



THE WINGS OF THE SUN

Traditional Jewish Healing in Theory and Practice

By [Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum](#)

Section 1

Refa'einu

Chapter 1

Refa'einu - "Heal Us!"

"Heal us, and we will be healed."
(from the blessing for healing, cf. Jeremiah 17:14)

The last hundred years have witnessed a revolution in medicine unparalleled in the history of the world. Smallpox and plague have been virtually eradicated the world over. Diphtheria, tetanus, polio and other scourges have been brought under control in countries with reasonable standards of hygiene and healthcare. Immunization prevents millions of childhood deaths a year. In advanced countries, infant mortality has dropped from about a quarter of live births to less than 1.3 percent, while life expectancy has risen from 45 to 75 years.

Techniques that were once unimaginable are now routine: organ transplants, video surgery, laser operations, molecular therapy, tissue regeneration. Far from abating, the medical revolution continues to expand exponentially. As you read these words, intensive research in molecular biology, biotechnology and a host of other specialties makes it conceivable that within the foreseeable future, ninety percent of cancer could be prevented or cured, coronary disease might be largely eliminated, mysteries like Alzheimer's disease could be unraveled, and cures found for dozens of conditions, including allergies, migraines and other afflictions.

The medical establishment

Western medicine's many successes and the hope it offers have given it a highly prestigious place in contemporary society. Healthcare is a multibillion-dollar business, consuming double-digit percentages of the gross national products of some of the world's most advanced countries. The medical

establishment consists of armies of doctors, specialists, nurses, paramedics, laboratory technicians, research workers, secretaries, maintenance and other personnel serving in public and private sector hospitals and clinics, special care centers, the pharmaceutical industry, the armed services, education, industry, business, international organizations, and so on.

It is taken for granted by governments, public agencies, the mass media and the overwhelming majority of the general public that the medical profession is the appropriate authority in all issues concerning the health of the human body. Many also assume that M.D.'s are the proper experts when it comes to the health of the mind. With their white vestments, scientific rites and terminological arcana, the doctors are like a priestly hierarchy, seemingly holding the keys to health, freedom from pain and illness, and the bestowal of life itself. Many people would give more weight to the pronouncements of a medical authority on matters of life and death than they would to those of a tzaddik. Grueling, costly medical treatments offering a slender hope of ameliorating a person's earthly existence are often tolerated with greater willingness than the mild efforts involved in carrying out simple religious precepts which carry with them a guarantee of infinite rewards.

The strength of our belief in the efficacy of medicine is hardly surprising. In some shape or form, medical care and guidance are ever-present factors in our lives from before birth until the day we die. After months of prenatal monitoring, the newborn baby comes straight from the womb into the hands of a reception party of nurses and doctors. Growing children soon learn that ointments and band aids make little sores, cuts and grazes disappear, while sickly-sweet syrups banish colds and coughs. Doctors and nurses are familiar figures in the worlds of most children, among whom even the healthiest receive medical and dental treatment of some kind quite regularly.

Even when everyone at home is feeling fine, health awareness penetrates our daily lives to a degree we are hardly conscious of. Every food packet we glance at has exhaustive details about its carbohydrate, fat, cholesterol, protein, vitamin and mineral content. We are bombarded on all sides with information about the healthfulness or otherwise of exercise, cigarette smoking, alcohol, sunbathing, insect repellants, computer screens and thousands of other things. Everyone has his own stock of medical wisdom culled from upbringing, general education, TV, magazines, home health guides and the like. Every household has a cache of assorted pills, ointments, lotions, sprays, etc., etc.

And if anything goes seriously wrong, God forbid, most people's immediate thought is to call a doctor. Urgently. Yes, we pray, we recite psalms, give charity, make resolutions. But is it our religious faith and trust that give us confidence that everything will turn out for the best? Or is it the arrival of medical assistance, the injections and medicines, and the look on the doctor's face that says the situation is under control?

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

It comes as something of a shock to find that Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

(1772-1810), the outstanding sage, mystic and chassidic teacher, "denounced doctors and medicine in the strongest terms. He advised anyone who cares about his life and that of his family to avoid them, even in the case of serious illness. One should depend only on God.... The art of healing involves many very fine intricacies, but they are hidden from the doctors, who are not able to take account of all the subtle details without error.... It takes only the slightest mistake by the doctor to destroy a person's life and actually kill him, as we see so often, for many people die because of doctors.... The majority of doctors are agents of the Angel of Death" (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #50).

Are these the words of the same Rebbe Nachman who told delightful stories and taught us to be happy always, to look at the better side of things and judge everyone positively? Calling the doctors murderers may be good for a laugh - haven't we all heard stories about arrogant doctors and medical incompetence, faulty diagnoses and people who received altogether the wrong treatment? Castigating the doctors could be a way of venting our resentment at feeling so dependent upon them.

But when it comes to the crunch? What would we do in a real crisis, God forbid? A child is having convulsions.... An accident victim is bleeding heavily.... Someone is experiencing severe chest pain and is vomiting and sweating profusely.... Haven't we seen miracles - cases of people who might not be alive and well today were it not for the intensive care, the miraculous operations, the extraordinary drugs, the new technologies? So we explain Rebbe Nachman away: "He was talking about then, the medicine of two hundred years ago, before all the amazing scientific discoveries of the modern age." Or we dismiss his ideas: "Faith healing? Surely all contemporary rabbinic authorities would agree that 'you are not permitted to rely on miracles' (Pesachim 64b). 'The Torah gave the doctor license to heal' (Berakhot 60a). You must go to the doctor!"

And in many cases the answer would be "Yes!" Rebbe Nachman himself insisted that people have their children vaccinated against smallpox (Avanehah Barzel p.31 #34). Vaccination was then a new medical technique but one that had proved itself. The same could be said to apply to countless routine medical procedures today. Rebbe Nachman also understood that many people would feel their faith was not strong enough to carry them through a serious illness. He said, "You know I don't hold by doctors. But if you're going to go, make sure you choose the very best!" (Siach Sarfey Kodesh I:8).

Illness can be very frightening, and some people avoid consulting a doctor - even when they have serious symptoms - for fear of what they might hear. No one should use any of the comments regarding doctors and medicine in this book as an excuse not to see a physician when necessary or to terminate medical treatment. Those who have questions or doubts about medical advice they have received or treatment they are undergoing should ask the opinion of other experts in the field. Religious or spiritual matters should be discussed with a competent rabbi. It must be remembered that Rebbe Nachman was addressing chassidim who devoted their lives to following his spiritual path. It would be extremely dangerous to use Rebbe Nachman's comments on doctors as a rationalization for avoiding necessary medical treatment while failing to

carry out his other teachings.

But the subject does not end here. Rebbe Nachman's statements about doctors are only one facet of an entire corpus of teachings on healing that are unique in the whole of rabbinic literature. Throughout the ages many leading rabbis have been well versed in medicine. Some, notably the RaMBaM (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, Maimonides, 1135-1204), wrote extensively on conventional medicine. The legal and ethical implications of various aspects of medical practice have exercised rabbinic authorities throughout the generations. With the new horizons opened up by modern medical science there has recently been a great proliferation of such literature. Yet in all of it, the primary focus is on the treatment of physical disorders by physical means. Practically nowhere do we find a detailed discussion of the spiritual dimensions of health, illness and healing except in the writings of Rebbe Nachman.

"All the illness that afflicts people comes only because of a lack of joy... And joy is the great healer"

(Rabbi Nachman, Likutey Moharan II, 24).

References to healing are to be found throughout Rabbi Nachman's teachings. But in the last three years of his life, when he himself was seriously ill with tuberculosis, healing became a central theme in every one of his major discourses. Rebbe Nachman was expressing and explaining a distinctive Jewish approach to health and healing that has its roots in the Bible and is implicit in countless passages in the Talmud, Midrash, Kabbalah and Chassidut, as well as in innumerable stories and anecdotes from all periods and all parts of the Jewish world.

Rebbe Nachman distilled the wisdom of thousands of years and turned it into a unique healing pathway. The primary focus is not the body but the soul. The gauge of spiritual health is joy. Rebbe Nachman's teachings on healing are summed up in one statement: "All the illness that afflicts people comes only because of a lack of joy.... And joy is the great healer" (Likutey Moharan II, 24).

Paradigms of healing

It takes considerable courage and honesty to open ourselves to unfamiliar ways of thinking. People are usually strongly committed to ideas imbibed from their social, cultural and educational milieu. Healing can be a matter of life and death. It is a subject that may be surrounded by stronger barrages of emotion than we perhaps realize. To those brought up to think of healthcare exclusively in terms of white coats, masked faces, blood tests, dials, meters, intravenous drips and the like, some of the basic concepts of Rebbe Nachman's healing pathway - faith, joy, repentance, confession, charity, song and dance - may seem irrelevant, even disturbing. To grasp the true meaning of an unfamiliar paradigm we must have the humility to look beyond our own inbred ways of viewing things and explore its concepts in their authentic breadth and depth.

The conventional medical paradigm of healing concentrates almost exclusively on the human body and its ailments. Until quite recently the majority of orthodox practitioners paid little or no attention to the owner of the body - the person, his or her mental and spiritual life, outlook, feelings and emotions, moral choices, lifestyle and activities - any more than a car mechanic would show other than polite interest in the lives of the owners of the cars he repairs. The body is seen as a machine. Complex, amazing, awesome, yes; but still a machine that is essentially the sum of its components and can be dissected, tested, analyzed, and adjusted to perform better.

When something goes wrong, the standard medical approach is first to probe the patient's physical symptoms in an effort to identify pathological changes and their causes. Diagnosis is followed by treatment with an ever more sophisticated array of drugs, surgery and other techniques. Many of these techniques certainly utilize the body's own amazing self-regulating mechanisms, but the tendency is for doctors not to rely on these but to intervene, sometimes quite aggressively, to reverse or stabilize the problem. If this can be done before some sort of permanent and irreparable damage has been done, the patient is said to be "cured." Through all this the patient remains for the most part passive. This is actually implicit in the very word "patient," which means someone to whom something happens. First the illness "happens" to the patient, and then the treatment. In the eyes of many doctors the patient's chief responsibility is to show up for examinations and take the medicine.

Rebbe Nachman is asking us to explore a totally different perspective on health, sickness and healing. What is happening in a person's body is seen as an inseparable part of his or her life as a whole. Physical symptoms are viewed not only as problems in and of themselves. They are also seen as a language that expresses what may be a far deeper disorder, one that pervades the outlook, behavior, personality and indeed the very soul of the individual. In the words of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Mezritcher Magid (1704-1772): "A small hole in the body - a big hole in the soul."

What is illness? Suppose someone is feeling generally weak, tired, strained, run down, faint and disoriented. Vitamins, tonics, a vacation haven't helped. He or she goes to a doctor (conventional or alternative). The doctor asks various questions and carries out tests. If the doctor arrives at a plausible diagnosis - hypoglycemia, post-viral fatigue syndrome, diabetes, cardiovascular disease or whatever else - the suffering individual usually accepts that this is the problem and starts with the recommended physical strategies for dealing with it.

But is this the problem? Is it the whole problem? Is it the root of the problem? Perhaps the physical symptoms are one important dimension of a far deeper, existential malady. Here is a soul that is tired. Why? What is it in this person's life situation, current environment, past history, conscious and unconscious thoughts and attitudes, habits and activities that may be blocking true fulfillment and happiness? A doctor may suggest that the fatigue is caused by systematic indulgence in the wrong foods. But can this be isolated from deep frustration, depression and other factors that may be driving this person to overindulge? Without confronting these problems, will any of the physical

strategies bring about more than a superficial change?

