At the Gates — בֵּיתֵרֹת

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
If I am only for myself, who am I?
And if not now, when?

— Pirkei Avot 1:14

We are busy people. We dedicate our lives to serving others, and we value the importance of nourishing our personal lives. Striving to be the best we might be in our professional and personal lives often means that we have no time left for taking care of ourselves: our mind, body, soul, and spirit. We often share our woes, challenges, concerns, successes, and joys, but it is a rare and blessed opportunity to sit with one another and share our experience, strength, and hope. This issue is a testament to holy work: The work of self-care, of t’shuvaḥ—returning to our highest self.

The articles, Maayanot, book reviews, and poetry reflect the strength, openness, and vulnerability of our collective hearts and minds. We are immensely grateful for the insights, ideas, and generosity of all our contributors. We particularly thank Laurie Green, who provided the spark for this issue by suggesting a call for papers on Addiction and Recovery.

This issue, which is devoted to Spiritual and Mental Wellness, begins with poignant articles on Self-Care in Times of Trauma. The

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honest and courageous voices in this section remind us that no one is exempt from trauma. Engaging in the hard work of healing involves effort, faith, community, and self-compassion. The section on Spiritual Practice and Lifelong Wellness describes the tools we might use as we pursue ongoing self-care, each tool grounded in the traditions and teachings of our people. The next section, The Professional Pursuit of Spiritual and Mental Health, guides us towards awareness of how self-care and the work we do within the community are related and inform each other.

The Addiction and Recovery articles offer insight into the pain of addiction and how Torah and tradition might help in the recovery process. Finally, the Maayanot article and translation provides a sacred resource towards self-evaluation—and thus self-care—during Yom Kippur.

Our book reviews and poetry further reflect our theme of Spiritual and Mental Wellness. We are proud to lift up outstanding classic and new studies on recovery, interpersonal relationships, and mourning—books that not only examine these important subjects with sensitivity and expertise, but that guide us through sacred texts and values as we wrestle with their challenges. And once again, this issue blesses us with talented poets whose unique voices enable, inspire, and even dare us to explore new and compelling facets of spiritual and mental wellness.

Several of these topics, such as addiction and recovery, have been explored in previous issues of our Journal. We hope that our conversations on self-care and spiritual and mental wellness will continue, and that future CCAR Journal issues will address vital topics such as spiritual direction, counseling, and chaplaincy.

Preparing this issue has been a privilege and a delight. We first met when we participated in the fourth cohort of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality’s Rabbinic Leadership Program; and over the last decade, each of us has continued to deepen our own journeys. Sharing the honor of editing this issue has been a pleasure. We are indebted to Elaine Rose Glickman, our brilliant Editor, who guided and accompanied us at every step of this project. Her skill, intellect, generosity, organizational expertise, and unfailing good humor are a gift to us, to this issue, and to our Conference.

This special issue of the Journal is a Chodesh Heshvan present. We hope that you will find something in these pages to open your
eyes, touch your heart, provide a window into your own life, and support your personal growth, healing, and happiness.

With gratitude to the Holy One, we share the teachings, truth, and love from our colleagues, teachers, and friends.

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