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**The Call of the Shofar** [www.calloftheshofar.org](http://www.calloftheshofar.org)

A report into the practices, beliefs and leadership of the organization

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## INTRODUCTION

I am presenting this document as a professional report on the US-based organization Call of the Shofar. Details are listed in Terms of Reference below.

I am writing this report in my capacity as Director of Cult Consulting Australia ([www.cultconsulting.org](http://www.cultconsulting.org)) situated in Melbourne, Australia. Cult Consulting Australia offers assistance to families who have been affected by cults and missionary groups. The organization also conducts research into issues of thought reform and mind control and acts as an advisor to government authorities and the media.

I am the author of “Cults: Too Good to Be True” (Harper Collins, 1999) and “Cults, Terror and Mind Control (Bayside Publishing 2009.) I am also the author of “Spirituality and Intimacy” (Devora Publications, October 2008,) “Believe – From Addiction to Redemption” (Fontaine Press, February 2009) and “Diaries of Addiction (American Publishing company 2010.)

Since 1975, I have worked intensely with over 500 families whose lives have been impacted by the involvement of a loved one in what is commonly referred to as the ‘cult phenomena’. I have lectured extensively on the issue of mind control and thought reform in Australia, the United States, Canada, Israel and China.

I have assisted clients and provided expert evidence to the court and correctional system (the Magistrates and County Courts, The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the Crimes Compensation Tribunal, the Department of Human Services and The Department of Community Services) in relation to criminal and family matters primarily in Australia but also overseas. The expert evidence has been provided to assist the courts determine whether a particular organization or establishment is involved in practices of mind control or thought reform.

I have provided expert testimony to the Australian government in relation to the activities of suspect organizations and am the first point of contact for most media outlets in Australia. Details regarding these initiatives appear on Cult Consulting Australia’s website.

## **Statement of Facts**

This report has been prepared with the understanding that I am qualified and experienced to be able to respond to the issues listed in the Terms of Reference included in this document. The information on this report is based has been sourced from a range of communications. They include:

- Letters from observant women whose husbands have participated in Call of the Shofar weekend retreats and are concerned about the effect of these programs on issues such as standards of *Torah* observance and *Sholom Bayis*.
- Letters from *Rabbonim* and other community leaders concerned about the participation of their staff in Call of the Shofar.
- The responses of educators and *Mashpi'im* (spiritual mentors) at Oholei Torah whom I addressed at meetings in Crown Height in December 2013.
- Over one hundred emails from people who had participated in Call of the Shofar weekends; some emails expressed concern while others spoke of the benefits of the program.
- Emails from Call of Shofar staff members who were seeking clarification of a range of issues in relation to Call of the Shofar and their roles in the organization.
- Personal interaction with participants of Call of the Shofar and their families regarding their views and any concerns.

## **Statement of Non-Confidentiality**

All witnesses interviewed for this report were informed of its purpose. All witnesses were explained that their evidence may be included in this report. I was satisfied that all the witnesses understood the purpose of the report and their inclusion of evidence in it.

## **Articles (non-academic) used in this Report**

- Official Statement issued by Call of the Shofar on January 1 2014
- Shofar Seasons of Transformation, Participant Workbook – Call of the Shofar 2012
- Returning Home – Integrating the Principles of Wellbeing into Everyday Life – Call of the Shofar 2011
- Call of the Shofar Raises Alarm in Chasidic community. *Baltimore Jewish Times*. December 2013

## **Books and Articles (academic) used in this Report**

See Appendix E

## Web links

- [www.calloftheshofar.org](http://www.calloftheshofar.org)
- <http://simchafrischling.wordpress.com>
- [www.cultconsulting.org](http://www.cultconsulting.org)
- Interview with Simcha Frischling. *HealthyJudaism.com*.
- Cult Expert Weighs In. [www.collive.com/show\\_news.rtx?id=28349](http://www.collive.com/show_news.rtx?id=28349)
- Rabbi Hecht Clarifies: Call of the Shofar is a Kosher Cult.  
<http://crownheights.info/videos/417821/rabbi-hecht-clarifies-call-of-the-shofar-a-kosher-cult/>
- Call of the Shofar is a Cult. [www.collive.com/show\\_news.rtx?id=28196](http://www.collive.com/show_news.rtx?id=28196)
- <http://crownheights.info/chabad-news/420409/videos-rabbi-shea-hecht-qa-on-call-of-the-shofar/>
- <http://crownheights.info/chabad-news/419968/experts-weigh-in-on-cots-damage-control/>
- <http://www.emclear.com/>
- <http://truthaboutshofar.wordpress.com/>
- Chabad Rabbis Ban Call of the Shofar  
[http://www.collive.com/show\\_news.rtx?id=28769](http://www.collive.com/show_news.rtx?id=28769)
- Rabbis Hold Hearing on 'Shofar'  
[http://collive.com/news\\_search.rtx?query=garbose](http://collive.com/news_search.rtx?query=garbose)
- Views on “Cult-Like” Retreats Vary wildly  
<http://www.thejewishweek.com/news/israel-news/views-cult-retreats-vary-wildly>

## Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for this report are broad based and include the following:

1. An understanding of Call of the Shofar (“the organization”) and its modus operandi.
2. Whether Call of the Shofar is a cult.
3. Whether the organization can be viewed in the context of an LGAT (Large Awareness Group Training) and any related implications.
4. Whether the organization directly or indirectly is engaged in practices commonly referred to as “mind control.”
5. Whether the organization poses any risks to its participants.
6. Whether or not any of the organization’s tenets, rules or guidelines, written or unwritten, contravene accepted Jewish practices.
7. Whether or not there are any connections, direct or implied with organizations or belief systems which fall under the category of *Avodah Zarah*.
8. Any other matter relevant to the impact of the organization on its participants, their families and the community.

While the focus of this report is the Call of the Shofar organization, during the course of researching this work it became obvious to the writer that other programs offering “breakthrough” seminars were also operating in New York, some under the banner of *Torah* and *Yiddishkeit*. Among them were numerous communications regarding programs offered by Landmark Forum which has come under fire from various Rabbinic and other institutions including the highly respected *Yad L’Achim* organization in Israel. A discussion regarding Landmark Forum is included in this report only inasmuch as it pertains to the connections between that program and Call of Shofar.

### **Background – Call of the Shofar**

Although the Call of the Shofar has been in existence for over twelve years, it is only recently during the past few months that it appears to have attracted significant attention throughout the Jewish world. Although there had been considerable disquiet about Call of the Shofar in Chabad communities for some two years, it was an interview on the Chabad website, ColLive with the Founder and Executive Director of Call of the Shofar, Simcha Frischling, which cast the issue into the public arena. This was followed by a series of hard hitting articles by renowned cult activist and an author of a book on the subject, Rabbi Shea Hecht, which appeared on various Chabad websites. Those articles drew hundreds of comments from the general public.

The polarizing effect of this attention has been dramatic. Appearing to target the Chabad community in particular, The Call of the Shofar has become a serious talking point between those who support and those who oppose the organization. This has led to disharmony within the Chabad community and on occasions to outright hostility between individuals.

Numerous individuals and couples have spoken of the incredible benefits of Call of the Shofar programs. Many have reported enhanced *Sholom Bayis*, a greater awareness of the need to listen, the ability to be more accommodating in their relationships and even a stronger commitment to *Torah* and *Mitzvos*. Others have referred to the opposite: a weakening of standards of Jewish observance, a sense of confusion about their identity and even situations of anxiety and depression.

This debate led to statements by the leadership of the Chabad community, in particular in New York, expressing deep concern about the trend for people to look outside the traditional Chabad sources of inspiration and meaningfulness towards an organization which is allegedly founded on non-Jewish sources.<sup>1</sup>

So concerned was the leadership of the Crown Heights community about this trend, that on Tuesday 24 December 2013, an Asiphah (gathering) was organized by the lay members of the Chabad community to address this issue. Although Call of the Shofar was not the specific focus on the evening, its existence, activities and the growing number of individuals who were participating in its programs were the underlying reasons for this meeting. Remarkably, some 2000 men and women (plus reportedly over 10,000 people on-line) in the main, members of the Chabad community, attended the Asiphah which was held at the Oholei Torah College in Crown Heights.

## Other Developments

On Thursday 26 December, 2013 two members of the *Beis Din* of Crown Heights published a letter forbidding anyone from participating in Call of the Shofar programs. "We hereby notify the public of our definite opinion according to *Shulchan Aruch* after a thorough investigation of the issues that one may not participate in any workshops, seminars etc of the group referred to as Call of the Shofar. We issue a strict warning as mentioned in the addendum of our earlier letter, not to spark arguments or sow discord or strife in the community. One must judge another fellow Jew favorably."

On Thursday 23 January 2014, the "Central Committee of Chabad-Lubavitch Rabbis in the United States and Canada," also known as *Vaad Rabbonei Lubavitch*, issued a ruling that participation in the "Call of the Shofar" is forbidden according to Jewish law.

The ruling stated: "In response to the questions of many about participation in the program 'Call of the Shofar,' we are informing that according to the testimony from a number of participants, and a number of knowledgeable experts, and after reading many documents, it is explicitly proven that the above mentioned program has in it things that were learned from foreign organizations, Heaven forbid."

"The program includes exercises and speeches that not only are not according to the spirit of *Torah* and *Chassidus*, but rather a peculiar way that has in it several prohibitive matters, and this isn't the place to elaborate. Because of all of the above, we have concluded that this program is dangerous and it is forbidden to participate in it."

## DISCUSSION

### 1. *An understanding of Call of the Shofar and its modus operandi*

#### Call of the Shofar

According to its official website [www.calloftheshofar.org](http://www.calloftheshofar.org), the organization has been in existence for over twelve years. The website states that Simcha Frischling, the Founder and Executive Director of Call of the Shofar with others, has created an organization that continues to transform the lives of countless Jewish individuals and families. "Since its establishment he has been working with Jewish men developing and facilitating numerous programs, which promote healthy fulfilling lives and responsible caring relationships."

According to a statement put out by Frischling on January 1 2014, Call of the Shofar is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower Jewish men and women of all degrees of observance to live with full vitality and to engage in appropriate, responsible relationships with others. "Educational by nature, our programs have brought positive change to thousands of lives worldwide over the past twelve years. With the continued guidance and support of prominent *Rabbonim* and experts in the field of personal growth, all of our programs are grounded in Torah *hashkofa* (principles) and are in strict accordance with *Halacha* (Jewish law)."

The full text of the statement can be found at Appendix A

### **Simcha Frischling**

The website <http://simchafrischling.wordpress.com> includes a list of partial trainings of Simcha Frischling:

- Rabbinic certification through Pirchei Shoshanim
- in Israel\*
- Studied in Yeshiva Ohr Samayach, Monsey
- New York Landmark Education
- Dr Richard Moss, author and teacher
- Jessica Dibb, founder of Inspiration Community
- Sandra Sherer, founder of “Wave Work”
- John Ruskan, author of *Emotional Clearing* 1999
- The Mankind Project (Formerly New Warrior)
- George Pransky, Psychologist, author, founder Pransky Inst.

\*It should be noted that in the week commencing February 2 2014, the Rabbinic certification was removed from Frischling’s website.

## **2. *Whether Call of the Shofar is a Cult.***

Frischling does raise the cult issue in his ‘Official Statement.’ It is worthwhile commenting on Frischling’s comments in which he attempts to deny that Call of the Shofar is a cult. In order to do so he lists the defining aspects of a cult and then proceeds to prove that Call of the Shofar is not a cult. The three characteristics Frischling cites are:

- A system of religious veneration and devotion directed towards a particular figure or object.
- An organization which imposes control over the minds and behavior of those involved.
- A group which has a polarized us-versus-them mentality. Members are encouraged to cut ties with other organizations or family members, etc.

Frischling’s response is simplistic. For example, while it may be correct that Call of Shofar does not involve the veneration of its leader, participants do develop an inflated and idealized view of the organization. So strong are these sentiments that supporters of the organization have expressed concerns about the integrity of opponents of Call of the Shofar. Thus, while the group may not overtly advocate an ‘us-versus-them’ mentality, the sense of polarization which has emerged regarding Call of the Shofar is disturbing. This has also been evident in the hundreds of comments of community websites regarding this issue.

Over the past few months, considerable time and space was devoted to the question as to whether Call of the Shofar is a cult. A cult refers to an organization or system which impacts

on an individual's ability to remain in control of his/her life and ultimately removes opportunities of enquiry and free choice. Instead, the subject may become the victim of a process commonly known as mind control.

It is the writer's opinion that the question as to whether Call of the Shofar should be labelled as a cult is irrelevant. While there are many well-known, religious, spiritual and personal development groups which have attracted the cult title, there is limited value in ascribing pejorative terms to particular organizations be they religious, spiritual or other. There are thousands of people who have joined numerous suspect groups often referred to as cults and walked away unscathed while there are probably as many who have joined 'established religions' and acted in a very 'cultish' manner. One need not look further than numerous fundamentalist groups today – both Christian and Moslem – in order to observe this reality.

It makes no difference and is not relevant whether the organization is headed by a guru or not. The writer has worked with numerous individuals who have been controlled by small groups or by natural healers and therapists in positions of power who have exerted an undue level of influence over their subjects. This is no less a cult-like relationship than what exists in some of the better known groups which have attracted that label.

The question regarding any organizations is far more about its agenda, its modus operandi and the long-term impact it has on those who join it. The crucial issue is whether the organization practices mind control in that participants lose their autonomy and their ability to view the program objectively.

The issue of mind control receives attention below. Suffice it to say that whereas twenty or thirty years ago mind control was a term associated with saffron robed devotees marching in Time Square or mass weddings in Maddison Square gardens – and in that respect, Call of the Shofar could claim it did not qualify for this term – but as is discussed in a subsequent section, the concept of mind control can also be used to describe a range of far more subtle behaviours which are equally disturbing and insidious. In this regard, the programs of Call of the Shofar demand close scrutiny.

### ***3. Whether the organization can be viewed within the context of an LGAT (Large Awareness Group Training) and any related implications.***

It is the writer's opinion that Call of the Shofar does fit the criteria of a LGAT (Large Group Awareness Training.) These groups were first offered to the American public in the early 1970's. In general, LGAT's espouse the idea that people are capable of changing their lives, not so much by modifying their external circumstances, but by changing the way they interpret them. LGAT's have generated a great deal of controversy both in the general public and the psychological community. <sup>2</sup>

The LGAT connection is important as these groups have been the subject of comprehensive research since the early 1980's. The research is significant in the light of comments made by many participants of Call of the Shofar programs stating the significant benefit offered to them by the organization. Although the absence of any control group or longitudinal studies regarding the long term effects of Call of the Shofar participation calls into question the validity of these claims, the vast majority of research paints a negative view of LGAT's and

dismisses the benefits often cited by participants. The comments below are worthwhile noting.

