

Healing from Despair - Choosing Wholeness in a Broken World
by Rabbi Elie Kaplan Spitz.
Jewish Lights Publishing 2008.

Those who have passed through the vale of despair that is severe clinical depression, and have learned to live with and manage the condition, come to understand that survival of the curse of depression brings with it the blessing of enhanced insight into the complexities of life and the effect that they have on others.

This truism is eloquently expressed in Rabbi Kaplan Spitz's powerful and moving new book, *Healing from Despair*.

In his intensely personal introduction, which also sets out the pattern that the book will follow, Elie Kaplan Spitz talks about his own inner travails, the unfolding of his depression and his journey back to mental, physical and spiritual renewal. The book is then divided into five sections: *A Shattered Vessel - Tools for Transformation*; *Bitter Darkness - Tools for Gratitude*; *Forgiving the Soul - Tools for Forgiving*; *A Healed World - Tools for Healing*; *You Shall Be a Blessing - Tools for Becoming a Blessing*. Each chapter is suffused with biblical and rabbinic material and allusion, as well as the author's personal experience, and at the end there is a page of suggestions for action that relates to the chapter's theme. The final chapter, in many ways the most powerful, looks at the lives of a number of significant figures that were touched by challenge and mental illness, but who nevertheless managed to overcome.

Healing from Despair concludes with a section entitled *Practical Guidance Distilled: Checklists for Specific Areas of Concern*, and there are very helpful notes and a comprehensive bibliography for further reading.

I salute Rabbi Kaplan Spitz for having written a courageous book that will assist both those who wrestle with the noontday darkness and those who try to help them.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh