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## ***What Ethical Lessons Can Be Learned from the Bernie Madoff Scandal?***

***Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer***

Because of the high intimacy in the Jewish world, it takes far less than "six degrees of separation" to establish links to people or organizations that were directly affected by Bernard Madoff's alleged Ponzi scheme.

But let's make something very clear. We don't own this scandal. This was not a Jew-on-Jew crime. Although many of Madoff's victims are Jewish, their being Jewish and his being Jewish are beside the point. This was, it seems, purely a devious and malevolent financial fraud that violated laws, ethics and an assumption of trust. It does not merit a special condemnation or apology from the Jewish community. It does require swift prosecution and assessment of what kinds of oversight were lacking and are needed to prevent this crime from re-occurring.

I find it distasteful that so many Jews customarily breathe a sigh of relief when a convicted criminal turns out not to be Jewish. We anxiously unleash a destructive form of ethnic typing on ourselves.

Instead, let us focus on our ability to reach out to those who have become impoverished. We can draw a valuable lesson from how we have faced adversity in the past with remarkable resilience and renewal of optimism.