An article co-authored by Peter Finkelstein in 1982 provides a detailed description of the structure and techniques of LGAT's noting an authoritarian demeanor of the trainer, physical strains on the participants from a long schedule, and the similarity of many techniques to those used in some group therapy and encounter groups.<sup>3</sup>

Specific techniques used in Large Group Awareness Trainings may include:

- meditation
- biofeedback
- self-hypnosis
- relaxation techniques
- visualization
- neuro-linguistic programming
- mind-control

It is important to emphasize that these techniques, in their own right and within professional boundaries, may be acceptable. However when combined in the context of the LGAT experience, the consequences can give rise for serious concern.

This is evident in the comments of Carmen Paglia who describes "EST's<sup>4</sup> Large Group Awareness Training as marathon, eight-hour sessions, in which [participants] were confined and harassed which supposedly led to the breakdown of conventional ego, after which they were in effect born again."<sup>5</sup>

In his book *Life 102*, LGAT participant and former trainer Peter McWilliams, although extremely critical of some LGATs, found positive value in some groups, asserting that they varied not in technique but in the application of technique.<sup>6</sup>

Researchers such as psychologist Philip Cushman,<sup>7</sup> found that the LGAT programs he studied "consists of a pre-meditated attack on the self". A 1983 study on Lifespring<sup>8</sup> found that "although participants often experience a heightened sense of wellbeing as a consequence of the training, the phenomenon is essentially pathological", meaning that, in the program studied, "the training systematically undermines ego functioning and promotes regression to the extent that reality testing is significantly impaired".

Cushman concluded that LGATs can be determined to be dangerous when:

1. Leaders had rigid, unbending beliefs about what participants should experience and believe how they should behave in the group and when they should change.
2. Leaders had no sense of differential diagnosis and assessment skills, valued cathartic emotional breakthroughs as the ultimate therapeutic experience, and pressed to create or force a breakthrough in every participant.



3. Leaders obtained substantial control over an individual's time and thought content, typically by gaining control over major elements of the person's social and physical environment.

In Coon's psychology textbook, *Introduction to Psychology*, the author references many other studies, which postulate that many of the "claimed benefits" of Large Group Awareness Training actually take the form of "a kind of therapy placebo effect".<sup>9</sup> DuMerton writes that "... there is a lack of scientific evidence to quantify the longer-term positive outcomes and changes objectively ..."<sup>10</sup> Jarvis described Large Group Awareness Training as "educationally dubious" in the 2002 book *The Theory & Practice of Teaching*.<sup>11</sup>

Coon's and Jarvis's conclusions regarding LGAT's are supported by an article in 'The Cult Observer' regarding this issue. Michael Langone Ph.D. concluded by stating that he knew of no specific academic research which showed that Large Group Awareness Trainings have positive behavioral effects.<sup>12</sup> Langone cited a study which showed no difference between the LGAT test-subjects and the control group.<sup>13</sup>

Sociologist Richard Ofshe identified the key factors that distinguish coercive persuasion from other forms of persuasion such as education and advertising and that also frequently seem to typify the techniques used by many LGATs.<sup>14</sup>

Those factors include:

1. The reliance on intense interpersonal and psychological attack to destabilize an individual's sense of self to promote compliance
2. The use of an organized peer group
3. Applying interpersonal pressure to promote conformity

The net result of such coercive persuasion techniques is the virtual shutdown through a step-by-step process of critical thinking. This renders victims intellectually defenceless and subsequently quite suggestible and vulnerable to the dictates of the group and/or leader.

Ofshe specifically concluded that LGATs "appear more likely to induce mood and affect disorders."

Dr Robert Lipgar, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Chicago who specializes in group therapy, expresses a different point. "I'm deeply concerned that it does amount to a kind of pyramid scheme that exploits vulnerability. It's buyer beware because, like psychology or any other form of 'coursework' involving one's inner life, transformational training can bring up some painful issues. In fact, it's supposed to. But unlike psychology - or psychiatry, or dentistry for that matter - training courses are entirely unregulated by any system of licensing or peer review."

According to the late Dr Margaret Singer, the techniques employed by LGAT's can seem innocuous, at first. Some of them - guided imagery, for instance - may actually be familiar from a relaxation class.... In the wrong hands, however, these techniques can do untold harm. "Trance-induction," Singer explains, is brought about by "a high central focus of

attention or concentration, which leads to diminished peripheral awareness. It can be achieved through various methods, and it's a means by which one person gets the complete attention of another." Closed-eye exercises, a form of guided imagery, can be one of the most powerful trance-induction tools used in workshops. With the sense of sight deadened, customers are more attuned to the voice of the seminar leader."<sup>15</sup>

"The trainers usually get you to think of all your most powerful memories, under the guise of somehow conquering your past. After several days of being 'dragged down into the pits,' says Singer, "the final day of exercises is usually designed to pump you up. By this time, customers usually just follow the leader. A false sense of community and camaraderie has developed. By now, they do everything they can to give you the 'warm fuzzies,' so that you'll sign up for the next course."

Because LGAT's espouse the idea that people are capable of changing their lives, not so much by modifying their external circumstances, but by changing the way they interpret them, there is a tendency to legitimize these groups within the context of the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) model. Generally speaking, CBT aims to teach people that it is possible to have control over their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. CBT helps the person to challenge and overcome automatic beliefs, and use practical strategies to change or modify their behaviour. The result is more positive feelings, which in turn lead to more positive thoughts and behaviours.

However, unlike many of the personal development programs which promise 'breakthroughs' over a very short time period, CBT takes time. The programs are run by trained professionals and may involve a series of important sequential steps. These steps include assessment -filling out various questionnaires to help you describe your particular problem and pinpoint distressing symptoms, person education - the therapist provides written materials to help you learn more about your particular problem, goal setting - the therapist helps you to draw up a list of goals you wish to achieve from therapy, practise of strategies - you practise your new strategies with the therapist and homework - you will be expected to actively participate in your own therapy.

The suggestion that LGAT's fit this model or that Call of the Shofar can be considered a CBT program is based on a lack of understanding of the nature of LGAT's and a misinterpretation of the CBT model.

It is worthwhile noting a comment by Steve Salerno in his book, *How the Self-Help Movement Made America Helpless*.<sup>16</sup> "Self-help is an enterprise wherein people holding the *thinnest of credentials* diagnose in *basically normal people* symptoms of *inflated or invented maladies*, so that they may then implement remedies *that have never been shown to work*." It is the writer's belief, based on interviews with participants of Call of the Shofar weekend retreats that Salerno's comments are applicable to these programs.

**4. *Whether the organization directly or indirectly is engaged in practices commonly referred to as "mind control."***

Mind control refers to a process in which a group or individual "systematically uses unethically manipulative methods to persuade others to conform to the wishes of the manipulator, often to the detriment of the person being manipulated". Mind control (also known as brainwashing, coercive persuasion, thought control, or thought reform) refers to an indoctrination process which results in "an impairment of autonomy, an inability to think independently, and a disruption of beliefs and affiliations." In this context, brainwashing refers to the involuntary re-education of basic beliefs and values.<sup>17</sup>

On January 1 2014, in response to the increasing criticism of Call of the Shofar, Simcha Frischling put out an "Official Statement" which included a set of FAQ's. One of the questions included in the FAQ's was "Is Call of the Shofar a cult?" The response was:

*"We are in no way controlling people's minds. We stress free choice. We teach participants how to take responsibility for their choices and their ways of thinking. We do not tell people what to think and what to do. We teach people how to be aware of the impact of unconscious, bad habits and negative thinking."*

This statement is difficult to substantiate for a number of reasons:

One of the problematic aspects of Call of the Shofar appears well before the three day retreat. It occurs when a would-be participant questions the nature of the program. Invariably, the person is told that they will find out when they get there. If in fact the organization preaches free choice, it is difficult to understand why the questions of the would-be participant aren't respected and a response is denied.

Several interviewees suggested that the very fact that participants agree to enter the program blindly, is the first symbol of submission. It is a form of saying "Trust Simcha, Trust Call of the Shofar." One would be hard pressed to find any approved personal development programs which deny the participants the opportunity to know what the program is all about.

Steven Hassan, one of America's leading cult counsellors makes his point very succinctly. "If you are ever pressured to attend a weekend workshop for several hundred dollars, ask the person to describe in detail what takes place. If the response is, "I can't tell you," or "I don't want to spoil the experience for you," then my advice is to respond with a determined, "No, thank you."<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Anne Cleary in an article titled "The Danger in Probing Memory in the Spirit of Self-Discovery - The importance of being informed before embarking on any self-improvement methods" - writes, "Personally, I am not comfortable with handing my memory over to a group carrying out retreats with vague descriptions about what will be done."<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, while Call of the Shofar may not tell people what to think and what to do, the program is highly regimented. The prohibition of speech at various times – although often not observed – could be regarded as a controlling feature of the program. The suggestion that people leave the program if unwilling to participate in all the activities is also controlling in that it ensures the group is compliant and willing to follow the directives of the leader. A well-known tactic of groups which practice mind control is their elimination of dissent and sometimes even enquiry.

While assessing the mind control issue, it is worth noting the well-documented Eight Criteria for Thought Reform by Dr Robert J. Lifton.<sup>20</sup> They include Milieu Control, Confession and Loading of the Language. The application of these three criteria to Call of the Shofar is important:

**i Milieu Control. This involves the control of information and communication both within the environment and, ultimately, within the individual.**

As mentioned above, the prohibition on speaking is certainly a controlling factor in that it imposes a regime onto the participants which would normally not be their choice. The scant knowledge of the timetabling and what lies ahead in the scheduling can also be controlling. Group participants can be worn down through surprises or unpredictable treatment. Such treatment or manipulation is assured to produce some level of fear or anxiety. The participant will be confused as to what to expect, as well as what they are to think and how they are expected to act.

The account of Shmuel Pollen, a former staff member of Call of the Shofar who has written extensively about his experiences at the program is telling. Referring to the *Erev Shabbos* activity, he writes, "It starts with complete silence. The chairs are set up in a circle. Only Simcha is there to start. We are all in a garage....very uncomfortable because we have no idea what to expect. One attendee is called in and walks in, each one at a time, and chooses a seat. People are shocked at how quiet it is and how everybody is looking at them as they walk in. People get a little nervous about which chair to take. Everyone is a little uncomfortable with the silence."

"Simcha explains the ground rules. No talking. Phone calls limited (to my recollection I was only allowed a very short call to my wife right before Shabbos")

"He explains this is to help us focus on what we're doing. Be on time to everything. Then you're given blindfolds. Non-Jewish music starts to play and you're told to dance. You do this again at the end of the weekend with no blindfolds so you see how you progressed in becoming less inhibited."

"I know someone who is 60 or so years old who said he was uncomfortable with the dancing. He put his hands in his pockets and stood up against the wall. While blindfolded he hears Simcha saying loudly into his ear "take your hands out of your pockets and move around!" That gentleman will attest to the fact that he was later pressured to leave before Shabbos because he wasn't prepared to conform."

**ii Confession. Sins, as defined by the group, are to be confessed either to a personal monitor or publicly to the group. There is no confidentiality; members' "sins," "attitudes," and "faults" are discussed and exploited by the leaders.**

'Carpet Work' is a central theme of Call of the Shofar which essentially encourages the participant to revert back to his childhood and deal with unresolved issues which are preventing him from reaching his true potential. The journey back to childhood is dramatic but so too is the participant's willingness to confront his

teachers or his parents and if necessary casting all forms of abuse against them. That communication can take many forms but there is no prohibition on swearing or other forms of verbal denigration.

By the time the “Carpet work” is over, the participants are all awkwardly familiar with often private or intimate insights into the lives of other attendees be they in relation to their own sins or misdemeanors or be they in relation to other early childhood interactions. There is no particular area of life which is not included in Carpet Work. Parent, sibling, relationship, marriage and intimacy issues are taken out of their normally private and sacred context and shared publicly and unashamedly.

- iii **Loading the Language. The group interprets or uses words and phrases in new ways so that often the outside world does not understand. This jargon consists of thought-terminating clichés, which serve to alter members’ thought processes to conform to the group’s way of thinking. The group members feel understood because they all use the same words and it generates a sense of camaraderie. New people may feel left out and often want to learn what the words and phrases mean, drawing them deeper into the mindset of the group.**

Being “in” or “out”, the “*klal* and *prat*” expression, “containers,” the “undifferentiated one” are but a few of Call of the Shofar expressions which become the participants’ special language. Other terms include, “check-in” and “check-out” as well as Frischling’s famous mantra, “I Matter.” While many organizations or even religious movements may have their own ‘vocabulary,’ these expressions are learned over years, often a life-time. They are not picked up over a weekend and then adopted into one’s personal lexicon. The words are important because they can act as triggers drawing the participant back into the mindset of the organization.

In this regard, it is worthwhile noting the similarities between the Call of the Shofar and Landmark Forum experiences. In an article published in The International Journal Of the Study of New Religions titled “Religiosity Rejected: Exploring the Religio-Spiritual Dimensions of Landmark Forum,” Renee Lockwood writes, “More than creating a sense of sacred community, the group-specific nature of Landmark education also adds to its esoteric nature subsequently playing a role in its expansion. As Landmark Forum does not advertise, their recruits come primarily from the recommendation of graduates. Many participants have enrolled in the course after a friend, lover, colleague or family member graduated claiming it had made their life better but were unable to explain how or why. This is largely because the specialist language used with the training does not translate well into ‘real-world’ dialogue. Often the result is the perception of an esoteric solution that is highly appealing in its ambiguity.”<sup>21</sup>

Another crucial issue relates to the memories which are retrieved during Carpet work at Call of the Shofar weekends. This report is not the place to discuss the now largely discredited notion of “The Repressed Memory Syndrome.” However, a few points are relevant. According to Dr Anne Cleary, Associate Professor in the Cognitive Psychology Program at Colorado State University, “Probing a person’s mind looking for hidden clues about the person’s past does not come without risk though. One risk is that the very

techniques used to probe memory can themselves actually alter memory. This is much like the Observer Effect in physics (i.e., the act of trying to measure something affects what is being measured)."

"As I tell my students: Memory does not work like a video recorder. It is ever-changing. Even the mere act of remembering changes the memory: The more often a person retrieves a memory, the further away from the actual event the memory becomes; it becomes a situation of remembering remembering, or remembering remembering remembering, and likely blending and confusing these different episodes."<sup>22</sup>

The use of guided imagery at Call of the Shofar retreats is a further serious concern. Shmuel Pollen's account of this practice is striking. "We get into two groups of about fourteen guys each group, and we enter a guided imagery session with an instructor. The instructor has us lie on the floor in a circle, close our eyes and he takes us through a forest, then a clearing, then a dark cave and finally into a warm, sun-bathed valley where a small boy stands alone. This small boy, the instructor says, is each and every one of us. He tells us to imagine that we are holding the boy and feeling his pain. He then tells us to wake up, and each person takes a turn to tell the instructor what the pain was, the time of the pain, who caused it to him, the exact age etc. Then, during each of our turns, the instructor asks us to stand up, hold his (the instructor's) wrists and cry out the pain and what the pain really, really wants (like shouting out, "love me, love me" if the individual wanted more love and attention, or "accept me, accept me, if the individual wanted more acceptance from his parents). During the shouting out the pain, the individual is pushing the instructor against the wall (that's why we held the instructors wrists, to push against him) to work out the pain and express it with his whole body."

