

Exiles in America
A Spiritual Odyssey of Trauma, Healing, and Wholeness

2017 Caring for the Human Spirit Conference



"By the Rivers of Babylon" by Eugène Delacroix

Exiles in America

Pathways to Recovery, Healing, and Wholeness: A Biblical Image

EXILES

When Warriors Fall
Carried Off the Battlefield
By The Rivers of Babylon
Rebuilding in Babylon
Dry Bones Coming Home
A Light to The World

WOUNDED WARRIORS

Exiles and Warriors United in Struggle
Babylonia to Bethesda
Waking Up In ICU
The New Normal
Finding Strength to Carry On
Pay it Forward

Two defining moments ending in a collision of concepts.

3

Two defining moments ending in a collision of concepts.

"Will my soul ever heal?"

4

Two defining moments ending in a collision of concepts.



5

Two defining moments ending in a collision of concepts.



"We can't talk about that."

6

Two defining moments ending in a collision of concepts.

Millions of people throughout the world suffer from the psychological aftermath of trauma. Buildings may be replaced and infrastructure rebuilt, but to rebuild the hearts and minds of men, women, and children a different kind of skilled intervention is required. After a traumatic experience, people need help to overcome their isolation, to mitigate the psychological consequences of the trauma and the again find meaning and purpose in their lives for body, mind, and spirit. It is often the spiritual that is most neglected in our society."

Lt. Col John McManus

Army Institute for Surgical Research, San Antonio, Texas

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Two defining moments ending in a collision of concepts.



"We can't talk about that."



"Spirituality naturally deals with these complex difficulties."

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Two defining moments ending in a collision of concepts.



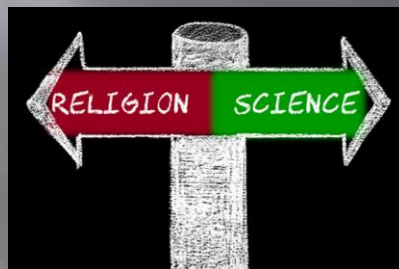
"We can't talk about that."



"Spirituality naturally deals with these complex difficulties."

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The Great Divide





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The Changing Tide



11

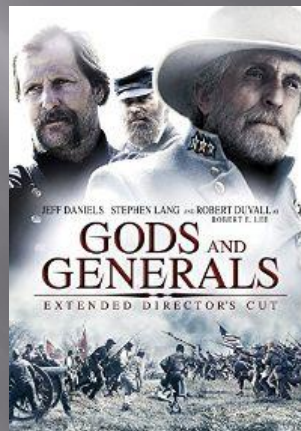
The Changing Tide

A systematic research of over 1100 studies . . . showed that religious involvement is associated with better physical and mental health, and lower use of health services.

Koenig, H. B., Religion, Spirituality, and Medicine: How Are They Related and What Does it Mean? Mayo Clinic Procedures 2001; 76:1189-1191.

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Wounds of War



Exiles in America A Spiritual Odyssey of Trauma, Healing, and Wholeness

1. When Warriors Fall: Exiles and Warriors United in Struggle

Evidence of SIED in the Fall of Jerusalem

Psalm 79: A Psalm of Asaph.

Ezekiel 7:2-6, 16-17



Burning of Jerusalem
by Francis R. Niglutsch, 1909

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Wounds of War

“I thought dying for our country was the worse thing that could happen to you.
I think killing for your country can be a lot worse.
Because that’s the memory that haunts.”

Senator Bob Kerrey

From *One Awful Night in Thanh Phong*, The New York Times, April 25, 2001. In Feb. 25, 1969 as an inexperienced, 25-year-old lieutenant, Kerrey led a commando team on a raid of an isolated peasant hamlet called Thanh Phong in Vietnam's eastern Mekong Delta. While witnesses and official records give varying accounts of exactly what happened, one thing is certain: around midnight Kerrey and his men killed at least 13 unarmed women and children. Kerrey left the senate in January 2001 to become the president of New School University in NY.