The same point could be made about a multitude of other physical complaints. Is someone's heart condition or cancerous growth his essential problem? Or is it just the tip of the iceberg of a far more extensive life crisis? Medical authorities in many different times and cultures have pointed to the destructive influence of mental states such as melancholy, grief and despair on one's physical health. But such factors are hard to measure scientifically and have been largely neglected by mainstream modern medicine. Yet numerous studies conducted in recent years have demonstrated the influence of stress, inner conflict, frustration, depression and so on in a wide variety of different conditions.

Is it valid to make a hard and fast distinction between physical illness and maladies of the soul? Adherents to the conventional western medical paradigm might agree that negative traits and negative outlook could be described as "unhealthy," "diseased" and so on. Yet they would consider this use of such terms as metaphorical and secondary to their "primary" use to describe tangible physical conditions. But just because frustration, bitterness, anger and other traits are hard to quantify, does that make them any less real? Where emotional and spiritual problems are intimately bound up with physical disease, does it make any sense to treat the latter without guiding the patient to resolve the former?

And where emotional and spiritual problems have so far caused no discernible bodily ailment, does that make them any less pathological than heavy smoking, drinking, drug abuse and the like? Is there any wisdom in waiting for physical damage to set in before seeking to heal them? And what about the other kinds of secret pain so many of us hide behind our public facades?

Prevention and health

The Rambam wrote: "The ability of a physician to prevent illness is a greater proof of his skill than his ability to cure someone who is already ill" (Yalkut Lekach Tov, Beshalach). Rebbe Nachman's pathway of healing is first and foremost one of keeping healthy - "preventive medicine" - because true healing must begin long before physical illness strikes. Guarding our health is a mitzvah, a positive duty. "Take care of yourself, and guard your soul diligently" (Deuteronomy 4:9). Good health is vital to the fulfilment of our mission in this world: obviously, physical weakness interferes with our ability to pray, study, perform acts of kindness and carry out the other mitzvot.

Guarding our health clearly involves taking the utmost care of our bodies: observing the rules of hygiene, eating wisely and moderately, exercising, not smoking, avoiding substance abuse and other hazards. But it is no accident that when the Torah asks us to take care of our health, the expression it uses is: "Guard your soul diligently." Spiritual healthcare is not merely an extra. It is the very foundation of sound physical health. Taking care of physical health frequently involves sacrificing immediate gratification for the sake of long-term benefit. What incentive is there to forgo the tempting pleasures of the moment unless one is firm in the belief that life in this world has a higher purpose?

Factors like a sense of mission, courage in the face of obstacles and general optimism are fundamental to good health. "A joyous heart is good medicine, whereas a broken spirit dries the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Today preventive medicine is high on the public agenda. The sheer cost of conventional medical care has turned it into a crushing burden in even the wealthiest countries. Diagnostic testing, medications, operations and hospital care have all become so expensive that not only the poor but even the more prosperous are often simply unable to afford them. Health insurance costs have soared. People who have paid insurance all their lives discover that once they become sick they may not be covered anymore. The luxury of state-of-the-art medical treatment may be affordable by the very wealthy, but for innumerable health-conscious ordinary citizens it is preferable to do everything possible to avoid the need for medical treatment through taking the best possible care of their health. The Jewish spiritual pathways of faith, joy, prayer, meditation, charity, love and kindness may yet prove to be among the world's most valuable assets in attaining the ultimate goal of freedom from illness.