But as Anne Cleary writes, "While guided imagery can be very useful for things like motor rehabilitation, athletic training, or focused relaxation, in the context of using it to uncover unconscious memories or hidden aspects of oneself, it can be dangerous. The use of guided imagery in attempting to uncover memories can increase the likelihood of developing false memories. One reason for this may be that there is neural overlap between the networks used in imagining activities and actually performing them, and there is overlap between the neural networks used in imagination and those in remembering; this may contribute to false memory."

Furthermore, the idea that these 'memories' can be healed by screaming together with heavily bodily movement has been criticized in numerous academic studies and by the British Association of Clinical Psychology which found that, "None of these claims are proven; these are against our knowledge."<sup>23</sup>

##### ***5. Whether the organization poses any risks to its participants.***

In Frischling's 'Official Statement,' he writes: "We do not attempt to administer psychological therapy of any kind and we make it clear to all of our participants that Call of the Shofar workshops are not therapy and do not replace therapy."

Most definitions of therapy refer to a curative or healing process. While it may be correct that Call of the Shofar should not be regarded as a replacement for therapy and no

interviewees expressed the view that formal therapy was discouraged, the programs are certainly therapeutic in their nature. In his Official Statement, Frischling writes, "Through experiential workshops and educational seminars, we teach skills of healthy communication. We help individuals become aware of old toxic patterns of thinking which often pollute our relationships with our spouses and children. We get in touch with our vitality and emotional vibrancy.....our programs are designed to create a safe environment for people to break free of old, dysfunctional constrictions." One would have to be relying on a very narrow definition of therapy in order to exclude Call of the Shofar as a therapeutic modality.

Herein lies a serious issue. While many participants may not be experiencing any significant personal challenges, others may be participating because they have unresolved personal or relationship issues. Fragile and possibly the victims of abuse and trauma, they may be at serious risk if they replace the need for qualified professional assistance with participation in a group which may not adequately screen or assess its clientele nor provide ongoing support and expertise demanded in these situations.

Furthermore, because the staff or facilitators are not members of recognized psychological fraternities, they are immune from any form of accountability or investigation. While, they could still be sued for negligence or a lack of duty of care under common law, the absence of accountability of the staff is a serious issue.

Interviewees expressed particular concern regarding the 'Carpet Work' which often continues past the end of Shabbos. One participant summed it up: "This is where the real 'healing' takes place. It's the highlight. It changes everything. It's Simcha's new brand of therapy unlicensed shock and awe therapy with devastating results that you'll be learning about from others soon. I actually have no idea where he got this reckless method from. I suspect he made it up because he seems to enjoy doing it as awful as it appears."

Dr Miriam Grossman, a medical doctor with board certification in child, adolescent and adult psychiatry who has been in practice for almost thirty years and an author of several well-known books on how to properly navigate sensitive topics regarding children and teenagers, has documented her concerns about Call of the Shofar. "To understand the danger of groups like COTS, it must be emphasized that all of us have emotional issues or sensitivities. The founder surely knows this. We all have traumas of one sort or another. To protect ourselves from the pain and fear associated with these traumas, our psyches build defenses. While they may sometimes be unhealthy, these defenses always serve a purpose. To suddenly weaken or remove these defenses can be damaging. It leaves a person wide open to influence, open to ideas and behaviors he otherwise would resist. COTS uses techniques that are known to weaken a person's defenses. These tactics include intense interpersonal "exercises" that are completely outside the realm of anything the participant has experienced."

"Some of the ways used by COTS to break down these barriers are: sitting in enforced silence in a circle of unfamiliar people, in the company of those people, dancing blindfolded, being expected to share emotionally-charged personal information with strangers, forced physical contact with and gazing into the eyes of strangers, cursing, and more."

“Whether an individual's defenses should in any way be challenged is a weighty issue that a professional may undertake only when he is deeply familiar with the patient, and after careful consideration of the costs and benefits.”

“What we see here, is nothing of the sort. It appears to me that the entire workshop of COTS is an attempt to destroy emotional barriers, aggravate the trauma behind them, and provide only temporary “relief” creating dependence on COTS...”

Similarly, Dr Rhonda Greenberg, a psychologist who specializes in psychotherapy and trauma therapy expresses concern about the psychological and/or physical problems which can be created by the pressured digging up of personal traumas and sensitive information which in turn can overwhelm the psychological defenses.

According to Greenberg, childhood trauma is a potentially dangerous area to explore with an individual without the presence of an expertly trained therapist with significant experience of supervised clinical care and ongoing training. “Buried memories are hidden for a reason! The mind can only handle so much in order to get up and function each day. Defense mechanisms are coping strategies, often unconscious, that keep out painful memories and events, and reduce anxieties generated by threats from unknown or uncomfortable places.”

These concerns were born out by evidence and statements from several interviewees. One interviewee wrote, “they are practicing illegal unlicensed unmonitored therapy and it just so happens that Simcha just has no clue at all what he is doing (he completely missed the fact that I was bipolar and made my situation much worse) on how to treat mental health issues, and he certainly has no interest to keep vulnerable patients in safe situations which is where they always need to be when they're under any professional's care. “

At the meeting with Rabbi Dovid Cohen it was reported that Frischling admitted that on two occasions during Carpet Work two participants of Call of the Shofar faced a potential safety risk through a condition called disassociation. Frischling claims that he resolved the situation. He does not provide details of this disturbing experience nor what may have eventuated if the situation had not been resolved. He also fails to provide any information about any clinical follow-up treatment which may have been required following this event.

One interviewee referred to the absence of any follow-up in relation to a very difficult situation in which he found that a family member who had participated in Call of the Shofar, had virtually severed his family ties following his return. The family member contacted Frischling who reportedly denied any responsibility for this relationship problem.

The question needs to be asked whether outside the setting and the context of Call of the Shofar you would have allowed someone to tell you to lock legs with another man and hold his hand for as long as this man you've never met tells you to, regardless of how uncomfortable you are with the situation. The question is significant for two reasons. Firstly, is the participant's willingness to engage in this activity an example of the weakening of his defences? As Dr Grossman says, “These tactics include intense interpersonal "exercises" that are completely outside the realm of anything the participant has experienced.”



Secondly, bearing in mind that some participants may be the victims of emotional, physical or sexual abuse, the leg-locking, hand-holding (and there are other exercises where one peers deeply into the eyes of one's partner) is it not possible that the intensity of this experience will revive memories of past events which require the safety and professionalism of an appropriate setting? There is also the possibility that latent or manifest homosexuality, personal secrets and physical boundary issues will possibly be confronted in this exercise without the safety of a setting in which these issues can be explored.

As Dr Grossman writes, "The human psyche is very fragile. Those with serious childhood trauma are even more fragile. The number one priority of a licensed therapist is to protect that fragile psyche from harm. Psychological boundaries are created by individuals which protect them from the harm of the wound of that trauma. Those barriers can be vital to the person's ability to cope with life. To forcibly break down those defenses, in lasting ways, in such a short space of time is appalling, unforgivable."

**6. Whether or not any of the organization's tenets, rules or guidelines, written or unwritten, contravene accepted Jewish practices.**

While many of the issues relevant to this question would be best dealt with by Rabbonim who are equipped to deal with these matters, a number of points are worthy of mention in this report.

A central aspect of this issue of Call of the Shofar's tenets, rules or guidelines, relates to the issue of Frischling's own level of Jewish observance and *Yiras Shomayim*. Considering that Call of the Shofar is the creation of Frischling, an understanding of his standards of Jewish belief and practice is critical to this discussion.

In relation to Frischling's personal background there are numerous questions which have been raised regarding his *Yiras Shomayim* as well as his level of practical observance of *Torah* and *Mitzvos*. This is highly significant. Frischling presents as an observant Jew – he wears a large black *Yarmulka* and his *Tzitzis* are clearly visible. He talks prolifically about *Torah* concepts citing a wide range of references including *Midrash* and *Zohar*. To the observer, Frischling is a knowledgeable and observant Jew. However, in a recent hearing on January 16 2014, before renowned *posek* Rabbi Dovid Cohen, Frischling acknowledged his beliefs and practice, in particular:

- He had difficulty in accepting the concept of *Moshiach* as a person
- he doesn't davven regularly
- he doesn't fulfil the Mitzvah of saying *Sh'ma*

Interviewees have raised other questions about Frischling's beliefs and practices which were not discussed at that hearing.

- Does Frischling believe in creationism or evolution
- Does Frischling "believe" in G-d or does he "assume" G-d exists

- What part does Taoism and Buddhism play in the Call of the Shofar (see next section)

Until now, Frischling's argument in refusing to discuss these issues with Call of the Shofar participants was that these issues were 'private.' Even before the revelations at the meeting with Rabbi Cohen, this argument was not acceptable. Were he a therapist he could perhaps argue that professional boundaries require that he not disclose information about himself. However, Frischling argues strongly that Call of the Shofar is not about therapy. In fact Frischling in his Official Statement makes it very clear the Call of the Shofar is a group process. "We get in touch with our vitality and emotional vibrancy. We learn to accept responsibility for ourselves, our families and for the communities within which we belong. We step into our freedom of choice from which we connect deeply with G-d and our loved ones....."

In fact, in arguing that his level of observance of *Torah* and *Mitzvos* is a private matter, Frischling presents a double standard. While he appears to have no reservations about having the Call of the Shofar participants reveal their most inner secrets about their childhood experiences and other significant events in their lives, he purportedly refuses to answer questions about his own Jewish practice.

Even more significant is the fact that the 'private matter' argument has been used by Frischling to avoid admitting to Call of the Shofar participants that the large black *Yarmulka* and *Tzitzis* disguise a person, who by his own admission, is not an observant Jew.

Supporters of Call of the Shofar continue to maintain that Frischling's admission that he is not an observant Jew is not a relevant factor in assessing Call of the Shofar programs or his ability to head up the organization. Rabbi Dovid Cohen disagreed with this view arguing that Frischling is unfit to be a *Mashpia* for Jewish people.

Beyond Frischling's own standards of Jewish observance, there are specific issues which appear to contravene Jewish laws and practices. These issues are relevant to Call of the Shofar programs and are worthy of close attention.

### **Negative Talk about Parents**

One aspect of the 'Carpet Work' event at the retreats involves the participants addressing past issues which have had a significant impact on their lives. This writer has received numerous accounts of participants speaking negatively about their parents. On occasions the participant uses grossly inappropriate terms including explicit words in relation to their parents and other loved ones. This is a significant Halachic issue

In an article written in 2005 by clinical psychologist, Dr Benzion Sorotzkin titled "Honoring Parents Who Are Abusive"<sup>24</sup> the author refers to the question of the legitimacy according *Halacha* for a client in therapy to speak disparagingly about a parent. The extensive article includes as an addendum, a lengthy piece which is excerpted from a speech by Harav Dovid Cohen, *Shlita*, "Counseling the contemporary Orthodox Jewish family." Young Israel Council of Rabbis Annual Conference, February, 2000.

Inter alia, Rabbi Cohen writes: "I recently came across an article by Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein, the Rov of Ramat Elchonon, Bnei Brak (and the son-in-law of Harav Y. S.

Elyashev Shlita) in the Torah journal, *Kol Torah* (Nissan 5763). The article contains four *teshuvos* on the permissibility of offending the honor of parents for therapeutic purposes. Significantly, Rabbi Cohen concludes: “I again reiterate what I previously emphasized, that *kibbud av va’eim* is a very important and complex mitzvah and any particular situation has to be evaluated by a knowledgeable Rov for specific guidance.”

No participant interviewed for this report was able to document any form of evaluation by a competent Rov regarding his rights and obligation in this regard. Indeed, these interviewees reported that the ability to discuss parental abuse or any other negative behaviour was applauded by other members of the group.

An extension to this issue is found in the general prohibition of speaking *loshon horoh* or embarrassing a person in public about which *Chazal* have taught, “It would be preferable for a person to fall into a fiery furnace rather than embarrass a person in public.”<sup>25</sup> Participants in Call of the Shofar programs leave the weekend with a long list of alleged transgressions and demeanours orchestrated by numerous people whose names have been mentioned publicly during the weekend.

Furthermore, the fact that many of these grievances may involve issues of a private or intimate nature is another concern. The participants at the weekend retreat included people who are married as well as *bochurim* still studying at Yeshivos. These institutions put in place various boundaries to protect the students from ideas and experiences which are not yet relevant to them. Introducing *bochurim* to such issues has the potential to compromise these well-placed boundaries.

### **Hypnosis and Trance States**

The issue of hypnosis is also relevant to this discussion. Most interviewees agreed that Carpet Work induced a level of euphoria which created trance-like states of mind. The breaking down of emotions during the carpet work, the almost uncontrollable sobbing of some participants indicated a loss of self-control in a disturbing manner.

In a more dramatic account of one participant’s response to the carpet work, Shmuel Pollen writes: “Simcha asks us to breathe through our mouths very very deeply. He shows us how to do it. After 20 or so breaths...it seems our brain function became impaired. We become totally uninhibited. Anything goes.”

“I really am embarrassed to say this. But one attendee went outside and took off his clothes...and just stood there arms to the heavens...maybe he thinks he’s a *navi* in *deveikus* with G-d...I don’t know. But I’m quite sure a lot of us did believe these spiritual highs were spiritual highs connected with coming closer to G-d.” He continues with an account of his own behaviour. “I was jumping and throwing myself into the wall. Pretending I was a conductor with a big log. Imagine 35 people doing the craziest stuff all in the same room. It was surreal.”

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, in his *Iggrot Moshe*<sup>26</sup> discusses the question of whether it is permissible to consult hypnotherapists, who treat patients by putting them in a trance. Rabbi Feinstein writes that after consulting a number of hypnotherapists, he determined that hypnotism is a legitimate technique used to help patients overcome emotional

problems, and does not involve any kind of alleged magical powers. Therefore, he writes, he cannot find any grounds for forbidding hypnotism. *He does warn that a person seeking this kind of therapy must consult a Jewish, G-d-fearing practitioner.* He then adds that although he cannot find any grounds for forbidding hypnotism, it is self-degrading for a person to allow himself to fall into such a trance. *He therefore maintains that one should resort to this kind of therapy only if he indeed requires it, and not just for the experience.*

Rabbi Feinstein's Halachic ruling speaks for itself in that there appears to be no basis for any activities at Call of the Shofar which introduce a trance state.

