

ANONYMOUS

Fellowship Things to Do

Sun March 26, 10AM Brooklawn, Sunday Spiritual 37th Anniv., Senior Citizens Center, 101 2nd St.

Wed. March 29, 6:00- 8:00pm Atco, Vorhees Women of Grace, 2259 Atco Ave. Downstairs in fellowship Hall- entrance at Kitchen, (Women Only)

Wed. April 19, 8pm- 9pm, Cherry Hill, SJIG Intergroup Meeting: St. Bartholomew's Church (St. Bart's), 1989 Rt. 70 E (Marlton Pike East), See AASJ.org for Zoom Meeting info

The difference between

HEAVEN AND HELL

It is said that the wise Rabbi Haim dreamed he had created a sharp blade with magical properties, capable of tearing the veil that separates both worlds. And, thus, he entered the world which is beyond.

He felt a strange bliss when he emerged into the middle of a sunny green meadow covered with flowers. Before him stretched rows and rows of tables about which people sat for a wonderful feast. The tables were overflowing with delicacies and the finest and most delicious drinks imaginable. The rabbi licked his lips at the thought of feasting on so much exquisiteness. He could smell the tantalizing aroma of the fine stews that the crowd would enjoy. But suddenly he realized something that surprised him greatly: the people did not look happy, as would have been the case at a banquet.

Quite the opposite, people were sad, angry, and desperate. And what is more, they were thin and emaciated -all skin and bones. What was happening here?^(see Page 2)

DON'T GET COCKY! BY: J.W.T.

The purpose of this little piece is to pass along to you an experience. Believe me, it is not an effort to moralize. It is not an effort to push any beat-up platitudes down your throat. It is simply something that happened to me. If you have had a similar experience, you will understand. If you haven't, my experience may help you.

About two years ago, I heard of the A.A. way of life. Several of us were sitting around the newsroom of a New York newspaper and the subject of alcoholic drinking was being kicked around. A photographer, who had been completely sober for a long time, was telling us how he did it.

It was 2:15 a.m. and I had a hangover. I was suffering through the last fifteen minutes of the shift before beating it over to Sam's for a required number of "doubles." I had been drinking steadily for two weeks and had reached the point where my drinking was for relief rather than for pleasure. In other words, the drinks I would take at 2:30 were a necessity. There would be no fun in them for me.^(see page 3)

INSIDE OUR APRIL ISSUE

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The difference between **HEAVEN AND HELL**

As he drew closer, the rabbi realized what the problem was. Braids of angel hair held their elbows straight so that they could not bend their arms, and the only silverware they could use were excessively long silver spoons and forks. Because their elbows were immobilized, they were unable to get the food into their mouths.

They were all terribly hungry! And their torture was even crueler because of the fact of having such delicious and abundant delicacies in front of them but out of reach. The rabbi was dismayed to see so much suffering and, unable to bear the contemplation of so much pain, he returned to his world to ease his grief and put the suffering out of his mind. What he had seen must have been hell. But hell was not as had imagined it.

The next day, after he had recovered a little from his grief, he decided to cross the veil again, but choosing to tear the air in a different direction. Surprisingly, he found himself in the same place, or so it seemed. On the wide green meadow under the sun, there were rows and rows of tables with the most succulent foods and drinks that any human could imagine. But this time people were chatting animatedly, laughing and even singing. These people were radiating so much happiness that the rabbi felt his heart rising towards the sun.

As he drew closer, he could see that these people also had their elbows tightly bound with angel hair braids, immobilizing their arms. In addition, their silver cutlery was also excessively long. Why were these people so happy, when they were being subjected to the same conditions as those in hell?

As he watched, a woman used her spoon to scoop out some stew and feed it to the man across from her. All up and down the tables, people were feeding each other, so that no one went hungry. Without a doubt, this must be heaven!

An idea passed through his mind. With an agile movement, he pulled out the magic blade and deftly ripped the air in the same direction he had done the previous day, thereby opening a door between heaven and hell. He passed cleanly to the other side and ran to the nearest tables of hell. Grabbing a man by the arm, he said: 'You do not have to keep suffering! Feed your neighbor across the table and he will feed you!' But the man did not want to pay attention to him, nor did the woman he went to next, nor the next, nor the old man at the end of the table, who responded with a grimace of annoyance: 'Do you tell me to feed the stupid man in front of me that I hate? Never! I'd rather go hungry than give something to someone like him!'

Deeply moved, he lowered his head and returned home, thinking about the profound lesson he had learned ... he did not realize that

he had left the veil torn between heaven and hell. Not long after, the inhabitants of heaven noticed the crack and looked through. They were shocked to see the devastating torture suffered by the people in hell, and they realized that they would never feel happy again knowing that, just on the other side of the thin veil, there were so many people suffering unspeakably- unless they tried to help.

Their deep compassion led them to cross to the other side to try and alleviate the suffering of their neighbors. The people from heaven were not well received, of course, but with time, the inmates of hell would end up getting used to them and see how they eat and maybe learn how to feed each other.

Thus began the end hell and we can have now.