Sickness and healing

Disease can be a terrible thing. But viewing it as a purely physical phenomenon makes it even more terrible, turning it into a meaningless torment, providing no comfort to those who are suffering. Medical science can often (though not always) trace the physical causes of disease. But it is silent on the deeper question of why a certain illness becomes a part of someone's destiny at a particular point in his or her life. To say that the individual had a genetic predisposition still does not answer the question of "why."

Why should a baby be born deformed? Why should a little child or a young man or woman in the prime of life suddenly be struck down with a crippling disease? The faith that God guides and controls every detail of the entire universe with unfathomable love does not in itself provide snug answers. "There is no wisdom, understanding or counsel relative to God" (Proverbs 21:30). However, faith does give us a pointer to the way in which we can eventually come to terms with suffering. Ultimately God does only good. The faith that every situation must contain good somewhere is what actually helps us search until we find it.

While accepting what we cannot alter, we must also take responsibility for that which we have the power to change. Conventional medicine tends to encourage patients to rely on the doctor to repair the physical damage to their bodies - "Cure me!" - allowing them to avoid confronting deep-seated problems of lifestyle and personality that may lie at the root of their illnesses. But merely attacking manifest physical symptoms can be dangerously counterproductive. The underlying disorder remains untreated and may give rise to a far more destructive disturbance later on.

The Torah view is that injury and illness may often be sent to prompt us to look carefully at ourselves and our lives. They can also help us come to a greater appreciation of the preciousness of life and health. How have we been using our

bodies? What have we been doing with our lives? What is our true mission in this world? Deepening our self-understanding is itself a vital part of the healing process. This is what helps us take control of our lives and let go of unnecessary baggage - bad habits, outworn complexes, anger, bitterness and the like. It becomes easier to repair relationships with spouses, parents, children, friends and enemies, with ourselves and with God.

"Turning to God" does not mean simply replacing one kind of fatalism with another, trading belief in the ultimacy of blind physical forces for intellectual acceptance of some vague, unknowable, implacable spiritual force "out there." Cultivating faith in God involves a profound shift on every level of our being. We must learn to perceive ourselves and the world in fresh ways. We must redirect our faculties of thought and emotion, explore our ability to make decisions, embark on unfamiliar paths of action. The key to bringing Godly power into our actual lives is prayer. This means much more than simply repeating ancient formulae and hoping for God's blessings in return. We must learn a new way of using words - our own words - to define the blessing we seek and to channel it into the real situations we face within ourselves and in the world around us.

New directions in medicine

Today many mainstream medical practitioners are becoming increasingly open to alternative paradigms of healing. Over the last two decades an increasing body of scientific evidence and clinical experience has begun to convince not only psychologists but numerous doctors as well of the importance of emotional and spiritual factors in physical healing. The very success of western medicine in combatting infectious diseases has resulted in their replacement by heart disease, cancer and other degenerative diseases as the chief causes of death in our society. It is certainly true that lives are saved every day through sophisticated coronary care, advanced methods of cancer treatment and other medical techniques. These can help patients survive immediate crises. But more and more mainstream practitioners now realize that the long-term health of such patients depends on radical changes in lifestyle, general outlook and attitudes.

There are now thousands of documented cases of patients who have recovered "spontaneously" from extremely serious conditions, to the complete amazement of their doctors. These are miracles, though not necessarily in the sense that the patients involved suddenly stood up as if raised from the dead. Many of them put a lot of hard work - spiritual work - into their recovery. They understood their illness as a signal to take a hard look at themselves and to institute far-reaching changes in their fundamental beliefs, their view of themselves and their intimate human relationships.

More and more medical research is now focussing on the complex and subtle relationship between the mind, both conscious and unconscious, the nervous, endocrine and immune systems, and the functioning of the rest of the body. Major hospitals have established clinics for people with problems ranging from headaches, high blood pressure and back pain to heart disease, cancer and AIDS, teaching relaxation, meditation, visualization and other techniques that

harness the powers of the mind to control pain and promote healing. Increasing numbers of patients are supplementing their medical treatment with psychotherapy, music therapy, creative writing and the like in order to grapple with the psychological and spiritual dimensions of their illnesses.