Further evidence regarding this can be found in a letter written by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1979 following his talk about the issue of meditation and *avodah zarah*.<sup>27</sup> In the letter to a number of health professionals involved in the field of meditation, the Rebbe, argued, against therapy through hypnosis stating that in addition to safety and health issues, it took away the *bechira* of the patient and thus violated the human condition. An Australian orthodox psychiatrist and *Lubavitcher Chosid*, Dr Mottel Greenbaum who drew the writer's attention to this issue has explained that it is possible to conduct hypnosis in a manner where the subject of the therapy still retains the capacity of *bechira* and ownership over the treatment. He can, for example, at any stage chose to withdraw from the therapy. This requires very careful professional skills as well as experience. To the writer's knowledge, Frischling does not possess these skills.

### **Painful Experiences on Shabbos**

Carpet Work raises another Halachic problem. *The Magen Avraham* on *Hilchos Shabbos*<sup>28</sup> states clearly that on Shabbos one may not discuss a matter that pains him. The *Ktzois HaShulchan*,<sup>29</sup> makes the same point. In *Even Shleimah*<sup>30</sup> the *Gra* says, inter alia, that the punishment for forbidden words, e.g. scoffery, vows, arguments...especially on *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov*, is 'impossible to estimate.'

### **Other Issues**

A further issue relates to the fact that the central component of Call of the Shofar programs is conducted on Shabbos, a time when the participants would be normally celebrating *Shabbos* in their communities with their families and loved ones. The message to participants is that one's personal journey is paramount; it takes precedence over everything including family and children.

There also appears to be a contradiction between the Call of the Shofar's concepts of self-empowerment and wellbeing with one of the central themes of Shabbos which emphasizes the relationship between man and G-d (this is why there are no *bakoshois* in the *Shmomeh Esreh* of *Shabbos*; it is also the reason why we have a lengthy *P'sukai d'Zimra* on *Shabbos*.) Interviewees have also reported that the *davening* on *Shabbos* is 'quick' as time needs to be made available for the Carpet Work program. This concern was also fuelled by the prohibition of talking on Shabbos outside the actual program which reinforced the notion that Shabbos is all about the individual's wellbeing over and above his relationship with G-d.

In terms of the nature of the *Shabbos* component of Call of the Shofar programs, it could be argued that the organization is teaching participants that personal wellbeing is not only a prerequisite to the ability to live life as a Jew but it takes precedence. Several interviewees expressed concern about this message in the context of one of Call of the Shofars best known mantras, "I Matter." The issue is significant.

On the surface, the notion that "I Matter" is consistent with Jewish values. There are numerous references in the *Torah* which allude to the importance of each individual member of the Jewish community. However, set against the backdrop of a weekend which repeatedly emphasizes the importance of personal wellbeing; the need 'to be a somebody before you can be a nobody' and the importance of being a 'yesh' as a pre-requisite to a relationship with G-d, 'I Matter' has the potential to send another message. That message is that my wellbeing and the relationship I have with myself take precedence over everything including my relationship with G-d. "If I really matter, will I matter less if I don't keep all the laws as strictly as I used to?" Perhaps, this is one reason why some interviewees reported a lessening of Jewish standards following Call of the Shofar weekends.

The issue of transparency receives attention in subsequent sections of this report. Any absence of transparency in relation to the teaching or transmitting of *Torah* is a serious issue and the subject of severe condemnation in the book of *Yirmiyah*; "...oise meleches Hashem remiyah"<sup>31</sup> where highly disparaging terms are used in relation to someone who performs the work of Hashem without transparency. Teaching *Torah* or even incorporating the lesson of *Torah* in a class or general program carries significant responsibilities. The abrogation of these responsibilities cannot be overlooked.

For further details see Appendix B which includes some of these Halachic considerations as set out by Rabbi Chaim Dovid Kagan Ph.D, ARCS, DIC (Associate Royal College of Science, Diplomat of Imperial College of Science & Technology) and Rav of the Congregation Bais Menachem, Monsey as well as a letter by Rabbi Baruch A. Zushe Winner, *Rosh Yeshiva of Chovevei Torah* and *Rov* in Brighton Beach, regarding the prohibition of participating in Call of the Shofar programs. These comments are also relevant to the next question in this report, regarding the issue of *Avodah Zarah*.

**7. *Whether or not there are any connections, direct or implied with organizations or belief systems which fall under the category of Avodah Zarah.***

As mentioned above, many of the issues relevant to this question would be best dealt with by Rabbonim who are equipped to deal with these matters. However, a number of points are worthy of mention. In particular, the very sources of the Call of the Shofar programs and their connection with non-Jewish, possibly idolatrous beliefs and practices require examination. Bearing in mind that nearly all of the institutions listed on Frischling's 'partial list of training' have non-Jewish or idolatrous sources, what is the Jewish quality of the programs he presents?

Significantly, 'Steven Frischling' is currently listed as the Baltimore, Maryland facilitator on a website titled "ECP The Emotional Clearing Process."<sup>32</sup> This process is the creation of John Ruskan who is credited with "having achieved a challenging and difficult task, clarifying the

interface between Eastern spiritual tradition and Western psychology.<sup>33</sup> Ruskan admits that his techniques are drawn from Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism.<sup>34</sup>

Interestingly, the website states “Although *Emotional Clearing* tends to focus on present-day experience, you may spontaneously recall memories of childhood experience as you enter the deep Alpha-State process. This program tenderly speaks to the child, facilitating release of painful traumatic memories.” This sounds strikingly familiar with one of the main methods used by Call of the Shofar.

Furthermore, in discussing the program, the website states “The *Emotional Clearing* schematic of feelings is linked to the 10 chakras that we use. A disc available through the program starts by taking the participant on a guided tour of the chakra system, providing a short experiential glimpse of all the feeling potentials that are hard-wired into a human being.” If Frischling has in fact adopted one of the Ruskan’s ideas of “speaking to the child” does he also subscribe to the Ruskan’s concepts of the presence of the ten chakras in the human being?

While Frischling’s connection with programs and personalities which may be based on non-Jewish and idolatrous sources is a significant issue, the incorporation into Call of the Shofar of some of the techniques and programs used by these organizations is disturbing. ‘Carpet Work’ has been described by participants of Call of the Shofar as a central component of the program. Frischling does not appear to disclose the origins of Carpet Work. However, the comments made by a participant in the ‘Mankind Project’ reveal a program which is strikingly similar to Call of the Shofar. Participants in the Mankind Project typically spend a weekend in the woods where they are purportedly encouraged to strip naked “in order to reclaim their masculinity (see Appendix C.)”

“Then it is time for what I found one of the most disturbing parts of the weekend - where we are effectively 'broken free' of our emotional past. We are divided into three groups, each of which has a so-called 'sacred carpet', and for about an hour each man is subjected to emotionally manipulative questioning, on the carpet, that probes into his past. Some of the staff are very skilled at reading visual signs of hidden emotion. At times, three inquisitors demand the answers to questions that eventually leave a man weeping and apparently broken. This is happening simultaneously on all three mats. At times, it is impossible to hear what was happening on my own mat because of the wails and screams from the other groups.”

“The majority of the men who participate in this spectacle positively welcome this treatment. Others appear less keen. The objective seems to be to provoke a violent reaction from the person in the circle. One man of about 40 has an issue with his mother. He felt she had treated him badly when he was younger.

A staff man is chosen to represent the mother and, while other men stand in front of him, he is goaded to confront her by pushing through a human barrier. Instead, he flies into an uncontrolled rage.....If these staff men have any professional training, I am unaware of it. The qualification they seem to share is that they are graduates of the course I am now on. Mankind deny that any therapy takes place. They call it training. Another man sobs as he is told to act out beating his stepfather and mother to death. Again, he feels that they ignored him as a child and treated him with disdain.”<sup>35</sup>

Frischling's background and his connection with numerous non-Jewish groups over a lengthy period of time raises a critical and fundamental question: Is Call of the Shofar a Jewish program which has adopted certain ideas from other cultures and belief systems (which could be problematic in their own right) or is Call of the Shofar run on a non-Jewish template – Buddhism, Taoism and other Eastern-based beliefs – with Jewish content and Jewish flavours? For many interviewees it was the non-Jewish background which caused them to rescind their association with Call of the Shofar and it is this issue which requires explanation.

Interviewees mentioned various examples to highlight Frischling's apparent connection with Taoism and that he appeared to draw inspiration from the Tao philosophy. Others mentioned the centrality of breathing as a Buddhist technique. Certainly breathing techniques are central to Buddhism to the extent that "one of the most widespread Buddhist practices for developing attentional balance is mindfulness of breathing."<sup>36</sup>

Breathing is also a cornerstone of one of Frischling's trainings through Jessica Dibbs, Founder, Spiritual Director, and Principal Teacher of Inspiration Consciousness School. The organization's website states that "Integrative breathing harmonizes the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems to allow increased relaxation and vitality, creating connections to what is most essential to us, both on a personal and transpersonal level. This process allows us to experience non-ordinary states of consciousness in which each breath becomes an opportunity for healing the tensions that maintain fear-based behaviors."

It is the writer's view that while the sources of Frischling's training are important, the more central issue are the sources of Frischling's philosophy.

In this regard, the comments posted on a website titled "The Truth about Shofar" are both revealing and disturbing. The website's author, Dovid Feldman, writes: "The primary ideological theme, the backbone of the Shofar philosophy, is the concept of *Klal Prat*, and *Klal*. The idea is that the Jewish "cycle-of-life" is comprised of a process of being "one" with the *Klal* ("undifferentiated oneness"), then separating from the oneness ("individuating"), and then returning back to the oneness (*Klal*) from a stronger place, in an appropriate relationship. This dynamic is the symphony of our lives, and the framework for our development."

Feldman continues, "Simcha Frischling, the founder of the Call of the Shofar, maintains that this concept stems from Kabbalah." Feldman's statement was corroborated by numerous Call of the Shofar interviewees who accepted both the centrality of *Klal*, *Prat* and *Klal* concepts in Frischling's philosophy as well as the fundamental significance of the concept of "undifferentiated oneness."

The significance of this comment cannot be overstated. The fact is that the term "undifferentiated oneness" is not Frischling's creation but has its source in Taoist and Buddhist philosophy.<sup>37</sup> According to these philosophies, "Mystical knowledge can never be obtained just by observation, but only by full participation with one's whole being. The notion of the participator is thus crucial to the Eastern world view, and the Eastern mystics have pushed this notion to the extreme, to a point where observer and observed, subject and object, are not only inseparable but also become indistinguishable. The mystics are not satisfied with a situation analogous to atomic physics, where the observer and the observed

cannot be separated, but can still be distinguished. They go much further, and in deep meditation they arrive at a point where the distinction between observer and observed breaks down completely, where subject and object fuse into a unified *undifferentiated oneness*.

This is clear from the writings of the *Upanishads*.<sup>38</sup> “This, then, is the final apprehension of the unity of all things. It is reached—so the mystics tell us—in a state of consciousness where one’s individuality dissolves into an *undifferentiated oneness*, where the world of the senses is transcended and the notion of ‘things’ is left behind. In the words of Chuang Tzu, “My connection with the body and its parts is dissolved. My perceptive organs are discarded. Thus leaving my material form and bidding farewell to my knowledge, I become one with the Great Pervader. This I call sitting and forgetting all things.”<sup>39</sup>

It is the writer’s view that this *primary ideological theme* of Call of the Shofar, the concepts of *Prat, Klal* and *Prat* are an attempt to dress the Buddhist and Taoist concepts of ‘undifferentiated oneness’ in Jewish nomenclature without revealing to the participants the source of this belief. The fact that a central theme of Call of the Shofar appears to be sourced from *Avodah Zarah* is a critical issue. The fact that participants in the workshop are led to believe that Frischling’s *Klal* and *Prat* theory is the means by which the participants are empowered to explore their own journey from Egypt to Israel is highly problematic in terms of openness and transparency.

A further theme which is presented as part of Frischling’s Jewish model is the preoccupation with the concept of personal wellbeing as the key to all effective relationships including one’s relationship with G-d. The concept of wellbeing is arguably Frischling’s most popular mantra and is a cornerstone of Frischling’s philosophy and a central theme of Call of the Shofar programs. In Frischling’s *Rosh Hashanah* message of September 2011 the message is not only all about wellbeing but not once during this recording is the name of G-d even mentioned.<sup>40</sup>

This is significant when attempting to assess the *Avodah Zarah* issue and the connection between Frischling’s philosophy and Buddhism. In an article titled ‘Mental Balance and Wellbeing: Building Bridges between Buddhism and Western Psychology,’ the authors state “The goal of Buddhist practice is the realization of a state of wellbeing that is not contingent on the presence of pleasurable stimuli, either external or internal. According to Buddhism, this movement toward wellbeing is a fundamental part of being human.”<sup>41</sup> Whether Frischling’s preoccupation with the notion of wellbeing is related to his connection with Buddhism is a matter of speculation. However, considering that the Buddhist influence is very present in Frischling’s teachings, this issue requires further investigation.

The wellbeing issue coupled with Frischling’s “I Matter” mantra are highly relevant in relation to the influence of Landmark Forum on Call of the Shofar programs. In the aforementioned article by Renee Lockwood, the author writes, “Perhaps the most conspicuous of all is the sacralisation of the ‘Self’ within Landmark Education, filling the perceived void of a deity or object of religious authority. Wielding power over everything around it.....The quest for the nature of reality, taking personal responsibility for its ultimate creation and subsequent explorations of the ‘Self’ are also primary within the contemporary Landmark Forum”<sup>42</sup> In the writer’s view that it is difficult not to connect the methodology



and the message of Call of the Shofar with Frischling's training which includes Landmark Forum.

The suggested connection between Landmark and Buddhism is also significant. According to Renee Lockwood, "Perhaps more prominent in the teachings and philosophy of the Landmark Forum are Buddhist notions of reality and the essential meaningless of all things material. The purpose of the training corresponds directly with the philosophy of the Yogacara school of Buddhism which views the world as we experience it as "purely mental." Similarly, according to Lockwood, the influence of Zen Buddhism is visibly manifest in the Landmark Forum. "The distinctive element in Zen is 'instantaneous leading to transformation,' rather than 'process leading to change,'" which in the writer's view is the fundamental cornerstone of the "breakthrough" process experienced by participants at Call of the Shofar retreats.

It is the writer's view that the emphasis on the "Self" also reflects the influence of Eastern religious thought on Frischling's philosophy of life. In an email to the writer, Rabbi Chaim Dovid Kagan lends clarity to the issue. "One of the essential differences between Eastern and Western religions is that the former does not believe in a transcendent G-d who provides commandments and instruction to the world. Instead, self-realization and self-actualization become the core processes in the achievement of spiritual progress."

The writer is not suggesting that the actual program uses idolatrous practices. However, the very intimate connections between the *raison d'être* and the philosophy underlying Call of the Shofar are a serious concern. The fact that some of these sources are clearly of an idolatrous nature casts a giant shadow over the acceptability of Call of the Shofar as an authentic Jewish program.

For further details of the Halachic issues and references, see Appendix B.