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Moral Injury

Traumatic events shatter survivors' beliefs about themselves and their world. Spirituality and moral beliefs are areas that are often significantly changed after trauma. This often leads to warriors reducing or abandoning their spiritual resources during their reentry, leading to worse psychiatric symptoms and higher medical service utilization.

Kent D. Drescher, *Trauma & Spirituality: Facilitator's Manual* (Menlo Park, CA.: National Center for PTSD, 2005), 7-10.

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Spiritual Improvised Explosive Devise (SIED)



You rolled over a SIED

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Evidence of SIED in the Fall of Jerusalem

Psalm 79: A Psalm of Asaph.

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Psalm 79: A Psalm of Asaph.

O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple,
they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble.

² They have left the dead bodies of your servants
as food for the birds of the sky,
the flesh of your own people for the animals of
the wild.

³ They have poured out blood like water
all around Jerusalem,
and there is no one to bury the dead.

⁴ We are objects of contempt to our neighbors,
of scorn and derision to those around us. ⁵ How
long, LORD? Will you be angry forever?
How long will your jealousy burn like fire?

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Psalm 79: A Psalm of Asaph.

⁶ Pour out your wrath on the nations
that do not acknowledge you,
on the kingdoms
that do not call on your name;
⁷ for they have devoured Jacob
and devastated his homeland.
⁸ Do not hold against us the sins of past
generations;
may your mercy come quickly to meet us,
for we are in desperate need.
⁹ Help us, God our Savior,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us and forgive our sins
for your name's sake.

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Psalm 79: A Psalm of Asaph.

¹⁰ Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Before our eyes, make known among the
nations that you avenge the outpoured
blood of your servants.
¹¹ May the groans of the prisoners come before
you; with your strong arm preserve those
condemned to die.
¹² Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven
times the contempt they have hurled at
you, Lord.
¹³ Then we your people, the sheep of your
pasture,
will praise you forever;
from generation to generation
we will proclaim your praise. (NIV)

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"Surely this is the end." Ezekiel 7:2-6



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"Surely this is the end." Ezekiel 7:2-6



"If any survivors escape, they will be on the mountains, like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning while their hands hung limp and their knees run with urine."

Ezekiel 7:16-17
(New English Bible)

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1. When Warriors Fall: Exiles and Warriors United in Struggle

- a) Communal Wound = fall of city - sense of security, vulnerability, exiled, cut-off, "no home."
- b) Physical/Psychological Wound = wounded, ill, and injured.
- c) Spiritual Wound = Temple - destruction of the soul

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EXILES IN AMERICA

2. Carried off the battlefield - From Babylon to Bethesda



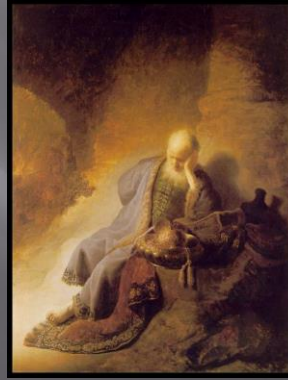
"We're not sick or diseased -we've been wounded."

Returning wounded warrior

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"My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within, my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city."

Book of Lamentations 2:11



Rembrandt, "Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem", c. 1630

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"Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart."

Proverbs 25:20 (NIV)



28

"Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart."

Proverbs 25:20 (NIV)

Grieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt, sleeping when you are tired, eating when you are hungry or sneezing when our nose itches. It is nature's way of healing a broken heart.



Doug Manning, *Don't Take My Grief Away From Me.*

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3. By the rivers of Babylon – Waking up in ICU

Young men without physical defect and handsome, versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace.