It was then that the rabbi understood. Heaven and Hell offer the same circumstances and

conditions. The only difference is what each decide regarding kindness and how they treat others. God gives each person the freedom of choice to decide where they spend eternity. Grace is a gift that is offered for free and there for taking!

In AA, surrendering to our powerlessness in the first step which unlocks a cage we didn't know we were in- The Bondage of Self. What we didn't know while we were resisting was the freedom that awaited us; the monumental moment when we first decide to be kind to ourselves and surrender. That moment opens up a world that was impossible to join; we were blind to all the good in ourselves and in others. That by accepting help of others this doesn't have to be a life of suffering- we join the family of God and all humanity. With self- forgiveness comes kindness and compassion for others.

Continued..... **DON'T GET COCKY!**

The photographer was saying that there was a group of alcoholics in New York who were staying sober with no trouble at all. He told us that he hadn't believed it until he went around to an A.A. meeting and saw for himself. He informed us that he had become a member of A.A., but he didn't have to remind us that he was staying sober. Don't get me wrong. This guy wasn't preaching to us. He simply stated that A.A. gave him the answer to his problem.

As a consequence of the photographer's story, I went around to the 41st Street Clubhouse meeting on the following Tuesday night. I was still extremely shaky because I was only three days away from the two-weeks binge. The meeting was interesting and, de-

spite my jittery condition, I stayed it out. I left, after meeting a few A.A.s, with the hope of solving my drinking problem.

So far, there is nothing unusual about my story. I continued to go to A.A. meetings; offered my services as an orderly at Knickerbocker Hospital; went out on 12th Step work; and made at least three meetings a week a part of this new way of life. I stayed sober. More important, I didn't seem to miss drinking and I was finding a new happiness. Then it began to happen.

It was about five months after my introduction to A.A. that I began to get a little bored by the meetings. By then, I had heard it all. When the speakers walked to the platform, I knew what they would say. Unless someone "was amusing" or "told an especial-

ly interesting story," I was beginning to get a little fed up with it all. I began to attend only two meetings a week. Later, I went to one meeting a week--maybe.

It was about this time that I began to lose my humility about my drinking problem. I was feeling fine. I was sober. Undoubtedly, my work had improved. Somehow, I had gained a new feeling of self-confidence in my affairs. I had found the solution to my problem and therefore I had no further use for A.A. Thank God, I wouldn't have to go around to "that damned church" to be bored for two hours!

When someone asked me why I stopped drinking, I would say that I had found a way to "lick the stuff myself." When fellow A.A.s would call me for lunch or ask why I hadn't been around to meetings, I made excuses. When the non-alcoholic drinkers on the newspaper went over to Sam's for a few drinks, I went along just to show them how I could stay there without drinking and have as much fun as anybody. Oh! Brother, did I have the answer!

Of course, the inevitable happened. Over at Sam's one morning I felt particularly cocky and ordered a glass of ale. I sipped the ale with anticipation and pleasure. I had another. After a third, I left and went to my apartment for what I later claimed was the "best night's sleep I'd had in years."

The next day, I felt fine. I was more convinced than ever that I could "hold my whiskey" like anyone else. And so, I gradually returned to my old way of life. In less than two weeks, I was in the squirrel cage. This time it took me about six weeks and two trips to the hospital to get sobered up. Somehow, I kept my job and when I returned to the newsroom, the A.A. photographer was waiting for me.

He asked me to go over to the club with him but he didn't lecture to me. In fact, he laughed about it. He told me that when he saw me drinking he knew what would happen. He felt that I had to learn to accept A.A. "the hard way."

I am back again in A.A. I am attending meetings two or three times a week. I have been sober about ten months now by living the A.A. way. And I have

learned something: If you get cocky in A.A., brother, you're going to lose A.A., and if you lose A.A., you are losing the *only solution* to your drinking problem.

Notes on Step Seven

There was true humility and deep surrender by asking God to "take all of me," both the "good" and the "bad." This was an admission that I could not trust myself to differentiate between the two. I almost drank after five months sobriety before going into the 12-step process with my sponsor. He wisely pointed out the obvious fact that my mind lied to me—It was not to be trusted! I needed a higher power (God) to see the truth about myself. What an ego-shattering revelation! Yet, it was necessary to give up on myself and trust God to take over my recovery. Someone said: "Self cannot rid self of self with self."

I often hear long dissertations of what Bill W meant by "shortcomings" and "defects of character" in Step Seven. Though it may be impossible to overstate the importance of dictionaries, Bill W uses these words to mean the same thing. Let us look how he came about phrasing Steps Six and Seven:

Page 59, Step Seven: "Humbly asked Him to remove our "shortcomings."

Page 76, Step Seven: "I pray that you now remove from me every "defect of character" that stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows." Consequently, it is easy to see that Bill meant for us to absorb these two words as "twins."

I wondered why the closing word "Amen" was not used in the many prayers of the steps leading up to Step Seven. It was explained to me that this word can be used as a summary of previous connected facts, e.g.:

In Step Three we asked to be relieved of the bon-

dage of self, but we didn't know what that was. Not complete. No Amen!