***8. Any other matter relevant to the impact of the organization on its participants, their families and the community.***

***Privacy***

In Simcha Frischling's 'Official Statement,' he poses the question, "Is Call of the Shofar curriculum a secret?"

Frischling writes, "In all of our trainings we clearly tell participants that they are free to share whatever they did, saw or experienced on our programs. We make a single exception to this transparency. We request all members to maintain confidentiality concerning what they witnessed or heard other participants share. This comes from a simple and fundamental respect of other people's privacy. Many of our participants choose not to share the details of the workshops in order to allow their friends and family the opportunity to experience the workshop without preconceived notions or expectations."

On the surface, Frischling's answer appears entirely appropriate. Against the backdrop of what transpires at the "Carpet Work" the answer rings very hollow. The issue was summed up by a former Call of the Shofar participant who said, "I'm out of Call of the Shofar but how do I retrieve the piece of me that I left behind?" If respect of privacy is paramount, how does

Frischling support and encourage a process where participants share with the group issues which they may have never shared with their closest friends or their partners in life? Is not 'Carpet Work' potentially, the biggest breach of privacy? One interviewee did report that Frischling stopped him from talking about an issue which appeared too private for public disclosure. While that is to be applauded, the very fact that the Carpet Work environment facilitated such potential disclosure is disturbing. Other interviewees – especially those who had left Call of the Shofar – had deep regrets about what they had shared.

### ***Behind the Message of Wellbeing***

Many supporters of Call of the Shofar argued that the program was about wellbeing, identity, communication and many other important aspects of inter-personal behaviour. These supporters believed that Frischling's personal level of Jewish observance was irrelevant as were any *Halachic* questions.

This argument is difficult to sustain. Frischling has called his program 'Call of the Shofar;' the symbol of the program is the Shofar. He claims that all the programs are grounded in Torah *hashkafa* (principles) and are in strict accordance with *Halacha* (Jewish Law.) The Shofar is arguably one of the most powerful symbols of the Jewish calendar. The *Shofar* conjures up numerous images including prayer, repentance, forgiveness and a return to G-d. The program is held over *Shabbos*, certainly the most spiritual day of the week. The theme of the weekend is the personal journey from Egypt to Israel.

While the program may address various aspects of human behaviour, it does so within the context of Frischling's unique model of Judaism in which personal observance as exemplified by his conduct is irrelevant and in an environment where Halacha can be compromised. Regardless of the motive for attendance, the experience goes well beyond personal behaviour and reaches deeply into the very essence of Jewish commitment and practice.

While the thrust of Call of the Shofar professes to be about personal growth and development, there appears to be an undermining of basic Torah principles and practice veiled under the banner of personal wellbeing. Ultimately personal wellbeing becomes *the* precursor towards Jewish observance, rather than the centrality of G-d in the world at large and in the life of the individual. The significance of this shift in priorities cannot be ignored in an assessment of Call of the Shofar.

### ***Recruitment of New Members***

The reports regarding recruitment of new members are disturbing. There is evidence from interviewees of a concerted effort to recruit new members. The interviewees reported that at the end of the weekend retreat they were asked to make lists of people who could be recruited.

Mention has already been made of the reluctance of recruiting members to tell anything about what happens at the program. However, beyond this the writer was told of numerous reports of Call of the Shofar supporters offering to pay the weekend fees for new participants.

At the conclusion of the seminar according to one interviewee, Frischling encourages participants to tell their friends to join the ongoing teleseminar. He encourages people to come to the graduation phone call. Forms need to be filled out with the names of potential recruits.

“The graduation phone call is shortly after the workshop. Frischling giving a little summary of his notion of going out of *Mitzrayim* and into *Eretz Yisroel* as it relates to personal development. Then it’s shofar attendees giving exclusively glowing testimonials about the workshop. In retrospect it was very close to the weekend and they were still on the ‘high’.”

### ***Deprogramming***

It is important to clarify the use of the term ‘deprogramming’ in relation to Call of the Shofar participants. The term ‘deprogramming’ suggests that the participants have been ‘programmed’ in a similar manner in which members of well-known cult groups have undergone a personality change which needs to be reversed.

‘Deprogramming’ is a term which was introduced in the 1970’s to refer to a process whereby the ‘programming’ orchestrated by the particular cult was able to be reversed. Typically, members of these groups broke off ties with their families; many were not seen for lengthy periods of time while others adopted radically different lifestyles. Deprogramming was a response to this behaviour. Often this was done involuntarily and in potential breach of the law. At the time cult victims were often described as being ‘glassy eyed’ or ‘zombie-like’ in their presentation, a sign that they had undergone a significant personality change.

It is the writer’s view that it is wrong to assume that because Call of the Shofar participants may not present in this manner, that they haven’t been heavily influenced by the organization. Indeed, the influence of Call of the Shofar on its participants is far more subtle than the influence orchestrated by many well-known cults of the 1970’s and ‘80’s.

Technically speaking, the more radical deprogramming approach may not be relevant in these situations. However, as has been mentioned by various well-informed cult-experts, in particular, Rabbi Shea Hecht, there is an absolute need for Call of the Shofar participants to undergo counselling in order to review and understand the processes and techniques which were used by the program and the effects they have had on the participant. While an individual case by case approach is always advisable, it needs to be understood that this is a complex but necessary process.

### ***The Benefits for Participants in Call of the Shofar***

As mentioned in the introductory comments, numerous people have spoken and written about the benefits of Call of the Shofar. The writer continues to receive emails from individuals who extol the program. It is not possible to ignore these claims. However, the issue deserves closer attention in order to determine, as most researchers of LGAT’s have found, whether these are real or perceived benefits, whether there is some sort of placebo effect in place or whether the benefits are short lived. From a *Halachic* point of view, any benefits gained from the Call of the Shofar would need to be assessed in terms of the

legitimacy of techniques offered by a program sourced in *avodah zarah*. Another issue is whether the same benefits could have been gained from more conventional or orthodox programs. Some of these issues are beyond the scope of this report.

However, one comment may be helpful. From a purely statistical point of view, there will always be a number of people who will gain from a particular program, therapy or teaching regardless of whether it is acceptable or not. When a large population participate in a complex program, this is a logical outcome. The writer has received correspondence from a number of people who have, as a result of their unique circumstances appear to have genuinely benefited from Call of the Shofar. While this is not being denied, it is a grave error to then use these individual situations to justify a program which in the writer's opinion is essentially flawed.

It is also impossible to overlook the participants of Call of the Shofar who report that they were harmed by the program some of whom are now in therapy to deal with the fallout for the intensive three day weekend retreat. The writer is also aware of and the pain that some parents and loved ones are experiencing in their efforts to rectify the damage they believe was caused by Call of the Shofar.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This report has raised a number of crucial issues regarding the Call of the Shofar. While the writer welcomes feedback on the report, it should be clear to anyone who reads the report that the program is seriously problematic in a number of critical areas.

In summary they include the following:

- In contrast to Frischling's claims, the program does have a strong therapeutic base
- The staff has no professional qualifications
- Experienced professionals have raised questions regarding the potential risks that Call of the Shofar poses to participants
- There is no system of accountability in place by which Call of the Shofar can be brought to task about its activities
- There have been no studies to evaluate the effectiveness of Call of the Shofar programs
- The program appears to be strongly influenced by non-Jewish and idolatrous sources.
- There are ethical questions regarding the recruitment methods used by the organization
- There are serious Halachic problems with Call of the Shofar in terms of the structure and methods of the program
- The "*primary ideological theme*" of the program, the concept of *Prat, Klal* and *Prat* is based on idolatrous sources
- Frischling is not a *Ye'ray Shamayim* and does not regard the laws of *Shulchan Aruch* as being binding upon him.

The primary ideological theme of *Prat* and *Klal* and the issue of Frischling's *Yiras Shamayim* are particularly relevant as they raise another highly relevant problem with Call of the Shofar.

Since the establishment of Call of the Shofar, Frischling has continued to promote his *Klal*, *Prat* and *Klal* as a central theme of his programs. He has repeatedly used the term "*the undifferentiated one*" in this context. At no time, to the writer's knowledge, has Frischling admitted the Buddhist or Taoist origins of this theory. Instead he has been applauded by participants of his programs for being able to take an essentially *Halachic* expression and apply it to the life journey of a Jew "from Egypt to Israel."

The question needs to be asked as to why Frischling has not revealed the sources of his theories and teachings – not only in relation to the "*Prat*" and "*Klal*" issue but in relation to many other aspects of Call of the Shofar as discussed in this report. Similarly, it is important to know whether the Rabbonim who have given their support to the program have been made aware of the origins of some of these programs.

Frischling has attempted to protect his lack of Jewish observance behind the "privacy" screen. While some of his shortcomings of his Jewish practice have been apparent to participants of Call of the Shofar, Frischling presents as an observant Jew. There has been no suggestion to the contrary in any of Frischling's media interviews, webcast or postings on his website or Facebook. The question needs to be asked again as to why Frischling has not been upfront about his laxity in Torah observance and whether the Rabbonim who have given their support to his program were aware of this.

While Frischling claims that "With the continued guidance and support of prominent Rabbonim and experts in the field of personal growth, all of our programs are grounded in Torah *hashkafa* (principles) and are in strict accordance with *Halacha* (Jewish law)," it is the writer's view that the *Rabbonim's* support is based on the false belief that the program is grounded in Torah and that Frischling is an observant Jew. This report has demonstrated that there are numerous serious *Halachic* problems with the program, that the *Hashkafah* on which the program is based is derived from a variety of sources many of which are not Jewish and even idolatrous, and that Frischling is not an observant Jew.

Giving a *Hechsher* to an organization is a huge responsibility. If such is the case regarding a restaurant or food outlet, one could argue how more onerous is the responsibility if the organization is dealing with people's lives, their relationships, their families, their place in the community and their observance of Judaism.

The presence of even one non-kosher product or utensil in a food establishment is enough to justify the non-administration of a *Hechsher* or the withdrawal of an existing *Hechsher*. Even one suspected misdemeanour in this regard will affect the status of the establishment.

It is the writer's view supported by participants of the program, that Call of the Shofar is not a Jewish program which incorporates strands of 'other' philosophies and belief systems to enhance its appeal and effectiveness. Rather it is essentially a Large Group Awareness Training organization based on a range of non-Jewish and idolatrous sources – in particular Buddhism and Taoism - which has adopted a set of Jewish practices and values to make it presentable and attractive to a Jewish audience. Frischling's training as listed on his personal CV supports the origins of Call of the Shofar.

Furthermore the opinions of experts in relation to the serious risks and potential damage caused by Call of the Shofar raises extremely significant issues regarding the possibility for any *Rov* or other professional to lend support to this organization which lacks professional input or external accountability. Interviewees' reports of participants at Call of the Shofar breaking down under the intensity of the program are extremely disturbing. The argument that such situations are rare is irrelevant. The fact remains that Call of the Shofar staff do not have any formal training or the capacity to deal with potential situations where participants may be at risk.

The fact also remains that in relation to the resolution of deep-seated emotional issues, personal healing and re-establishment of family ties and connections, there are no 'quick-fixes.' The fact that Call of the Shofar, like many other LGAT's and 'Breakthrough' programs, presents as an organization that in the time-frame of forty eight hours can offer a range of positive and sometimes dramatic life changing outcomes, is not supported by longitudinal studies or other academic research.

The real challenge for *Rabbonim* goes well beyond their refusal to grant a *Hechsher* to Call of the Shofar. It goes beyond the responsibility of *Rabbonim* to advise would-be participants not to attend the weekend retreats or participate in any other programs offered by Call of the Shofar. The real question is whether *Rabbonim* have a responsibility to alert the public to the serious issues regarding Call of the Shofar raised in this report.

The question has been raised whether the model used by the "Call of the Shofar" could be modified to conform to acceptable standards of emotional/mental health and Torah principles. While this issue is beyond the brief of this report, it is the writer's view that the program is not salvageable. As an organization which purports to enrich the lives of Jewish men and women, its methodology well as its philosophy are essentially flawed.

Raphael Aron  
Director Cult Consulting Australia  
Adar 5744  
March 2014

## Official Statement

To Whom it May Concern:

I am Simcha Frischling, Founder and Executive Director of Call of the Shofar. Sadly, a great deal of slander and misinformation has been circulating about the organization and I want to take this opportunity to clarify who we are.

Call of the Shofar is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower Jewish men and women of all degrees of observance to live with full vitality and to engage in appropriate, responsible relationship with others. Educational by nature, our programs have brought positive change to thousands of lives worldwide over the past 12 years. With the continued guidance and support of prominent Rabbonim and experts in the field of personal growth, all of our programs are grounded in Torah hashkofa (principles) and are in strict accordance with Halacha (Jewish law).

Our programs explore the journey from Egypt to Israel as a template for our own personal journey back to our true selves. Our workshops provide tools and opportunities to identify and transcend our own constrictions. From greater freedom and clarity we can then consciously orchestrate our actions towards living healthy, vital and responsible lives.

We can all agree that our communities are not immune to individuals suffering from low self-esteem, dysfunctional marriages and a lack of good parenting skills. These problems, to name a few, are affecting the very foundation of our families. To learn and embody the principles which generate emotional and relational wellbeing is now an absolute responsibility and necessity.

Through experiential workshops and educational seminars, we teach skills of healthy communication. We help individuals become aware of old toxic patterns of thinking which often pollute our relationships with our spouses and children. We get in touch with our vitality and emotional vibrancy. We learn to accept responsibility for ourselves, our families and for the communities within which we belong. We step into our freedom of choice from which we connect deeply with G-d and our loved ones. We come to understand our highest priorities and the importance of following the laws and leadership which help us manifest those priorities. We experience gratitude for our lives, which provide us the opportunity to grow and love.

Through compassionate listening and respectful attention, our programs are designed to create a safe environment for people to break free of old,

dysfunctional constrictions. Call of the Shofar provides effective tools to live with more vitality and intentionality and the ongoing support to bring these qualities into our everyday lives.

I am proud to be a member of an organization which is having such a positive effect on so many lives. I am honored to be working with so many courageous individuals. I am grateful to be part of a growing circle of individuals who are making positive changes for the sake of our families, our communities, and the ultimate awakening of G-d's Presence in our lives.

This is what Call of the Shofar is and this is what we do.

Yours truly,

Simcha Frischling

I have provided a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that address circulating misconceptions. If you have additional questions or inquiries, you may contact me at [info@calloftheshofar.org](mailto:info@calloftheshofar.org).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

Is the Call of the Shofar curriculum a secret?

In all of our trainings we clearly tell participants that they are free to share whatever they did, saw or experienced on our programs. We make a single exception to this transparency. We request all members to maintain confidentiality concerning what they witnessed or heard other participants share. This comes from a simple and fundamental respect of other people's privacy. Many of our participants choose not to share the details of the workshops in order to allow their friends and family the opportunity to experience the workshop without preconceived notions or expectations. For this same reason, we do not publish the content of our seminars, but we are always happy to share details or answer question at any time via phone or email.