Daniel 1:4

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Psalms 137

*By the rivers of Babylon—
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there
we hung our harps.
For there our captors
asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”*

*How could we sing the LORD’s song
in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy.*

*Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem’s fall,
how they said, “Tear it down! Tear it down!
down to its foundations!”
O daughter Babylon, you devastator!
Happy shall they be who pay you back
what you have done to us!
Happy shall they be who take your little ones
and dash them against the rocks!*

EXILES IN BABYLON

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Some call them blasphemous . . . We want to hide from God our true feelings of anger and doubt. We don’t think that those emotions have any place in our prayers or in our relationships with God. Thus, when we voice our questions, we take on an extra burden of shame and guilt . . . We reveal to God only what we think God can handle . . . Resistance to laments is undergirded by the belief that we should bear suffering patiently and not complain to God about it . . . Without the lament protestation [in scripture], we are left alone and isolated from God at a time when we need God most in our lives. This can be extremely dangerous to our spiritual health.

Dr. Denise Dombkoski-Hopkins in *Journey through the Psalms*

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PTSD and Accelerated Aging

PTSD Research Quarterly, Vol. 27/No. 3, 2016

“Their focus on potential epi/genetic markers of cellular aging.”

Erika J. Wolf, Ph.D. Boston University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry.
National Center for PTSD, Behavioral Science Division, VA Boston Health Care System

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3. By the rivers of Babylon – Waking up in ICU



Jason's story of waking up in ICU.*

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"Survivors of trauma often feel like they are refugees entering an alien country."



Judith Lewis Herman in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992)



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"This Psalm in its rage is an act of "catching up" with the new reality."

Walter Brueggemann



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4. Rebuilding in Babylon - The New Normal

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Trauma is "not the end but can become a new beginning."

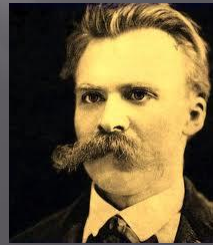
*Walter Brueggemann
Cadences of Home*



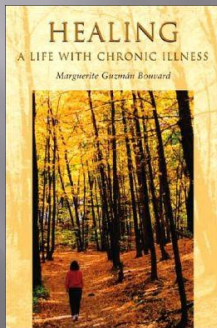
Dr. Walter Brueggemann

To live is to suffer; to survive is to find meaning in the suffering.

Nietzsche (1844-1900)



Illness is a moral occasion: it raises for each one of us the question of who we are, who we will become. It raises the question of how we will use the time and energy that remains. What may have been important when we enjoyed good health may now seem insignificant. Some people may change as a result of their situation and others become more of who they were. While we all wrestle with moral choices in our working and private lives, illness makes the question of choice more urgent.



Marguerite Guzman Bouvard
Healing - A Life With Chronic Illness.

Technology has advanced to the point where we can salvage patients who would not have survived before. The bigger test is psychological. Can we restore a life worth living?

John McManus in *Healing War's Wounds*

A Letter to the Exiles

From the Prophet Jeremiah,

To the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people,

A Letter to the Exiles

From the Prophet Jeremiah,

To the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people,

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Jeremiah 29:4-7

A Letter to the Exiles

- God was still with them even though they had been through this traumatic experience.
- There was hope of restoration.
- They could find some meaning and purpose in their situation by resuming the "normal" activities of life.

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt - a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The exiles inevitably must reflect upon the power of promise, upon the capacity of God to work newness against all circumstances.

Walter Brueggemann
Cadences of Home

For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Jeremiah 29: 10-11

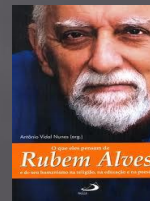
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Jeremiah 29: 10-11

There is hope!

“Why is it so important to go on hoping? Because without hope one will be either dissolved in the existing state of things or devoured by insanity.”

Ruben A. Alves in Tomorrow's Child:
Imagination, Creativity, and the Rebirth of Culture.



5. Dry Bones Coming Home – Finding Strength to Carry On.

Ezekiel 37
“A Vision in One Act”

The Valley of Dry Bones –
a spiritual vision of
restoration and renewal



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Israel without hope is like a valley full of bones, but the Lord will put his spirit in them and they will live and he will resettle them in their own land.

