



HINDA INSTITUTE

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CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS Under Covid19

The spread of any virus is dangerous and particularly in correctional institutions. The coronavirus is even more threatening because it is so contagious. Not all correctional institutions have sufficient supplies. Cell blocks are often over-crowded, and viruses can spread quickly. In most places there are administrative lockdowns in an effort to keep the virus out. This means that many of our clients are totally isolated in very, very small rooms, often at high temperatures, with little movement for months on end. All non-essential programs in the correctional institutions have been cancelled or drastically modified.

Fortunately, religious services and Passover were deemed essential by IDOC and a permitted right for Jewish clients as long as rigorous screening protocols for the virus were followed. After successfully overcoming this year's obstacles, Rabbi Scheiman and his sons delivered boxes of matzah and food to over 27 correctional institutions.

But, this Passover night was really

different from all others. Visitation and services were limited, depending on the institution. Like everyone else, prisoners faced Passover alone. This is hard for anyone, but even harder if you are locked down in a cell and one of the only Jews in the institution. The matzah and Passover food reminded our clients that they are important and remembered, even if they are alone. It reminds everyone that all Jews left the slavery of Egypt – young and old – and have the merit to participate in a Seder.

Our chaplains were accustomed to visiting 30 prisons every month during the summer. This summer, because of COVID19, they couldn't visit as many prisons as in the past. Additionally, instead of a group service, due to regulations or safety, the chaplains either saw people in their living unit or only one person at a time in a common area.

We interviewed Rabbi Scheiman to understand the full impact of COVID19.

INTERVIEWER: What was the effect of COVID19 on prison chaplaincy?

RABBI SCHEIMAN: "Every situation



HINDA CARES

The Hinda Institute has started a peer group for women who are families of offenders. These women are often the hidden and silent victims of a crime they did not commit. They suffer extreme financial and emotional stress, as well as social ostracism.

The CARES group meets monthly to support each other.

We are also in the process of organizing sessions and producing a video to better educate and sensitize the community to the plight of these women. Thank you to Vickie Block for your invaluable assistance. Stay tuned!



JEWISH ADDICTION SUPPORT GROUP

We are currently forming a Jewish Addiction Support group.

Please let us know if you know anybody who is interested in joining either as a mentor, participant or supporter. Stay tuned!

has advantages. This gave me the opportunity to have deep, personal, probing conversations with my clients and explore the causes as to why these people are where they are. I feel this is really crucial for our clients. It allows them to be real and open up. We were able to touch core issues on how to improve their lives.”

INTERVIEWER: Can you give us an example?

RABBI SCHEIMAN: “For example, on the second day of my summer visit, I was able to see 4 men and 3 women all charged with first degree murder. All of them were in for at least 10 years and some as long as 25 years. Out of the 7, one was Jewish.

“In the State of Illinois, there used to be a super max security prison – the TAMMS Correctional Prison. It was shut down because it was deemed too inhumane to continue. If a prisoner caused problems in maximum security prisons, they were sent to TAMMS. All these 4 men were at TAMMS at one time. All these men identified themselves as Jewish when at TAMMS — for some questionable reason. Once TAMMS closed, it is interesting to note they all identified themselves as

Jewish and wanted to see a rabbi.”

INTERVIEWER: What does a rabbi say to a non-Jewish, hardened criminal?

RABBI SCHEIMAN: “I will tell you a story. One man is 25 years into his sentence; he may not have an out date. However, when I met him something amazing happened. I ask each man, as a rule, what are you doing to advance your freedom and be a free man. I always tell them that it is their obligation to regret, to improve themselves, and figure out what they are going to do when they get out.

“This client was in the process of filing evidence. A private law firm saw what he filed and realized that he had reliable evidence to prove his innocence. They realized that he could not have been the killer on this case, as he was jail in the time of the crime!”

“I then queried him, ‘Even though you have been sitting here for 25 years and you even did things that got you into TAMMS. Why after 25 years, do you think that you are finally getting this break? Why not at the beginning?’ I told him that the real reason he is here is because G-d wants you here. “

“I asked him, ‘Why do you think you were here for 25 years?’ He did

agree that even if he did not do what he was arrested for, he did many other things that no one ever caught him for. In the last decade however, he was working on himself and did *teshuvah* (repented).

“I told him that he knows why he was in prison. After 25 years, he was finally was able to look inside himself. G-d sees that now he needs to be released.

INTERVIEWER: Do you give this message to all your clients?

RABBI SCHEIMAN: “I emphasize this message with all my clients. ‘Find out why G-d wants you here. Make your vessels. G-d will take you out when you are ready to get out. Work on yourself and never give up your hope for freedom.’”

Rabbi Scheiman said that Covid19 has given him the opportunity to have these in-depth meetings and “cut to the chase”. Covid19 will pass through. In the meantime, the job of our chaplains is to have deep compassion for human beings in awful circumstances, recognize that G-d’s hand is directing the world and take advantage of the unique opportunities to bond with our clients.

From VICTIM to SURVIVOR to OFFENDER: WHERE IS JUSTICE?



This summer, the Hinda Institute ran a specialized class for women that had encountered the criminal justice system. A special thank you to Prof. Erez and her colleagues from the University of Chicago, Prof. Gunn, Prof. Isom and Prof. Globokar who helped facilitate the sessions. In addition, many of our Hinda heroes and supporters led individual sessions. Each of the participants also had a specially selected personal tutor and mentor. All did an amazing job.

The class was very diverse and included women of African American or Hispanic descent, secular and Jewish, highly educated graduate students and

lawyers and those with learning challenges. The class tackled topics such as the cycle of victimization of women, the challenges of mothering in prison, reintegrating successfully and dealing with addiction, as well as political issues, such as policing and the justice system. The discussions were fascinating. All participants appreciated the unique opportunity to dialogue across social boundaries and to support each other as women. This class changed lives. Many women had the opportunity to dialogue safely around painful issues and make new choices.