Is Call of the Shofar therapy?

We do not attempt to administer psychological therapy of any kind and we make it clear to all of our participants that Call of the Shofar workshops are not therapy and do not replace therapy. Through a detailed questionnaire and application process, individuals who have mental health challenges are often asked not to attend the program. While we do not actively try to solve any mental health issues, when given the support and tools to explore self-awareness, participants often experience greater psychological and emotional clarity.

Do we practice meditation?



There are many types of meditation. We practice one very simple form of bringing awareness to our patterns of thinking. We promote freedom and intentionality to the quality of our thoughts. We do not attempt to change or manipulate anyone's thinking at any time.

Are the programs in alignment with Halacha (Orthodox Jewish law)?

We have made every effort to construct our program in total congruency with Jewish law by consulting with top orthodox authorities. Many prestigious rabbis and Torah Scholars have learned about and experienced Call of the Shofar first hand and have given our program their blessing. Although our program has been approved by and strictly adheres to the guidelines of Orthodox Rabbinic authority, we do not attempt to teach Halacha (Jewish law) or influence religious observance in any way. We tell our participants to consult with their own Rabbis for matters of Halacha and personal Hadracha (direction). Whenever a Halachic concern has arisen, we have immediately worked closely with Rabbinic authorities to understand the issue and adjust our program accordingly. We are committed to operating within the Torah framework, and will continue to do whatever is necessary to uphold that standard should Halachic issues be brought to our attention.

Are Call of the Shofar techniques or exercises based on non-kosher sources?

Call of the Shofar programs are unique. Some of the principles that we teach and processes that we utilize are of course found in other programs. These commonalities are purely due to their fundamental and universal nature. We follow the Torah's directive of utilizing the world's resources for a higher purpose. To that end, our techniques will draw from a variety of sources, yet as stated above, Call of the Shofar works to make sure that every aspect of our programs are in accordance with Halacha and Torah Hashkafa.

Do you take away people's cell phones?

No. Participants are encouraged to limit their interaction with family and work while participating on the workshop in order to allow complete concentration and minimize distractions. If a participant needs to make a call, they are asked to do so in private as to not distract others.

Is Call of the Shofar a cult?

To label an organization a cult, one must first define the word cult and provide concrete facts to support this claim. Some defining aspects of a cult are the following:

1. A system of religious veneration and devotion directed towards a particular figure or object.
2. An organization which imposes control over the minds and behavior of those involved.
3. A group which has a polarized us-versus-them mentality. Members are

encouraged to cut ties with other organizations or family members, etc.

Facts:

1. No one in the organization is pretending to be anything other than an individual trying to live life as best as they can. At no time are we pretending to be communal leaders. We are giving over principles. No one in the organization is pretending to be above others in any way or to be role models for others to strictly follow.

2. We are in no way controlling people's minds. We stress free choice. We teach participants how to take responsibility for their choices and their ways of thinking. We do not tell people what to think and what to do. We teach people how to be aware of the impact of unconscious, bad habits and negative thinking.

3. We stress the exact opposite of an "us versus them" mentality. Our mission is to improve our extended relationships. We emphasize that participants should not isolate themselves. We encourage participants to incorporate the principles and teachings in their personal lives through greater presence, acceptance, and understanding of our common humanity. The participants of our program come from all walks of life and are encouraged to infuse what they learned back into those walks of life.

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Apply **NOW** or contact [pinny@calloftheshofar.org](mailto:pinny@calloftheshofar.org)

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*"Call of the Shofar has brought together some of the most powerful experiential modalities that are out-there in the world, and has given them their natural place in a Jewish framework..."*

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## APPENDIX B

Halachic Consideration regarding Call of the Shofar by  
Rabbi Chaim Dovid Kagan Ph.D, ARCS, DIC (Associate Royal College of Science,  
Diplomat of Imperial College of Science & Technology) and Rav of the Congregation  
Bais Menachem, Monsey

**בס"ד  
בענין "קול השופר", הרב חיים דוד קאגאן  
רקע לשאלה**

לפני כמה שבועות בעקבות הפרסום באתרות האינטרנט החב"דיות נשאלתי משומעי לקחי לדעתי על "קול השופר". מבלי להתעטר בכתר של פוסק, ובהכרה שמוה"ר הרה"ג וכו' הרב ברוך דוב לשס שי' הוא המרא דאתרא של קהילת אני"ש במונסי, פרסמתי את דעתי נגד "קול השופר" בשיעור השבועי בעניני הלכה שאני מוסר כרב בהכ"נ בית מנחם. מאז כבר יצאו נגד "קול השופר" כמה גדולים וטובים ממני. מכיון שחקרתי ודרשתי בענין זה אמרתי לכתוב את מסקנתי.

**עובדות: מה קורה בשבתון "קול השופר"?**

מצורף בזה העדות המפורטת של ר' שמואל פאלקן שי', ואני קבלתי עדות מ ה. ר. שהעיד אותם הדברים ממש. גם דברתי עם עוד משתתפי השבתון, אף שסרבו לתת פרטים לא סתרו עדויות הנ"ל ואף במדה מסוימת היה ניתן להסיק מדבריהם כדברי העדים.

בקיצור: ערב שבת: מוסרים הכלי תקשורת, ושעונים (לפי ה.ר.), אח"כ מתחיל תקופת השקט. מדריך השבתון מסביר קצת התכלית. אחר כך רוקד כל אחד באמצע מעגל באופן שהעניים מכוסים. אחר כך כל אחד יושב מול אדם אחר – בן זוגו – בקרוב מאד לשני. זאת אומרת שהפנים מול הפנים ברחוק של כמה סנטימטרים בלבד וממילא הרגלים של שניהם מסובכים יחד. כל אחד מסתכל בעיני בן זוגו מבלי לומר שום דבר לזמן ממושך. אחר כך מנסח כל אחד מכתב מאלוקים אליו. כל זה נמשך עד שבת. (לפי שמואל פאלקן רצו שיטיילו הזוג ביחד לזמן מה.)

קבלת שבת סעודת שבת הכל בשקט (חוץ מהקדוש והתפילות והברכות). הולכים לישון.

שבת: השכמה ותפילת ש"ק ב7:30. סעודת ש"ק. מתחילים עיקר התכנית בערך 10:30. קצת התעמלות כהכנה. שוכבים על הרצפה ושומעים איך המדריך מוליך את כל אחד במסע אל הילד במערה. (עיין הפרטים בתאור של שמואל פאלקן) כ"א מדמיין לעצמו שהוא הילד הזה והוא צריך לבטא את הכאב של הילד. וכל אחד כיחיד צריך לקום ולצעוק בכל כוחו כשהוא דוחף את המדריך שצועק כנגדו ומדברו אותו עד שהוא מגיע לשיא הצעקות והדחיפות ואז הוא פרק את מטען ההרגשים מעליו. תרגיל זה נמשך רוב רובו של ש"ק. (עיין הפרטים בתאור של שמואל פאלקן) כמובן כ"א מאוד מותש ועיף מתרגיל זה.

ביום ראשון יש תרגיל של נשימה עמוקה עד שכ"א במצב של "עד דלא ידע" ואימרים אז כל מיני דברים ולא זוכרים מה שאמרו אז.

כמובן יש יותר תרגילים אבל אלו העיקריים.

**מאיפה לקח הממציא תרגילים אלו?**

**פרישלינג התגאה בעבר שלו כבסיס של תכניתו.**

*Partial list of trainings:*

Studied in Yeshiva Ohr Samayach, Monsey

New York Landmark Education

Dr Richard Moss, author and teacher

Jessica Dibb, founder of Inspiration Community

Sandra Sherer, founder of "Wave Work"

John Ruskan, author of Emotional Clearing 1999

The Mankind Project (Formerly New Warrior)

George Pransky, Psychologist, author, founder Pransky Inst.

למטה בנספחים קבצתי הרבה חומר על רשימה זו ועל עוד מקורות תכניתו. הצד השווה מכל אלו הוא שהם דרכים מושפעים מ"בודיסם" או לגמרי "בודיסם". ודרכים לא מקובלים בין רופאי נפש מומחים. גם ניתן לראות כל פרט בתכנית שלו לקוח ממקום אחר. הדרכים האלו נקראים

Large Group Awareness Training - Here the methods of inner child, primal scream, bioenergetics, and breath work (holotropic breathing) are clearly used.

ויש הרבה מחקר על דרכים אלו, עיין הדו"ח מהפסיכיאטרים המצורף וכל שאר החומר.

### שאלות הלכתיות:

**שבת:** אסור להתעמל בשבת (שו"ע סי' שכ"ח סעי' מ"ב, ועי' ביאור הלכה שם) שו"ע הרב שם סעי' מ"ז "אפילו לתענוג בעלמא". לכן ההתעמלות לפני התרגיל העקרי אסור). אסור להיות בצער בשבת: (עי' במג"א ושו"ע סי' רפ"ז ובשו"ע הרב שם "שלא יצטערו בשבת" ובסעי' גי' "שלא יבא להצטער עמהם"). ובשערי תשובה שם: "ומי שהוא רך הלבב ומיצר על יסורי החולה אין לו לילך בשבת לבקר דלעונג ולא לצער ניתן. בספר אגרות קודש של כ"ק אדמו"ר מליובאוויטש ז"יע חלק י"ג סימן תנ"א: דייק "כל צער אסור בו אפילו הבא ע"י ודאי מצוה". התרגיל העקרי בשבת תכליתו הוא להצטער עם הילד הפנימי ולצעוק וכו'.

**לשון הרע, בזיון אביו ואמו, קללת אביו ואמו.** לפי העדויות הרבה מהנוכחים יש להם הרגשים קשים נגד הוריהם. מכיון שעליהם ללכת אחורה בחייהם ולבטא את כאב הילד, הרי הם אומרים זה בפרהסיא וגם בדבורים קשים ולפעמים בדברים גסים ולא נקיים. ה.ר. העיד שבשעת התרגיל נשימה עמוקה "עד דלא ידעי" שמע קללות גסות נגד ההורים. (עי' יו"ד סי' רמ"א וח"מ סי' כ"ז גדרי קללות וכו'). ואם היו מתרפאין מחולי הנפש ע"י זה היה מקום לשאלה כשאין קללה בכנוי או בשם ח"ו אבל בשביל איזו שיפור מדומה בחיים מי יתיר את זה? ונוסף לזה יש לשון הרע והלבנת פנים ברבים. וגם אפשר שיש כאן לאו דלפני עוור וכמו שמצינו במכה בנו הגדול בשו"ע יו"ד רמ"א סעי' כ'.

**הפנוזה או שליטה על מוח הזולת.** בשו"ת אגרות משה התיר זה רק לרפואה. בשו"ת אגרות משה יורה דעה חלק ג סימן מד כתב "בדבר שאלתך אם מותר לעשות לרפואה היפנאטיזם הנה דברתי בזה עם יודעים קצת בזה וגם עם הגרי"א הענקין שליט"א ואיננו רואים בזה שיהיה דבר איסור שאין בזה ענין כשוף כי הוא ענין טבעי שיש כח לאיזה אנשים להשפיע על אנשים חלופי העצבים וכדומה שלא ידעו מה אתם. אך יש לחוש אם הרופא העושה זה הוא חשוד לעבור על איסורי תורה שמה יאמר לו לעשות דבר איסור ולא יחשב אנוס כיון דהביא עצמו לידי כך דהוא כהשכיב עצמו לישן אצל כלים שאינו אנוס כדהביאו התוס' ד"ה כיון ב"ק דף ד' ע"א מירושלמי עיין שם. ואם אין לחוש לזה כגון ברופא שהוא שומר תורה או באופן אחר שאין לחוש לאיסורין ולבטול מצות איננו רואים בזה שיהיה דבר איסור. אבל נלע"ד שהוא זלזול בעצמו שג"כ הוא ריחא דאיסורא כדאשכחן באוכל בשוק בקידושין דף מ' ע"ב שפסול לעדות משום שמזלזל בעצמו וכן בשאר עניני זלזול כדאיתא בש"ע ח"ו"מ סי' ל"ד סעי' י"ח. וזה ג"כ הוא זלזול גדול בגופו שלכן אין לעשות זה אבל אי"כ יכול לעשות לרפואה דהוה כלא אפשר שמוותר לזלזול בעצמו ולהתבזות כדאיתא בסנהדרין דף כ"ו ע"ב ופשוט שהוא אף בליכא סכנה דבאיכא חשש פ"נ הא דוחה אף איסורין ופשיטא ומאי קמ"ל בגמ' ולכן גם הכא אף שהוא לרפואה דבר שאין בו סכנה הוה לא אפשר לו ואין בזה חשש זלזול בגופו ויכול לעשות." וכן דעת כ"ק אדמו"ר מליובאוויטש ז"יע. בני"ד אין כאן היפנוזה ממש אבל יש כאן סוג של שליטת המוח ולפי הנ"ל מכיון שאין זה לרפואה של מחלה, ובודאי לא לרפואת חולי הנפש ממש (גם לפי פרישלינג) אלא בשביל שיפור החיים, ולפי המומחים אין זה מועיל, אין להתיר.

**דרכי אמורי:** ידוע מחלוקת הפוסקים האם רפואה שאין שום סיבה הגיונית שהיא מועילה וגם לא נתאמת ע"פ הנסיון ולקוח ממקור ע"ז אסור (הרמב"ם עי' תוספת יוה"כ יומא פ"ג א') או מותר (הרשב"א בשו"ת א' קס"ז, ת"י, תתכ"ה) ואכמ"ל. אע"פ שמשורת הדין נראה שפוסקים כהרשב"א אבל בשו"ת צ"צ יו"ד פ"א ובשו"ת מנחת יצחק ח"ו סי' פ' מיעצים שלא להשתמש באלו רפואות. וזלז"ק של כ"ק הצמח צדק יו"ד פ"א "ויכ"ז מדינא. אבל בדרך עצה ג"כ פשיטא ופשיטא שאין ראוי לילך ח"ו אחרי התהו אשר לא יועילו ואין בזה ממש כלל רק שיצא שכרם בהפסדם ח"ו שע"ז לא יבקשו רפואה אחרת בסמיכתם על ההבל. כ"א ראוי שישע א' מהם או מעירם לדאקטער מומחה לבקש ממנו עצה על מיחוש זה והי' ישלח דברו וירפאם כמ"ש במשנה ספ"ג דר"ה היו מתרפאין." וכ"ז אם הוא לרפואה ואין משתמשים בע"ז דאז אסור אפילו בפקוח נפש עי' באריכות שו"ת מנח"י הנ"ל. והנה בעניננו יש לכה"פ מקורות של ע"ז ועי' להלן.

**שיטות עבודה זרה, כפירה, עבודה זרה:** בני"ד יש צד חזק לומר שהשיטה בעקרה בנוי על כפירה וע"ז. (ואין אני אומר שפרישלינג הוא עובד ע"ז ח"ו אלא ששיטתו או תכניתו מושפעת הרבה מזה בידועין או בלא יודעין). דהנה יש להבין למה כל תכניות של:

Large Group Awareness Training - Landmark, Hoffman Method, Mankind Project, etc.

