they wanted sanction for their physical drives. You'll develop a system for what you want." When Twerski says, "I've got to tell everybody that they've got to get spirituality no matter what way they're going to find it," he means that in the absence of a spiritual focus one's life will inevitably be self-centered. Because modern American society, and the modern mind, is monotheistically structured, Twerski observes, people have two options, to accept their ultimate powerlessness in the face of an almighty God or to have "a godlike delusion" and project the self as the almighty, all-consuming power. [66]

Twerski's concept of "spirituality" lends itself to another, less generic and more affirmative interpretation as well, akin to Martin Buber's "religiosity," the state of intensified, fully activated religious feeling. [67] "The goal of the Jew," Twerski writes, "is attainment of spirituality," and he sees "Luzzatto, other ethicists, and the Chassidic masters" as preaching this lesson. Spirituality, in Twerski's usage, signifies the features "that distinguish man from other forms of life." These consist of the abilities that coalesce around the ideal of heshbon hanefesh, as idealized by the tzaddik who every night wrote down the events of the day, noted ways he acted improperly and wept regretfully, "until the tears washed away the recording of the sin." [68]

On the one hand, Twerski's "spirituality" represents an assimilation of the contemporary American religious vocabulary into the Jewish ethical tradition. At its least substantive, this act of assimilation is semantic; spirituality is a neologism for heshbon hanefesh. On a deeper level, the merging of spirituality into mussar is an episode of cultural assimilation, or acculturation, a meeting of contemporary American and traditional Jewish sensibilities. "Today we need to make religion more understandable," Twerski observes, comparing the effort to synthesize therapy and mussar with the earlier movements of the Baal Shem Toy and Israel Salanter to renew and reenergize Jewish society. [69] In this belief, Twerski echoes Milton Steinberg's commentary on Liebman's Peace of Mind, which Steinberg felt rose to the major intellectual challenge of the twentieth century: reconciling religious tradition with the psychological model of humankind. [70]

Abraham Twerski's career illustrates how subtle and complex the American-Jewish interaction can be. While retaining the ideas of Hasidism, Twerski crafted his expertise and philosophy out of American materials. His psychiatric training sharpened his awareness of the involuntary nature of some human behavior and added a new psychological dimension to mussar. His desire to write for the American mass market changed both the form and content of his ideas. The mussar tradition Twerski inherited was not the same one he bequeathed; the optimistic, empathetic tone, the powerful emphasis on self-acceptance, the consciousness of physio-psychology and the exploration of spirituality all reflected a modern American context. American inspirational literature also changed from contact with mussar, especially as it gained some of the color and warmth of the Baal Shem Toy.
A footnote about Twerski’s relationship to Charles Schulz will provide a fitting conclusion to this case study of the Americanization of mussar. The psychiatrist views the cartoonist as a sort of untutored genius whose insights into human nature wanted an explicitly psychotherapeutic expression. Twerski recalled having said half-jokingly to Schulz, “I’m your Americus.” [71] The choice of words is fascinating, suggesting the image of the Hasidic Jew Americanizing an American cultural icon. Within the paradox, though, lies the plain meaning—that Twerski intended to lift Charlie Brown out of the realm of entertainment and place him onto the spiritual high ground of mussar. Just as Vespucci perceived that America was not Asia, so Twerski, by recognizing the psychological value of Schulz’s work, aimed to give it a new and redeeming significance. Of course, in the same moment that he recontextualized Schulz’s piece of American popular culture, Schulz reshaped Twerski’s brand of mussar. More broadly, as Twerski reconfigured the Twelve Steps and modern psychology to fit the frame of Jewish ethical literature, this literature was itself reworked in the American grain.

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NOTES

I would like to thank Professors Murray Baumgarten, Arnie Eisen, and Ira Robinson for their helpful comments on this article.


(2.) For a short survey of the psychologization of Judaism from Mordecai Kaplan to the present day, which includes a brief discussion of Twerski, see Andrew R. Heinze, “Judaism and the Therapeutic,” The Reconstructionist (Spring, 1996): 27-35.


(4.) Encyclopedia Judaica, v. 17 (Supplement), 587; on Aaron, see Brooklyn Law School web page [http://www.brooklaw.edu/school/news/items/endow.shtml]; in a telephone conversation of May 3, 1999, Abraham Twerski noted that his brother Motel died in 1998 and that Shlomo passed away in 1986. The information about his father’s serving a local congregation and then starting a shul in his home also came from this conversation.

(5.) Author’s interview with Abraham J. Twerski, January 21, 1998. (Hereafter cited: “Twerski interview”)

(6.) Twerski’s titles and publishers run a gamut that suggests the scope and personality of his work: Self-Improvement? I’m Jewish! (Mesorah)... Life’s Too Short (St. Martin’s)... I Didn’t Ask to Be in This Family: Sibling Relationships & How They Shape Adult Behavior & Dependencies (Henry Holt)... Self Discovery in Recovery (Harper)... Living Each Day (Mesorah)... The Shame Borne in Silence: Spouse Abuse in the Jewish Community (Mirkov)... Who Says You’re Neurotic? (Prentice Hall)... Waking Up Just in Time (St. Martin’s)... I’d Like to Call for Help, But I Don’t Know the Number (St. Martin’s)... Caution: Kindness Can Be Dangerous to the Alcoholic (Macmillan)... The Clergy and Chemical Dependency (Edgehill).


(8.) Twerski, Self-Discovery in Recovery, p. 98.

(9.) Twerski, Self-Discovery in Recovery, pp. 99-100.
(10.) Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 955-956; E. Brooks Holifield, A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), pp. 260-269. The Power of Positive Thinking is not as conspicuously concerned with psychology as Peace of Mind is, but Norman Vincent Peale was one of the first Protestant ministers to incorporate psychoanalytical ideas into American religion. He developed a pastoral psychology institute in the 1930s and co-authored several popular books with psychiatrist Smiley Blanton.


(12.) Twerski, I Am I, p. 235.

(13.) Mussar writers of course held out the possibility of repentance for sin and urged their readers to take the "straight path." Nonetheless, Israel Zinberg, in comparing the authors of Kav Ha Yashar ("The Right Way") and Shevet Musar("The Rod of Instruction"), writes of the latter, "because the human heart is obstinate (hartnekik is doch dem menschen's hark), [he] avails himself of the same method used so willingly by the author of Kay Ha Yashar, the rod of terror and dread (der rut fun shrek un eyme)." See, Di Geschichte fun der Literatur bay Yidn, 10 vols. (New York, 1943), v. 5, 198. See especially v.5, pp. 184-224, 320-339. In the English translation by Bernard Martin, A History of Jewish Literature (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1975), the corresponding pages are in v. 6, pp. 155-190, 271-286.


(15.) Moses Chayim Luzzatto Mesillat Yesharim (The Path of the Just), (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1990), pp.30, 36, 40. This edition, with translation into English by Shraga Silverstein, was first published in 1966.


(19.) Twerski, Good Things, p. 52; Twerski interview.

(20.) Twerski, Generation to Generation, pp. 214-215.

(21.) Twerski, Good Things, p. 6.


(23.) Alcoholico Anonymous Comes of Age, pp. 160-167.

(24.) "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
We humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs." See Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (New York: Harper, 1952).

(25.) Freemasonry has historically been attractive to Jews and also requires monotheistic belief but it is primarily a social rather than spiritual organization.

(26.) Twerski, Self-Discovery in Recovery, p. 118.

(27.) Twerski, Self-Discovery in Recovery, pp. 94--96.

(28.) Twerski, I Am I, p. 209.

(29.) Twerski, Self-Improvement?, p. 86.

(30.) Twerski, Self-Improvement?, p.27. See the lengthy discourse on drinking in Tanhuma, parashat Shemini, the fifth section.


(32.) Heshbon ha-nefesh means an "accounting of the soul," or moral and spiritual self-examination. It is a dominant concept of mussar.

(33.) Twerski, Self-Improvement?, pp. 40--41, 77--80. The Talmudic citations are: B. Makkot 10a and B. Berachot 6a, 8a.

(34.) "One day at a time" is a slogan of AA and the Twelve Step program; it stands for the idea of meeting an immense challenge in a manageable way, focusing one's attention on surviving in the present moment rather than confronting the prospect of a formidable long-term transformation.

(35.) Twerski, Self-Improvement?, p. 67.

(36.) Twerski interview.

(37.) Immanuel Etkes, Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), passim, but especially pp. 289--312. This study appeared originally in 1982 under the title Rabbi Yisrael Salanter ve-Reshitah shel ha-Mussar. The three most important mussar writers in the "modern" era (late nineteenth-twentieth century) are Salanter, the Chofetz Chayim (Israel Meir Kagan) and Abraham Isaac Kook, all of whom were innovators. Psychological theory, however, does not really enter this literature until the late twentieth century, with Twerski and two other Orthodox rabbis, Zelig Pliskin, who is eclectic, and Reuven Bulka, an adherent of Victor Frankl’s logotherapy. Of these three, only Twerski has "crossed over" into the mass market, a fact that makes his writings especially inviting for
intellectual and cultural history. For an overview of the modern period of mussar written just prior to the emergence of the "psychological" writers, see Joseph Dan, Sifrut ha-Mussar v'ha Derush (Jerusalem: Bet Hotsa'ah Keter Yerushalayim, 1975), 264-272.


(39.) Twerski, I Am I, p. 65.


(42.) The first few pages of Luzzatto's Mesillat Yesharim give a good idea of the traditional concept of the heart as the seat of human motivation and even discernment. For example, in describing how the yetzer hara causes men to become too busy and thus neglectful of proper introspection, Luzzatto says that this time pressure works against their hearts (l'hachbeed avodato b'tamidut al libot bnai ha-adam), p. 30.


(44.) Twerski, Caution, p. 93.

(45.) Mesillat Yesharim, p. 4.

(46.) Twerski, Who Says, p. 146.

(47.) Twerski, Who Says, p. 145.

(48.) Twerski, Self-Improvement?, pp. 50-52.

(49.) Pirke Avot 6:2 - literally, "who insult the Torah"(me-elbonah shel Torah).

(50.) Twerski, Self-Improvement?, p. 60.


(52.) Heinze, "First Mass Market Rabbi," p. 15.


(54.) Twerski, Like Yourself p. 6.

(55.) Twerski, Generation to Generation, pp. 90-91. Twerski also cites the Talmud (B. Sukkah, 53a) on Hillel, who was considered "second only to Moses in humility," but who said "If I am here, all is here." "Without a proper, healthy sense of "I," there can be no humility." I Am I, p. 11.

(56.) Twerski, I Am I, p. 40.

(57.) Twerski, I'd Like to Call for Help, But I Don't Know the Number (New York: St. Martin's), pp.24-25.

(58.) See the back cover of the book, original 1991 edition.
(59.) Twerski interview. In I'd Like to Callfor Help, But I Don't Know the Number, Twerski begins every chapter with a quotation, primarily from non-Jews including Abraham Lincoln, Helen Keller, Carl Sandburg, James Thurber, Thoreau, Beethoven, Carlyle, Hegel, and Gandhi in addition to a few anonymous proverbs from Europe and Asia. Among the Jews cited is Felix Adler, who, as founder of the atheist Ethical Culture Society, personified the utter secularization of the tradition that is dear to Twerski. Although Twerski attributes the use of these quotations to his publisher, he also justifies them by the principle that one should accept wisdom, from any source. (The quote from Adler was: “The purpose of man's life is not happiness but worthiness.”)

(60.) Twerski, I Didn't Ask, p. 113; Good Things, p. 7.

(61.) Twerski, Good Things, pp. 9-10.


(63.) Twerski, I'd Like to Call, pp. 7-8.


(65.) Liebman, Peace of Mind, p. 15.

(66.) Twerski interview.


(68.) Twerski, Self-Improvement, pp. 40-41.

(69.) Twerski interview.

(70.) See Heinze, "First Mass Market Rabbi," p. 17.

(71.) Twerski interview.