Bible scholar Dane Gordon



Live = (חַיָּה *châyâh*) *"to nourish, quicken, restore (to life), be whole."*



Live = (חַיָּה *châyâh*) *"to nourish, quicken, restore (to life), be whole."*



"I will breathe my life into you and you will live."

The return from exile may indeed be geographical. But first the movement is emotional, liturgical and imaginative; it requires forming a vision of the future free of the fearful dreams of entrenched power.

Walter Brueggemann
Conversations Among Exiles

"I don't feel. I understand what happened and what needs to happen but I'm stuck here. I need more."

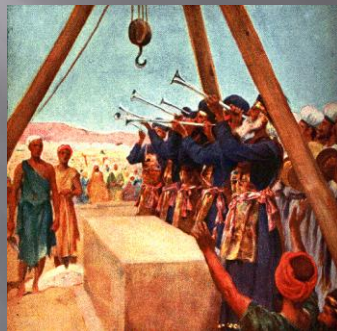
There is a cry for the experiential.

Experientia = (ik-ˌspir-ē-ˈen(t)-sh(ə-)lē) knowledge gained by testing or trials"

"Movement of the Soul towards healing."

- ▣ Experiential learning = Doing and reflecting on what you have done.
- ▣ Experiential learning is distinct from rote or didactic learning, in which the learner plays a comparatively passive role.

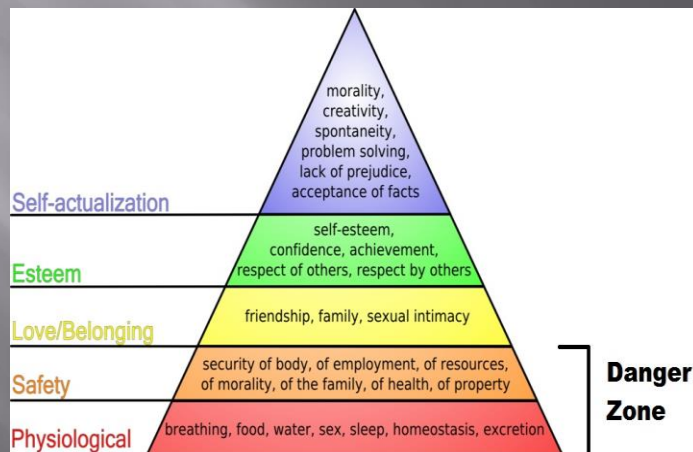
God's Restoration Project – dry bones coming home.



Depiction of worship and celebration at the laying of the cornerstone of the temple in the book of Ezra.

Backing into Recovery - Maslow in Reverse. A Story in Three Acts

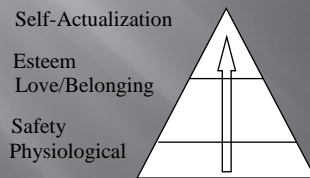
Maslow's Hierarchy of Need



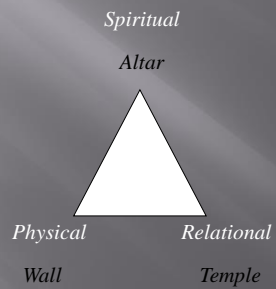
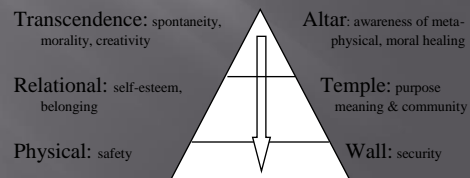
Backing into Recovery - Maslow in Reverse. A Story in Three Acts

Altar (Transcendence)
 Temple (Relational/Community)
 Wall (Physical Security)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

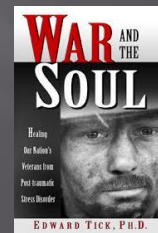


Return of the Exiles



War poisons the spirit, and warriors return tainted. This is why, among Native American, Zulu, Buddhist, ancient Israeli, and other traditional cultures, returning warriors were put through significant rituals of purification before re-entering their families and communities. Traditional cultures recognized that unpurified warriors could, in fact, be dangerous. The absence of these rituals in modern society helps explain why suicide, homicide, and other destructive acts are common among veterans.