כולם ללא יוצא מן הכלל אומרים שהם מבוססים על "בודיהיזם". והדתות המערביות דהיינו יהדות ולהבדיל נצרות ואיסלם מנגדות להם. והסיבה היא שהדתות המערביות מאמינות באלוקים בורא עולם ומנהיגו המצווה על ברואיו איך להתנהג. מה שאנו קוראים קבלת עול מלכות שמים. הדתות המזרחיות למיניהן חושבות אחרת, ובפרט בודהיזם (ובפרט ז"ין בודהיזם). אין להם מושג זה. אלא הכל תלוי ב"נפש האדם" בכוחו ובשליטתו. התכניות הנ"ל מבוססים על עיקרון זה. מענין הוא שאע"פ שתכניות אלו אומרות שאין סתירה בין השתתפות בתכנית ואמונה בדת, אבל הדתות המערביות בעצמן חושבות שיש סתירה! הבודהיזם סובלת כל דת שממציא האדם, שאינם מאמינים בבורא המצוה! וכששמים במרכז את האדם באופן בזה בודאי הוא יוצא לחרות מכל המניעות אבל הוא נכנס לעבדות של ישותו. ואכמ"ל ולהעמיק בענין זה, מפני שכן מודים כל הדתות המזרחיות.

ואם כנים אנו בזה אז אסור ללכת לכל התכניות האלו שעיקרם מיוסד על ע"ז ובזה נכלל "קול השופר". פרישלינג ג"כ מצטט משירי דת טאיסם.

המעין בהנ"ל (וכמו שכבר חקרו בזה הארגון המפורסם "יד לאחים" בארץ ישראל) יבין למה יש השפעה עמוקה לדתות המזרחיות על תכניות אלו שעיקר הדגש הוא על ישות האדם.

בארה"ק יצאו כמה פוסקים מכל החוגים נגד יוגה ומדיטציות ובלשון המצוטט מהבעל "יביע אומר" זצ"ל "כגובלת בע"ז" ואפילו המקילים לא הקילו אלא לאנשים עם בעיות נפשיות ותחת תנאים מסויימים. פרישלינג דוגל בשיטות וטכניקות אלו כענין של לכתחילה!!

**גלוי עריות ח"ו** כמה מהתרגילים של קול השופר בנוים על ה"מנקינד פרויקט" – שמביא לידי משכב זכר. אף שבודאי אין זו כוונת התכנית, התרגיל השני יכול לעורר ענין כזה. (ראה התאור לעיל). ועוד יש משתתפים המגלים ענינים שהם היפך הצניעות ממש.

**רציחה ח"ו** היו אצל תכניות כאלו כמה מקרים של התאבדות לדעת (עי' לקמן). בפרט אם יש משתתף שיש לו מכבר בעיות נפשיות. כמובן מנהלי התכנית מנסים שלא יכנסו חולי נפש או אנשים עם בעיות נפשיות רציניות, אבל קשה להם לדעת ולחקור העבר של כל משתתף, מכיון שאינם רופאים מומחים.

מכל הנ"ל לפע"ד, כרב קהילת בית מנחם, מתנגד אני להשתתפות בתכנית קול השופר.

עלינו לייעץ למושפעים שלנו השואלים אותנו, שאין להשתתף בתכנית המוזרה "קול השופר". אדרבה ואדרבה על פרישלינג להוכיח כשרות התכנית, התאמתה ליסודות היהדות, ולתת מענה לכל השאלות ההלכתיות.

[נוזאת למודעי: פרישלינג מצטט תמיד מהרמח"ל זצ"ל שעיקר תכלית הבריאה הוא, שרצונו יתברך להטיב לברואיו. ולכן הוא אומר שצריך להיות יש או פרט כדי לקבל ההטבה. כשעיינתי בקל"ח פתחי חכמה, ובדרך ה' , ראיתי שהרמח"ל כותב שההטבה שהקב"ה רוצה להטיב היא הטובה האמיתית דהיינו היחוד ובלשון החסידות קוראים לזה ביטול. ואין שום רמז על הצורך להיות "יש". והוא סילוף דברי הרמח"ל.]

**Rabbi Baruch A. Zushe Winner**  
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בס"ד יט שבט תשע"ד

לכו' ידידי הווי"ח אי"א עוסק בצ"צ כו' הרב ר' יהושע שליטי"א

שלום וברכה,

במענה על שאלתו ע"ד המוסד "קול השופר", הנני רואה בזה כמה צדדי איסור, ובכל צד יש עוד סניפי איסור, כדלהלן:

א) רכילות ולשון הרע, הלבנת פנים – חלק עיקרי בהטיפול שלהם הוא שכל משתתף יגלה מצפוני לבו ברבים, ולזאת המשתתף מגלה סוד על אלו שבהרגשתו גרמו להבעיות נפשיות שלו או פשעו נגדו וכו'. ועי"ז נשמעים דברים מבהילים של השחתה ורשעות של קרובים או רחוקים, וגם הורים ומורים, שגרמו לדכאון ונפילת הרוח של המשתתף. וסיפור הדברים האלו ברבים עלולים להזיק ההורים ומורים בגופם ובכבודם כו' ועי"ז נאמר מות וחיים ביד הלשון עיי' ערכין טו,ב.

אמנם החפץ חיים (עי"ש לשון הרע כלל יי) כתב שכשיש תועלת יש אופני היתר לספר לשון הרע כו'. הרי יש שם כמה תנאים בזה, ומי הוא האחראי שיתקיימו השיחות באופן המותר.

ועוד כיון שזה נעשה ברבים, זאת אומרת שעשירות אנשים נכשלים בשמיעת לה"ר, אי"כ בכדי למעט ברע, יותר טוב בטיפול לפני פסיכולוג יחידי. ומלבד זאת שימעט ברע, יש היתר ברור יותר כיון שנוכחות הרופא היחידי היא הכרחית לתועלת הנרצה, משא"כ לפני הרבים ספק גדול אם נוכחות כל אחד ואחד מהם מוסיף בהתועלת. ועיי' בח"ח שם מקוה"ח אות ו' שאם יגיע התועלת באופן אחר ישנו איסור לה"ר.

בשגם שהרבה מן המשתתפים הם לא חולי נפש ממש שאזי יש חשש סכנה כו', כ"א שחסר אצלם שמחת הנפש או סיפוק נפשי בחייהם וכיו"ב, דאזי יש לדון באם מותר להם לרומם את עצמם על חשבון של הורדת והשמצת אחרים, עיי"ש בח"ח אות ז' שלא לגרום היזק להנדון יותר ממה שהי' מחויב ע"פ הדין.

ובכלל זה יש גם ענין של הלבנת פנים ברבים, דאף שזה שלא בפני המדובר (וכן הי' במעשה תמר), מ"מ עוף השמים יוליך את הקול ולאחר זמן גם המדובר ישמע היאך נתפרסם קלונו ברבים, והרי אמרו חז"ל נוח לו לאדם ליפול לכבשן האש מלהלבין פני חברו ברבים, ובתוס' סוטה י, ב (ד"ה נוח) משמע שהוא ביהרג ואל יעבור. ומי התיר לרפאות את עצמו עיי"ז, ובפרט שיש טיפול פרטי עיי' רופא מקצועי המושבע ועומד שלא לגלות המידע לאחרים.

ב) ניבול פה, והרהורים רעים – בעת התוכנית נשמע הרבה ניבול פה, וגם מפי המדריך כשצווק על המשתתף כשרוצה שיתרגש יותר. וכשהמשתתפים מגלים מצפוני לבם לפעמים מדברים מחטאת הנעורים שלהם, ונשמע מהם על מעשה זנות והוצאת ז"ל כו'.

בקבוצה כזו נמצאים כמה סוגי אנשים, כאלו שהם יותר יר"ש ומסוגרים מהרחוב וכאלו שהם גסים יותר ופתוחים להרחוב, ובהכרח שביאתם ביחד יטמא את הטהורים בשמיעת העבירות של האנשים הגסים ויביא לידי הרהור כו', ואין לאדם לחטוא ליזכות אחרים.

ואף שגם הוא ירויח מזה, כשישמעו האחרים ממנו את מצפוני לבו, מ"מ בשעה שהוא שומע מהאחרים כשהם מדברים מזנות מגרה בעצמו יצה"ר ע"ד שאסור לקרוא ספרי זנות כמ"ש בשו"ע או"ח סי' שז סט"ז, ואין זה שייד להטיפול שלו שבא לאחר זמן.

ואין זה דומה לטיפול פסיכולוגי, אשר בעת הטיפול נשמע מעניני זנות כו', דשם השיחה של המדבר היא חלק מהטיפול שלו, והשומע הוא רופא שטרוד בעסקו שאין כ"כ חשש להרהור (והוא ע"ד רופא של נשים).

ולפי הנשמע עושים קבוצה של משתתפים מבלי להבחין באיזה גיל, מערבים בחורים ביחד עם מבוגרים נשואים, ויתכן אשר בחור ישיבה ישמע מעניני אישות של נשואים ומחטאים גסים, וזה מגרה יצה"ר בלב השומע שלאח"ז ירד ח"ו מדחי אל דחי, והוא דבר המבהיל.

ג) חילול קדושת השבת – היפך כבוד ועונג שבת (ע"ד שאסור לעלות בספינה תוך ג' ימים מפני צער הטלטול באו"ח סי' רמח ועיי"ש באדמו"ר הזקן קו"א סק"א, ואין קובעים תענית שם סי' רפח), התעמלות בשבת באו"ח סי' שכה, חז"ל תקנו שלא לבקש את צרכיו בשבת וכו', ורבים הם וא"א לפורטם.

ואין להצדיק את זה אפי' לחולה נפש, שהרי לא נשמע שיהי' קובעים ביקור אצל פסיכולוג בשבת, מלבד אם יהי' סכנה כו'. וכאן קובעים הועידה ביום שבת קודש המיוחד ללימוד התורה וחיי רוח.

והעירנו חכם א' מאו"ח סי' רפז דעל החולה מתפללים "שבת היא מלזעוק", וכאן מהפכים את יום השבת ליום שכולו זעקה!

ד) חילול השם – כשעוברים עבירה בפרהסיא הוי חילול חשם, עי' ע"ז ה,א ברש"י ד"ה דמפרסם, ותויו"ט יומא פ"ח מ"ח. וכאן נעשים כו"כ איסורים בפרהסיא.

ובאם יש שם אדם חשוב כמו מורה או רב המשתתף בזה, ואפי' סתם יהודי חרדי עם פיאות וזקן המתנהג שלא כראוי לכבודו, הוי חילול ה' יותר גדול כמבואר ביומא פו,א שחילול ה' היא מצד הרואים.

ובכלל זה יש איסור לגלות חטאיו ברבים ואפי' בשעת הוידוי ביוה"כ דלא הוי כבוד שמים עי' יומא פז,ב והובא להלכה באו"ח סי' תרח.

ומי התיר לחלל השם לצורך טיפול פסיכולוגי, ובפרט שיש עצה לעשות טיפול שלא בפרהסיא.

ה) פריקת עול וביטול מדת הביישנות – תפקיד התוכנית הוא שהבן אדם יפרוק מעליו ההגבלות שלו, המדכאים אותו, ויבנה את עצמו מחדש ע"י שמוצא את ישותו. ובכלל זה מדריכים אותם לא להתחשב עם מה שאחרים חושבים עליהם. ובסוף הטיפול יש ריקוד פראי שמורים להמשתתפים לפרוץ כל הגדרים כו', וזה מכניס אצלם הרגש של אנוכיות ואגואיזם.

לפני פטירתו של ריב"ז אמר לתלמידיו "הלואי שיהי' עליכם מורא שמים כמורא בשר ודם". אמנם מנהל של "קול השופר" מזלזל ברעיון הזה ומורה להם שלא להתחשב ולא להתבייש בפני בני אדם. במהלך הטיפול לוקחים מהמשתתפים העדינות של מדת הביישנות שבה עם ישראל מובדל מכל העמים. גם הריקודים והזמר הוא ברוח של פריקת עול שמחזק את ההרגש של אנוכיות. וחלק חשוב מן המשתתפים מרגישים מכ"ז הרגש של חפשיות – פרייהייט, ושעולמו מסתובב מסביב לישותו והרגשותיו. כמה החליטו שאין צורך לחבוש כובע ברחוב כנהוג וכיו"ב, והוא דרכו של יצה"ר היום ואומר לו כך כו'.

וכ"ז אינו דומה לביטול היש ובנין האדם בדרך החסידות או המוסר (ואפי' לא כהמעשים המשונים שבדרכי מוסר של נבהרדוק וכיו"ב). דיש הבדל גדול כשנבנה האדם מחדש ע"י גדול בתורה המורה לו להתעלות בעבודת ה', ומדריך אותו איזה רגש לקרב או לרחק. והרי אמרו חז"ל אם רבו דומה למלאך ה' קבל תורה מפיו, והיאך מותר ליהודי יר"ש להפקיר את נפשו לאדם שאין בו תורה ולא הדרכה בדרך החיים, ולקוות לבנות עצמו מחדש בהבלי שווא של תנועה ששרשו מסטרא אחרא.

ו) השקפה זרה – כשיהודי בריא יחידי מחפש סיפוק נפשי מחוץ לחיים של תורה הוא הוראה שחלש הוא באמונתו, ואולי צריך הוא לזה לע"ע להרים את עצמו ובלבד שיכוון לשם לשמים. אבל כשנעשה תנועה של רבים לחפש סיפוק נפשי בדרכים אחרים נאמר ע"ז כי דבר ה' בזה גו' שהרי מראים בעצמם שאין בחיי היהדות מספיק תוכן להשביע את צרכם הנפשיים.

אלפי שנה שעם ישראל נדכאים בגלות המר הזה, ומצאו תקוה באמירת תהילים, ושמחת הנפש בלימוד תורתנו הקדושה, וחיים של אהבת התורה ויר"ש נתנו להם הסיפוק הנפשי. ומצד חשך הגלות בעקבתא דמשיחא הוצרך הבעש"ט לבוא להרים קרנם של ישראל בדרך החסידות לעבוד ה' בשמחה ואהבה, ואדמו"ר הזקן כתב סי' התניא היאך הוא קרוב מאד לעבוד ה' ולמצוא את שמחת הנפש הנרצה, והמשיכו בזה רבותינו בכל דור ודור להורות לנו דרך החיים ע"פ יסודי התורה והחסידות. ועכשיו באים בני בלי-עול לומר שכל זה איננו שווה לי אלא צריכים למצוא סיפוק נפשי בדרך חדש שיסודתו בהררי החשך של אומות העולם וכו'.

