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This review covers four booklets (out of 42) published in the *Hope for the Heart* series. Each of the booklets addresses a different type of abuse but each is similarly divided into four sections. Each booklet includes a section giving *Definitions* for each topic. This is followed by *Characteristics* of the particular form of abuse identified by each booklet; the *Causes* underlying the particular abuse and finally *Steps for Solution*.

So why is a rabbi reviewing four booklets which are overtly Christian in their design and text? Accepting the Buddhist concept that truth can be found in many sources, then these booklets help clarify many of the underlying questions that every faith community (and indeed those of no belief) have more than likely already confronted, or inevitably will have to face.

I recently came to the point of wanting to clarify some underlying faith questions with regard to religious faith and abuse due to two events. First was the (Australian) Royal Commission into Institutional Sexual Abuse currently underway. Out of this I reflected on how this extended to families and the violence they often experience.

Second, I turned to the religious literature and was frustrated that compared to psychological and sociological literature (including social work) there is actually little material, be it theological or even biblical, that
responded to the wider issue of family violence. Serving on a regional Rabbinic Court we began to address this question through creating a responsum.

Looking at the literature, both popular and academic, there was a heavy emphasis on domestic violence and in particular spousal (primarily husband-on-wife) abuse, but conveniently most other possible forms of abuse were minimized if not ignored – as if there were no others who could be victims of abuse. Other areas of concern that were noted however included elder abuse and teen-on-teen abuse (beyond just bullying).

As readers will note, three of the publication titles (Spiritual Abuse; Domestic Violence; and Verbal & Emotional Abuse) focus on some of the possible forms of abuse that exist in our society. These can be expanded to include the possible dimensions of abuse: physical, psychological, social, sexual, spiritual and economic. Each of these dimensions challenges every faith community to find appropriate responses, especially from each of the texts’ contextual and theological basis, and not just relying on other disciplines which extend beyond the legal requirements but to act in an ethical manner. Hart strives to achieve this through this Hope for the Heart publication series, but what I found most useful in all these booklets is information about the impact of abuse within a table which shows both sides of the impact. For instance, the victim not only experiences “loss of self-worth” but its consequence of “increased self-doubt”. I also found very useful the checklists for both victims and chaplains/pastors.

So what is different about these booklets? It is the use of biblical texts to help put many of the suggested responses through a biblical prism, although I have to admit that sometimes I struggled to see the connection between response and text – perhaps this reflects that I do not come from the protestant proof text tradition. Nevertheless, these booklets are definitely worth adding to the resources one can call upon as the wider topic of abuse continues to take a front and centre position across all societies.