There is also growing awareness that these approaches may be of major importance in relieving the suffering of some of the many patients whom conventional medicine is unable to help because their complaints simply defy all diagnostic tests. The doctors can find nothing definite - though this does not make the patients' fatigue, incapacitating headaches, visual dysfunctioning, digestive troubles, chronic pain and other symptoms any less real. Many doctors are inclined to dismiss these sufferers as neurotics or malingerers. Some drift from one specialist to the next, while countless others despair of ever improving and are ready prey for downward spirals of anxiety, depression and despair.

Those in this category are by no means an insignificant minority. Studies of the patients treated by group medical practices in one major European city showed that between thirty and forty percent were classified as suffering from "neurotic" complaints! Another fifty percent of the patients were classified as chronically ill. That leaves a mere ten to twenty percent of patients whose illnesses responded to the standard medical procedures! (Arthur Jores, *Medicine in the Crisis of our Time* p.54).

The limited effectiveness of conventional medicine is even more striking when we remember that by no means do all sick people become "patients." Studies indicate that between a half and two-thirds of physical complaints do not result in a visit to a doctor's office - and these complaints are not necessarily trivial in nature, as proven by the statistics on untreated illnesses and the early stages of chronic diseases. Surveys of job holders - people in the prime of life - have revealed that fewer than ten percent of respondents consider themselves really healthy, whereas about sixty percent feel themselves to be in need of some kind of medical attention (ibid.).

That such enormous numbers of people in the prime of their lives feel less than healthy is a sad comment on healthcare in a society where the majority suffer no lack of food, housing and other amenities. Is the root of the problem purely physical or does it have more to do with the emptiness and lack of meaning in so many lives? Is it not tragic that some people have to wait until they become seriously ill before they realize the central role of faith and joy in good health and healing, while countless others never discover it at all? What effect would it have on the health and well-being of millions and millions the world over if not only diet and exercise, but also the basics of faith, prayer, meditation, charity, kindness, love and joy were taught as a matter of course in schools, colleges and the mass media, not to mention medical schools, hospitals, clinics and doctors' offices?

Where do we put our faith?

Rebbe Nachman's warning of two centuries ago against using doctors must be

considered with the utmost caution. There is no comparison between the medicine of 1800 and that of today. No doubt, in fifty to a hundred years time posterity will view some of our most sophisticated contemporary medical techniques as being just as primitive as we think many of the methods used fifty years ago to have been. Even so, it would be absurd and irresponsible to reject contemporary medicine out of hand and throw away skills and expertise that save lives every day and can alleviate so much human misery.

For us, the main significance of Rebbe Nachman's critique of doctors is as a challenge, to force us to examine some of our assumptions about healing and how to go about it, even as we continue to take advantage of what medicine has to offer. The sleek, super-sophisticated world of modern medicine often seems to work so well that we can easily fall into thinking it's the doctors who give life and heal the body - until a grave-looking doctor eventually comes along and says solemnly, "I'm sorry but it's terminal and there's nothing we can do. You'd better pray."

Rebbe Nachman said, "What people do at the end I want you to do at the beginning!" (Siach Sarfey Kodesh I: 293). People resort to passionate prayers when they see that all other ways of saving the situation have failed. But Rebbe Nachman wanted us to turn to God for help at the very beginning of the trouble.

The main target of Rebbe Nachman's criticisms is not so much the doctors as it is the patients who put all their faith in them. "People put all the emphasis on the means through which healing comes about - the medicine - as if without medicine God does not have the power to heal. That is not so. The Holy One, blessed be He, is the Cause of all causes. There is no absolute need for any one particular means. Even while resorting to a given means of trying to bring something about, we must believe only in God, and not put our faith in the means" (Likutey Moharan I, 62).

Even as we wonder at the miraculous skills and expertise of the doctors, let us thank God for opening up the gates of knowledge and giving of His wisdom to human beings. As we marvel at the amazing powers of modern drugs, let us bless God for creating the stupendous variety of plants, trees and other healing substances. Let us never forget that even as the drugs and other treatments work on the body, it is the body's own phenomenal self-regulating mechanisms that actually make it heal. It is not the suture that causes body tissues to knit together but the genius God has planted within the cells themselves.

What could be more amazing than that an instrument as subtle and intricate as the body, even when abused, battered, damaged and malfunctioning, can repair itself and often become as good as new? And what could be more wonderful than the normal functioning of the body - growth, renewal, respiration, circulation, digestion, excretion of wastes, vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, movement, coordination, etc. etc. - every second, every minute, every day for seventy, eighty, a hundred and more years! It is for this that we bless God every day: "Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, King of the universe, Who designed man with wisdom and created within him many openings and

many cavities. It is revealed and known before Your Throne of Glory that if just one of them were to be ruptured or one of them blocked it would be impossible to survive and stand before You even for a brief moment. Blessed are You, HaShem, Who heals all flesh and acts wondrously" (blessing after relieving oneself).

Refu'ah Shelemah

Healing is more than a matter of curing people's bodies. It is about healing their lives. The essential sickness, whether of an individual, a social group, a nation or indeed the whole world, is to be turned away from God and His wisdom, unfulfilled in our purpose in this world, bitter and unhappy. All other illnesses, social, psychological and physical, are ultimately rooted in this. If we would only take this essential sickness seriously and make at least as much effort to cure it as we do to try to solve our other problems, we could attain true happiness.

"Heal us, and we will be healed, save us and we will be saved, for You are our praise. Send complete healing for all our ailments, for You are God, King, the faithful and compassionate Healer. Blessed are You, HaShem, Who heals the sick of His people Israel"

(from the blessing for healing, cf. Jeremiah 17:14).

Faith in God can bring healing even to those for whom medicine offers no hope because it cannot cure their bodies: the disabled, the chronically sick and those who are preparing to leave this world. The body may not be able to be healed, but the soul can always be healed. The worst suffering can be sweetened when we have faith that it comes from the loving God. Terminal illness and death have meaning when they are seen as the gateway to the higher life.

Refa'einu veneirafei. Heal us and we will be healed. Heal us - for if You heal us, we will certainly be healed. The Hebrew root for healing, (RePh'A) is a rearrangement of the letters of the word (PeR'E), meaning "wild." So long as there is no healing, the elements within one are wild and out of joint. The body, the mind, the soul, the very world are "desolate and formless" - like the earth before the revelation of God's light (Genesis 1:2). It is the light of spirituality that brings order to the elements. True healing, (RePhu'Ah), turns (PeR'E), wildness, into (Pe'ER), which means beauty and harmony, the true beauty of Godly revelation.

The traditional Jewish prayer for healing asks for complete, perfect healing: (refu'ah shelemah, refu'at hanefesh urefu'at ha-guf). Complete healing: healing of the soul and healing of the body. First healing of the soul, then healing of the body. Perfect healing.

"And for you who revere My Name a sun of righteousness will arise with healing in its wings" (Malachi 3:20). At the end of the very last prophecy given to the

Jewish People, the prophet Malachi reveals that in time to come a new light will shine into the world: not a physical light, but the spiritual light of tzedakah, the true justice, charity and love that come to right the wrongs that cause strife and disorder in countries, nations, communities, families, in individual souls and physical bodies.

Let us search for God through our studies, prayers and meditation, our mitzvot and our acts of love and kindness. Let us draw down this healing light. "Heal us and we will be healed; save us and we will be saved, for You are our praise!"

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[BACK TO WINGS OF THE SUN HOMEPAGE](#)

[AZAMRA HOMEPAGE](#)

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