ועוד יש לדון בשרש השיטה שלהם היאך באה מכתות שונות ומשונות וכו', בנוסף לעוד צדדי איסור (כמו לבייש את עצמו ברבים בשו"ע אדמו"ר הזקן הלי שמירת הגוף שאין אנו בעה"ב על גופינו לביישו כו'), אמנם בכל בהנ"ל די והותר להוציא החמץ הזה ממחנינו ולאסרו בכל יראה ובל ימצא.

לדעתי עליו האחריות להביא את זה גם לגדולי הרבנים בשכונת פלטבוש ובארא פארק כו', להזהיר הגדולים על הקטנים שלא ירשו להכנס למחנם הנגע הזה שיתפסו נדכאים ונשברי לב, חסידים ובני תורה שיבלו שבתותיהן

ביגון ואנחה. אלא צריכים להתחזק בדרך החיים שהנחילנו אבותינו ורבותינו עדי נזכה להגאולה שלימה.

בברכת הצלחה בעבודת הקודש,

דיוק א' בניי טס וניש



## APPENDIX C

### **Landmark Education**

Landmark Education is the inheritor of Erhard Seminar Training (EST), which emerged in San Francisco during the late 60s and early 70s. While EST/Landmark's methods and philosophies are not unique, as they are a hybrid of Eastern religious philosophies, methods and techniques once studied by psychologists and sociologists, the organization and its approach to "self-awareness" is the brainchild of Werner Erhard (also known as John Paul Rosenberg)

Landmark charges \$600-\$750 for 72-hour retreats (a similar amount and duration as Call of the Shofar retreats). According to participants who have attended Landmark, during these retreats, groups in excess of thirty people are encouraged to intensely focus on childhood experiences, and publicly share secrets which may have never been shared before. Landmark participants have claimed that they were psychologically and emotionally broken down and then "coached" with the means by which they could view themselves and others according to the organization's formula, thus achieving their "transformation." The seminars are reportedly conducted by a central figure that has no mental-health degree or certification. There appears to be no professional oversight and participants have reported that other than signing a confidentiality agreement which asks if they have been treated for a mental illness, there is no other screening. According to many experts, Landmark is a type of operation which mainstream psychology has termed "Large Group Awareness Training" (LGAT).<sup>43</sup>

### **Dr Richard Moss**

In 1977 Richard Moss was a practicing physician when he experienced a spontaneous state of illumination that irreversibly changed his life and profoundly transformed his understanding of human consciousness and behavior. With this opening came a new level of sensibility including a heightened intuition, subtle insight into mystical and spiritual teachings, and the ability to sense human body-energy fields.

Impelled by this opening and its intensity which required virtually continuous self-examination, he took a sabbatical from his medical practice and began a period of withdrawal from his usual activities for nearly a year. During this time he spontaneously meditated for hours each day and read extensively in spiritual and psychoanalytic literature, as well as poetry, and mythology. Above all, he made a careful observation of the new quality of energy moving in his body, and how his thoughts instantly generated emotions and sensations.

He realized that he was being guided through this unknown territory by his dreams. Richard never returned to medicine, but he had been a loved physician and eventually a few of his former patients looked him up and began consulting with him at his home. He would sit with them, holding hands in silence for long periods, and then begin to see what spontaneously emerged in their discussions.

Richard's teaching draws from a broad range of approaches to human understanding both Western and Eastern and has the rare capacity to induct his audience into the state of consciousness from which he is speaking. His words emerge from such a timeless and universal place that people report feeling as if he is reading their minds and speaking directly to their immediate needs and issues.

### **Jessica Dibb**

Jessica Dibb is the Founder, Spiritual Director, and Principal Teacher of Inspiration Consciousness School. According to her website, The Spiritual Director holds a space in the classroom for "The God of Many Faces"—which can also mean no "god" at all. The innovative and highly experiential curriculum allows for direct contact with non-ordinary states of consciousness and encounters with the Sacred. This open approach has allowed students to discover and embody experiences such as boundless love, timelessness, unbearable compassion, inner guidance, collective intelligence, non-duality, surrender, freedom, and the fundamental unity of all things.

### **Sandra Scherer**

Scherer, better known by her Sanskrit name Dayashakty, which translated means "Awakened spiritual energy of compassion," was a former beauty pageant queen who recently died from cancer after refusing standard medical treatment. She lived and taught at the Kripalu Yoga Center in Stockbridge, Mass., for many years and developed a technique which she called "Wave Work" because, according to one of her students, "It was not uncommon to feel an extraordinary connectivity in the form of energy waves moving through the body." Scherer wrote, "In order to increase our connectivity, the most important thing to do is to let go of certainty. The more we are comfortable not knowing, the better positioned we are to catch the next wave. We become as a hawk, perched on the limb of a tree waiting for prey to come along. When the prey appears, there isn't time to think and debate; there is only time to act..."

### **The Mankind Project (Formerly New Warrior)**

Attendees to The Mankind Project (MKP) retreats typically spend a weekend in the woods where they strip naked, chant, drum and scream rage against women in order to 'reclaim' their lost masculinity. The MKP helps men away from the 'comforting embrace' of their mothers so that they can confront their 'dependence on women' to help them move into the 'masculine kingdom'. The final act in the weekend is for the participants to be sprayed with burning sage and instructed - naked again - to get into a sweat lodge which is pitch black where they shout blessings, make noise, howl, quote poems and sing songs. MKP has reportedly been the target of litigation, including at least one case of Wrongful Death.

## APPENDIX D –GLOSSARY

<i>“klal and prat”</i>	<i>The general and the specific</i>
<i>Avodah Zarah</i>	<i>Idol worship</i>
<i>Bakoshois</i>	<i>Requests</i>
<i>Bechira</i>	<i>Free choice</i>
<i>Beis Din</i>	<i>Jewish Ecclesiastical Court</i>
<i>Bochurim</i>	<i>Students</i>
<i>Chazal</i>	<i>Our Rabbis of blessed memories</i>
<i>Deveikus</i>	<i>Attachment to G-d</i>
<i>Eretz Yisroel</i>	<i>The Land of Israel</i>
<i>Hashkofa</i>	<i>Jewish outlook</i>
<i>Hechsher</i>	<i>Rabbinic certification</i>
<i>Iggrot Moshe</i>	<i>The Responsa of Rabbi Moishe Feinstein</i>
<i>kibbud av va'eim</i>	<i>Respecting parents</i>
<i>Loshon horoh</i>	<i>Gossip</i>
<i>Mashpi'im</i>	<i>Spiritual mentors</i>
<i>Mitzrayim</i>	<i>Egypt</i>
<i>Moshiach</i>	<i>The Messiah</i>
<i>Navi</i>	<i>Property</i>
<i>P'sukai d'Zimra</i>	<i>Sentences of Song</i>
<i>Posek</i>	<i>Halachic authority</i>
<i>Sh'ma</i>	<i>First word of sentence “Hear Israel, G-d is One.”</i>
<i>Shmomeh Esreh</i>	<i>Prayer with eighteen blessings</i>
<i>Sholom Bayis</i>	<i>Harmony at home</i>
<i>Shulchan Aruch</i>	<i>Code of Jewish Law</i>
<i>Teshuvos</i>	<i>Rabbinic Responsa</i>
<i>Tzitzis</i>	<i>Fringes worn by men</i>
<i>Vaad Rabbonei Lubavitch</i>	<i>The Lubavitch Rabbinical Council</i>
<i>Yarmulka</i>	<i>Skull-cap</i>
<i>Yiras Shomayim</i>	<i>The fear of Heaven</i>

## APPENDIX E - ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> On, Monday, 23 December, the majority members of *Beis Din* of Crown Heights penned a very lengthy letter, in response to "a deluge of inquiries regarding participation in weekend seminars and retreats that are dedicated to the use of various methods of therapeutic treatment including meditation and seclusion". This letter mentions the fact that "there has been much chatter in the community about a particular program that appears to have caught the attention and participation of many of our members. Its merits are now being publicly debated, eliciting hearty applaud from some, fierce condemnation from others, and leaving the majority somewhat confused." In this letter, the Rabbonim outline numerous concerns that might exist in such retreats, among them: "Halachic permissibility", "health and safety", as well as "appropriateness." The Rabbonim have pointed out that "the answers depend on a thorough investigation of the program, its techniques, and its representatives. This is not a matter we can simply guess or make uninformed decisions about" and discuss the need to "of gathering expert knowledge of the techniques and the way they are applied in this particular program."

<sup>2</sup> Characteristics of Participants in a Large Group Awareness Training, *Journal of Counselling and Clinical Psychology* 1990, Vol 58, No 1 99-108

<sup>3</sup> Finkelstein, P.; Wenegrat, B.; Yalom, I. (1982). "Large Group Awareness Training". *Annual Review of Psychology* (Calvin Perry Stone) 33 (1): 515–539. doi:10.1146/annurev.ps.33.020182.002503. ISSN 0066-4308

<sup>4</sup> Erhard Seminars Training (est), an organization founded by Werner H. Erhard, offered a two-weekend (60-hour) course known officially as "The *est* Standard Training". The purpose of *est* was "to transform one's ability to experience living so that the situations one had been trying to change or had been putting up with, clear up just in the process of life itself." The *est* training was offered from late 1971 to late 1984. *est* is credited as having been one of the first and highly successful LGAT's.

<sup>5</sup> Paglia, Carmen (Winter 2003). "Cults and Cosmic Consciousness: Religious Vision in the American 1960s" (PDF). *Arion* (Boston University) 10 (3): 106. Retrieved August 5, 2009

<sup>6</sup> Peter McWilliams, *Life 102: What to Do When Your Guru Sues You* (Prelude Press: Los Angeles, 1994). ISBN 0-931580-34-X., pp 6–7.

<sup>7</sup> Cushman, "Iron Fists/Velvet Gloves: A Study of A Mass Marathon Psychology Training", *Psychotherapy* vol 26, Spring 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Haaken, J. and Adams, R., "Pathology as 'Personal Growth': A Participant-Observation Study of Lifespring Training", *Psychiatry*, vol 46, August 1983.

<sup>9</sup> Coon Dennis / John O. Mitterer, *Introduction to Psychology: Gateways to Mind and Behavior*, Thirteenth Edition. Linda Schreiber-Ganster 2008

<sup>10</sup> DuMerton, C. Lynn (July 2004). "Tragic Optimism and Choices: The Life Attitudes Scale with a First Nations Sample". [*Master's Thesis*] (Trinity Western University [Hosted on university web-site]) (Master of Arts, Graduate Counseling Psychology Program). Archived from the original on October 1, 2006. Retrieved June 22, 2009.

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- <sup>11</sup> Jarvis, Peter (2002). *The Theory & Practice of Teaching*. Routledge. p. 97. ISBN 0-7494-3409-0.
- <sup>12</sup> Langone, Michael (1998). "Large Group Awareness Trainings". *Cult Observer* **15** (1). ISSN 1539-0152
- <sup>13</sup> Hosford, Ray, E., Moss, C. Scott, Cavior, Helene, & Kerish, Burton. *Catalogue of Selected Documents in Psychology*, 1982, Manuscript #2419, American Psychological Association
- <sup>14</sup> Encyclopaedia of Sociology Volume 1, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York  
By Richard J. Ofshe, Ph.D.
- <sup>15</sup> It should be noted that Margaret Singer's comments regarding LGAT's attracted strong criticism from the American Psychological Association. After the APA spurned the report, Singer remained in good standing in the psychological research community. Singer reworked much of the report material into the book *Cults in our Midst: The Hidden Menace in Our Everyday Lives* (1995, second edition: 2003), which she co-authored with Janja Lalich.
- <sup>16</sup> Salerno Steve, *How the Self-Help Movement Made America Helpless*, Random Press, New York 2005
- <sup>17</sup> Kowal, D. M. (2000). Brainwashing. In A. E. Kazdin (Ed.) , *Encyclopaedia of psychology*, Vol. 1 (pp. 463-464). American Psychological Association.
- <sup>18</sup> Hassan, Steven, *Releasing the Bonds, Empowering People to Think for Themselves*, FOM Press 2000
- <sup>19</sup> <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/quirks-memory/201302/the-danger-in-probing-memory-in-the-spirit-self-discovery>
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid
- <sup>21</sup> *The International Journal Of the Study of New Religions* 22 (2011) 225 – 254
- <sup>22</sup> <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/quirks-memory/201302/the-danger-in-probing-memory-in-the-spirit-self-discovery>
- <sup>23</sup> *Therapy Today and the BACP Ethical Framework* - <http://www.ctpdcblog.ctpdc.co.uk/?p=5>
- <sup>24</sup> *Honoring Parents Who Are Abusive Reprinted (with minor modifications) from The International Network of Orthodox Mental Health Professional, NEFESH News.*  
[http://drsorotzkin.com/honoring\\_abusive\\_parents.html](http://drsorotzkin.com/honoring_abusive_parents.html)
- <sup>25</sup> The Gemorrah in Sotah (10:2) says that embarrassing a person in public falls under the category of "Yehorag V'al Ya'avov."
- <sup>26</sup> Igrois Moishe Yoreh Deah 3:44
- <sup>27</sup> In February 1978, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, sent out a confidential memorandum asking for "doctors specializing in neurology and psychiatry" to develop a meditation program that could serve as an alternative for the popular meditative imports from the Far East such as Transcendental Meditation (TH.)
- <sup>28</sup> *Shulchan Aruch* Chapter 307

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<sup>29</sup> Section 4, Dinai Dibbur B'Shabbos

<sup>30</sup> 10:11

<sup>31</sup> Yirimyahu 48.10; see Bava Bara 21B

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.emclear.com/>

<sup>33</sup> Dr. Harville Hendrix, author of *Getting The Love You Want*, Holt Paperbacks, New York 1988 and founder of *Imago Relationship Therapy*

<sup>34</sup> Emotional Clearing by John Ruskan 2003

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1257607/Tom-Mitchelsons-weird-weekend-naked-woodland-warriors.html#ixzz2tX4td6ri>

<sup>36</sup> B. Alan Wallace, Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies and Shauna L. Shapiro, Santa Clara University in *American Psychologist* by the American Psychological Association Vol. 61, No. 7, 690–701 2006

<sup>37</sup> Coleman James William, *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition*, Oxford University Press, New York 2001

<sup>38</sup> A class of the Sanskrit sacred books probably composed between 400 and 200 bc and embodying the mystical and esoteric doctrines of ancient Hindu philosophy. Source Collins English Dictionary

<sup>39</sup> Capra Fritiof, *The Tao of Physics: An exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*. Shambhala Publications. Boston MA 2000

<sup>40</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/3r8oz38>

<sup>41</sup> B. Alan Wallace, Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies and Shauna L. Shapiro, Santa Clara University in *American Psychologist* by the American Psychological Association Vol. 61, No. 7, 690–701 2006

<sup>42</sup> *The International Journal Of the Study of New Religions* 22 (2011) 225 – 254

<sup>43</sup> See Characteristics in a Large Group Awareness Training, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 1990, Vol 58, No 1, 99-108