In Step Four we only partially realize the nature of said bondage. Not complete. No amen!

In Step Five our sponsor may provide deeper insights of the bondage. Not complete. No Amen!

In Step Six we become willing to ask God to remove this bondage. Not complete. No Amen!

In Step Seven, now that we have a much better insight of our bondage and are willing to be rid of our defects and shortcomings we are now ready to ask God for help. We have completed the necessary prerequisites. The summary has been completed—consequently Bill adds the word, Amen. So be it.

Frank Z. Audubon Monday night.

The Patron Saint of AA_{BY}

CHARLES M.

I wish I could tell you that after reading the Big Book and the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, I experienced a spiritual awakening and grasped a total understanding of our Traditions. I wish I could tell you that as a GSR, a DCM, and an active member of several standing committees, I have never violated the principles set forth in the Traditions. But, typically alcoholic, I gained most of my knowledge and understanding from my mistakes and through the mistakes of others. Sadly, I made most of those mistakes after several years of sobriety, when I should have known better.

As a GSR at my home group, I was extremely adamant about Traditions. I tried to dictate moral behavior, told people what literature they could or could not read, and even made violent threats to one man because he was saying bad things about the group. I would run guilt trips

on those who refused to get involved with service work while bragging about my own involvement.

After about a year of this self-imposed misery, I found it necessary to get back to the basics of AA. I discovered that I had forfeited my own serenity.

Being a slow learner, I found myself gradually slipping back into my old behavior. I was a DCM at the time. Controversy seemed to dominate my AA life. I was constantly engaged in heavy debate with other trusted servants over issues that were none of my business. I justified this behavior by rationalizing that I was preserving the integrity of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Today I realize that my behavior was just another example of my alcoholic thinking.

One day as I was reading the Ninth Tradition in my "Twelve and Twelve," a message was suddenly revealed to me that I had never noticed before. Even though I had read that particular chapter many times before, I had never understood its true meaning. I had always thought that it merely gave authority for the formation of a service structure. The new message had an entirely different meaning.

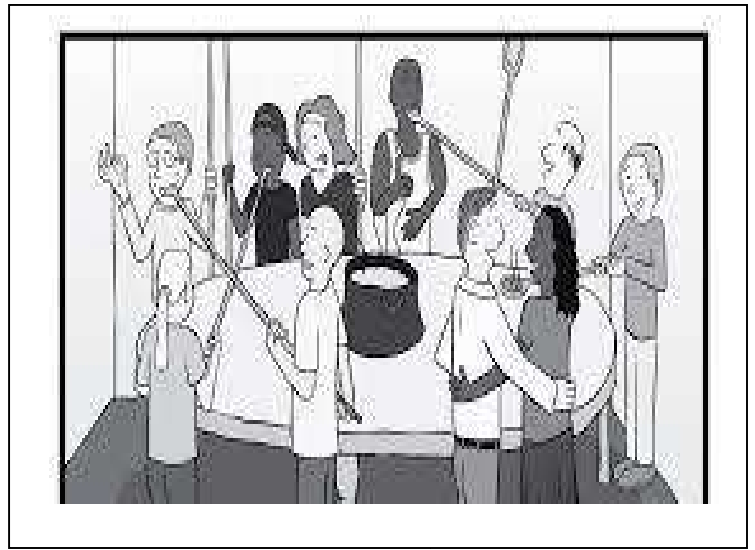
I suddenly realized that I had been trying to impose organization into the Fellowship. In my own way, I had been exacting my own brand of punitive action against those who I judged to be less sincere than myself. I had ordained myself as a patron saint of AA.

In prayer, I asked for forgiveness from my Higher Power. At the next area assembly I was selected to chair a meeting with the GSRs and DCMs. With all the humility I could muster, I made amends to all those present and later to those individuals who had felt the sting of my verbal whip. Finally, again in prayer, I turned my will and the care of AA over to God, as I understand him.

I found the essence of the Ninth Tradition cleverly concealed on page 174 of the "Twelve and Twelve." Bill wrote, "Great suffering and great love are AA's disciplinarians; we need no others."

To me, the Ninth Tradition epitomizes the spirit of anonymity, clarifies the Second Tradition, and provides us with an avenue through which our efforts in carrying the message of AA can have continuity, structure and cohesiveness. It is the principle that necessitated the foundation of the Twelve Concepts. It requires that I recognize

the autonomy of each group, even when I disagree with some of its policies. It will always stand as a personal reminder to me that my service to the Fellowship must come from a space of love. And finally, the Ninth Tradition will always serve as a tourniquet for this once-bleeding deacon.



Editorial Policy

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Contributions from readers are encouraged—you can write about your experience, strength and hope in general, or you can focus on one of the steps or traditions. You can also write about something that touched you at a meeting, something that bothered you at a meeting, or some service commitment you especially enjoy. Submissions are edited for space and clarity. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter. However, we are happy to include your gathering in the general list of fellowship announcements.

Please send your submissions to newsletter@aasj.org.

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SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 pm at: St Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ See AASJ.org for up to date zoom info