Read some selected comments from participants below:

► I was very inspired by the courageous women who not only survived their struggles, but were leading the classes and sharing the wisdom that they learned on their journey. This was a very powerful group of women from all different backgrounds that came together to learn and grow. The course opened a new perspective on our diverse community, making it closer and more familiar. It was magical at every moment.

► It is very important to be open to many different perspectives. We are all here for a purpose – it is important to support one another and accept people for who they are. We are all “the same.” This class has allowed me to step in to another’s person shoes, appreciate and value diversity.

► Being assigned as a mentor suited me. It was a wonderful idea. It gave me the motivation I needed to continue to set goals and achieve these goals.

► It was a very powerful course for everyone. I loved that the group was so diverse. It was amazing to see how much more we have in common than "in difference." The group bonded very quickly, The unique wisdom and strengths of each individual was highlighted. Having participants lead class sessions was especially powerful.

► Conversations were from the heart and about our real authentic selves.

► I felt I had hit a wall in my life. It was great to hear about others who broke through that wall.

► I was inspired. We can overcome and change the world.

► This course affected my life. I am more in tune with myself.

► A great job! Every session ended on a positive, spiritual note. Thank you for always reminding us that no matter how bad things seem, things are changing, and we are making a difference.

THANK YOU

Rabbi Eliezer & Avigail Bakaleynik for the generous donation of books to our prison library.

Yochi Scheiman for updating our website, HindaHelps.com, so beautifully.

Beth Pelzat for developing and furthering our new correspondence program in prisons.

PERSONAL NOTES

Condolences to **Mrs. Maureen Headington**, a long-time supporter of the Hinda Institute, **Mr. David Jacobson**, a devoted supporter, and all who lost loved ones to this virus.

May the memories and lives of your loved ones be a comfort and blessing to your families.

NEWS & SCHMOOZE

We have a lot of news and notes of appreciation for this newsletter as we had difficulties with the Spring edition due to COVID.

EVENTS

Over 300 people joined the Hinda institute virtual event for a night of joy and redemption in honor of:

► **Rabbi Binyomin Scheiman**, who has dedicated 40 years to servicing the needs of Jewish people who have been incarcerated and their families. *Visit our website to order our book published in commemoration of this event: "What's a Nice Jewish Rabbi Doing in Prison?"*

► The 7th yearzeit of **Hinda Scheiman a"h**, for whom this amazing organization receives its name.

Mr. **Zach Isaacman** was honored with our annual Hinda Hero Award which celebrates successful second chances. (Mr. Zach Isaacman has turned his life over and, in turn, through his successful business now helps others.)

Ms. Susan Warso received our Hinda Scheiman Mother of the Year Award for her untiring dedication.

Featured speaker was **Mr. Sam Horowitz**, "The Russian Concussion," on the topic "From Prison Cell – to the Boxing Ring – to Hollywood".

Special thanks to our dedicated sponsors: the **Crain-Maling Foundation, Chicago Jewish Funerals, Prodigie Processing Inc., Mr. & Mrs. Marcus** and an **anonymous donor**.

Rabbi & Mrs. Scheiman and **Aaron ben Noach** were invited to speak at Rabbi Bentzy and Mrs. Chanie Shemtov's Chabad House at UIC on Feb. 24 and 25. It was a truly inspiring evening!

HOLIDAYS

We had our regular Purim parties in correctional institutions. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped our chaplains read megillah: **Mr. Yakov Weingrow, Rabbi Mark Weiner, Rabbi Shalom Ber Raices, Mr. Pesach Perelman, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Telsner & Rabbi Eli Langsam.**

Abby and Chaya Mushka Scheiman teamed up to offer a Pre-Purim baking party for women. The baked goods were then distributed to our clients. Thanks to our bakers **Randee, Arlene, Esther, Marla, Yenta** and **Chaya** and our delivery team **Shmuel and Mushka, Susan, Chaya, David** and **Akiva**.

This year, many had to spend Passover alone. Our clients and their families are often under significant financial stress and now under COVID19 are under even more pressure. We delivered Matzos, Passover plates and home-cooked meals and goodies to isolated Jews and families as far as one hour away.

Special thanks to **Abby** for cooking, packing and organizing these meals and relief items. VERY special thank you to our dedicated kindhearted delivery team: **Barb Teeple of Keeping Spirits Connected, Reuven Stork & David Grosky** for their continued generosity.

We want to thank our supporters for their continual generosity over the years:

► **Maot Chitim Committee of Greater Chicago** for Kosher L'Pesach food items.

► **Aleph Institute** for Seder plates.

► **The Ark** for Salamis.

► The **Grinker family** for Shmura Matzah.

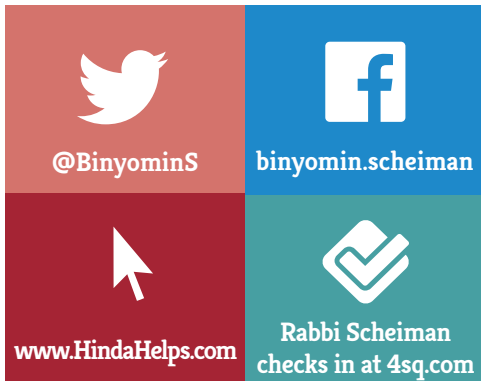
► **Larry and Anita Miller** for the cargo van rental and gas.

► **Shtark Kosher Cheese** for cheese donated with the help of **Mr. Levi Lando**.



THE HINDA INSTITUTE

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