Dr. Edward Tick



In traditional cultures, shamans (religious professionals) guided warrior purification, and particular shamans presided over "warrior medicine."

For example, Lakota Chief Sitting Bull also served as Medicine Chief of the Hunkpapa Warrior Society, which was responsible for overseeing the spiritual lives and well being of warriors. He considered this to be the most important of all the offices he held.



These ceremonies help the Navajo war veterans return to a state of balance, or beauty, within the universe.

Happily may their roads back home be on the trail of pollen.

Happily may they all get back.

In beauty I walk.

With beauty before me, I walk.

With beauty behind me, I walk.

With beauty below me, I walk.

With beauty above me, I walk.

With beauty all around me, I walk.

It is finished in beauty,

It is finished in beauty,

It is finished in beauty,

It is finished in beauty.

'Sa'ah naaghéi, Bik'eh hózhó

—from a Navajo Ceremony (Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature, ed. by John Bierhorst, 1974)





The National Cathedral in Washington, DC offers opportunities to walk the labyrinth on the last Tuesday of each month

6. A Light to the World – Pay it Forward (redeeming trauma)

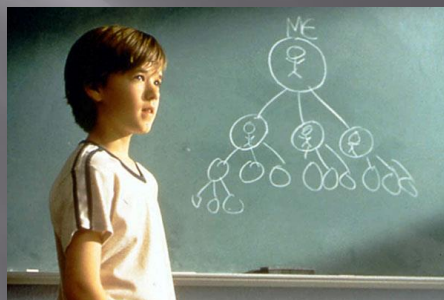
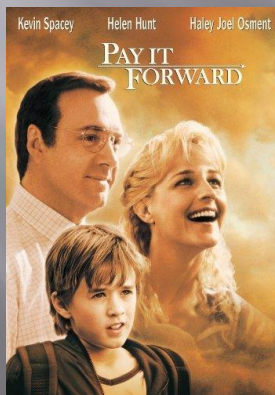
6. A Light to the World – Pay it Forward (redeeming trauma)



If there is any responsibility in the cycle of life it must be that one generation owes to the next that strength by which it can come to face ultimate concern in its own way.

Dr. Erik Erikson

6. A Light to the World – Pay it Forward (redeeming trauma)



6. A Light to the World – Pay it Forward (redeeming trauma)

You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.” (vs. 10) and “I declared and saved and proclaimed when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses, says the Lord.

Isaiah 43:12

6. A Light to the World – Pay it Forward (redeeming trauma)



6. A Light to the World – Pay it Forward (redeeming trauma)

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God.

Isaiah 40:9

6. A Light to the World – Pay it Forward (redeeming trauma)

It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

Isaiah 49:6

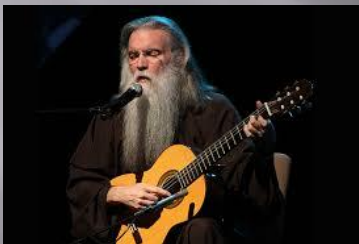
6. A Light to the World - Pay it Forward (redeeming trauma)





The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These people have an appreciation, sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross



Healer of My Soul by John Michael Talbot

Healer of my soul
Keep me at even'
Keep me at morning
Keep me at noon
Healer of my soul

Keeper of my soul
On rough course faring
Help and safeguard my means this night
Keeper of my soul

I am tired, astray, and stumbling
Shield my soul from the snare of sin

Healer of my soul
Heal me at even'
Heal me at morning
Heal me at noon
Healer of my soul

Post Seminar Survey

Please take a few moments to complete the post seminar survey. Your insights (while anonymous) will serve to strengthen this project and provide feedback to the presenter.

Shalom

Be well, be whole.

Thank you for your participation! I am always available to discuss any issues regarding this workshop. Please feel free to contact me at (910) 787-3795 or habitatsbygr@gmail.com

Gordon D. Ritchie