



# THE WINGS OF THE SUN

Traditional Jewish Healing in Theory and Practice

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## Chapter 9

### Sound the Shofar

Rebbe Nachman left Lemberg for Breslov in mid-June of 1808. The doctors said it was dangerous for him to travel because of the gravity of his condition, and that he should travel no more than about ten kilometers a day. But the Rebbe paid no attention and pressed on at high speed, covering tens of kilometers every day, just as the busy merchants used to do (Tzaddik #80). He arrived in Breslov two weeks later. He was still very sick and extremely weak, but he continued to teach his followers as before. He would often ride with them to the outskirts of the town and take walks in the meadows.

Reb Noson tells us that after Rebbe Nachman's return from Lemberg he spoke out against physicians and medicine more emphatically than ever before, denouncing them in the strongest terms (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #50). Rebbe Nachman's attacks on doctors and medicine are fairly well-known, not only among his present-day followers but among students of rabbinic thought in general. Sadly, most people are far less familiar with the positive pathway of health and healing he was teaching in precisely the same period.

#### Dominion over the Angels

The first Rosh Hashanah after Rebbe Nachman's return from Lemberg (September 22, 1808), hundreds of people came to Breslov to be with him. However, the Rebbe was so weak that, as Reb Noson put it, "it seemed as if there was no earthly way he would be able to give a discourse" (Tzaddik #116). But in the end Rebbe Nachman marshaled all his strength and gave a very lengthy discourse. This is Likutey Moharan II, 1: "Sound the Shofar - Dominion over the Angels," the fullest and most extensive statement we have of his healing pathway. (For complete translation and commentary, [click here.](#))

This first major teaching of Rebbe Nachman's since his return from Lemberg is a magnificent elaboration of the pathway he had set forth in the last teaching he had given before leaving on his trip, "Azamra - I will sing!" There he explained how to awaken our soul-powers and attain true prayer - through finding our good points. The power of the soul of the Jew is the starting point of "Sound the

Shofar - Dominion."

"The Jew was created to have dominion over the angels! This is the ultimate destiny of the Jewish People, as our Rabbis taught: ' In time to come, the position of the Tzaddikim will be superior to that of the ministering angels.' Each person must see that he attains his destiny and rules over the angels" (Likutey Moharan II, 1).

This striking affirmation of the greatness of the Jewish soul is a rebuttal of the mechanistic ideas of the natural philosophers of Rebbe Nachman's time, who argued that human beings are nothing but machines and totally subordinate to the imperatives of natural law just like everything else in the world. Rebbe Nachman wanted us to realize that although we live within nature, our souls place us above it. Through the force of our wilful embrace of our spirituality we have the power to master and control nature. Our prayers and good deeds turn the "angels" - the vital forces of creation - into our agents. It is our holy words and deeds that channel power to them, bringing goodness and blessing into the entire creation.

This is our ultimate destiny - and we can actually attain it in this world. But first we have to be tested: incarnated in our bodies, our souls are confronted with the challenge of our physical natures. Will we pursue our spiritual mission or succumb to the temptations of the flesh?

"One must guard oneself carefully and see that one has the strength to stand firm in this position of power and not let the ministering angels cast one down out of jealousy. For the angels are very jealous of a man like this who has dominion over them" (ibid.).

The jealousy of the angels finds expression in each one of us in the impulses of our yetzer hara, the evil inclination, which tries to distract us from our spiritual mission by focussing our attention on our material desires. And if we succumb, we do indeed fall under the power of nature.

### Rebbe Nachman's Teachings on Healing

All of Rebbe Nachman's major discourses, together with numerous shorter teachings, are collected in Likutey Moharan (literally, The Collected Teachings of MoHaRaN -Morenu [our teacher] HaRabbi Nachman). Part I of Likutey Moharan contains Rebbe Nachman's teachings prior to his trip to Lemberg. It was first printed soon after his return to Breslov in the summer of 1808. Part II, which is shorter, contains his major discourses and other teachings from the time of his return from Lemberg until his death in 1810. It was first printed in 1811. Today both parts of Likutey Moharan are usually printed in one volume.

The teachings in Part I include various discussions of healing but no detailed analysis of the subject. The main references to healing are in discourses #14, 21, 27, 56, 57, 58, 62 and 74, and in the shorter teachings in #164, 231, 263, 267, 268 and 277. In Part II healing is the central theme of #1, 3, 5, 6, 24 and 42, and it is a major theme in #2, 4, 7 and 8.

The other main sources of Rabbi Nachman's teachings on healing are: The Aleph-Bet Book, Healing 1-4; Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #50, 98 and 187; Tzaddik #194, 390, 391 and 459 and Rabbi Nachman's Stories pp. 410-37 and 479-80.

## Who is the true leader?

"Sound the Shofar - Dominion" comes to teach us how we can remain firm in our mission and attain our destiny, transcending our bondage to the natural order - through binding ourselves to the souls of our fellow Jews. "Together we stand!" It is through working together as a spiritual community, supporting and encouraging each other, that we become immune to the temptations and distractions that plague us as long as we remain isolated and wrapped up in ourselves. This is a further development of the theme Rebbe Nachman expressed in his discourse the previous Rosh Hashanah, just before his trip to Lemberg. "For us, everything depends upon chavivuta, mutual love" (Likutey Moharan I, 61).

But in order to bind oneself to the souls of the Jewish People it would be necessary to know the root of every single soul. Since this is practically impossible for most people, the main thing is to bind oneself to the true leaders of the generation since all the individual souls are grouped under them, and in this way one is bound to all the souls. The key question, then, is: how can we recognize the true leaders and distinguish them from the false leaders who have thrust themselves to prominence through sheer brazenness? Rebbe Nachman's answer to this question takes up almost the whole of the rest of this lengthy teaching. And it is in the course of his answer that Rebbe Nachman explains in full detail the foundations of the Torah path of healing - for true healing of the soul and the body comes through attachment to the spiritual teacher who guides us to our ultimate destiny.

Rebbe Nachman tells us that our difficulties in recognizing the true leaders stem from the fact that the spiritual consciousness in our heart becomes dulled to the extent that we gratify our cravings for wealth, food and sex in excess of what we need to fulfil our mission in this world. To recover our spiritual sensitivity we have to rectify these cravings, learning to satisfy our material needs in a balanced, harmonious way as part of our overall spiritual life. The way to do this is by turning our intellectual knowledge of God's existence into an awareness of His presence that we actually feel in our hearts as we go about the daily business of living. "Know this day and put it into your heart that HaShem is

God...." (Deuteronomy 4:39).

## The healing power of prayer

The effect of developing complete awe and reverence in the heart is to release prayer from its exile.

"And when this happens, there is no more need for medicines. All medicines are derived from plants, and every single plant receives its powers from its own particular planet or star, because 'there isn't a single plant that doesn't have a planet or star that strikes it and says, "Grow!"' (Bereshit Rabbah 10). Every planet and star receives its power from the stars above it, and the highest stars from the higher powers, until they receive power from the supreme angels, who in turn receive from the powers beyond them, one higher than the other, until they all receive from the root of all things, which is the 'Word of God,' as it is written, 'Through the word of God the heavens were made and all their hosts by the breath of His mouth' (Psalms 33:6).

"This explains why, when we attain prayer, there is no need for medicines. The reason is that prayer is the 'Word of God,' which is the root of all things. And 'He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their abominations' (Psalms 107:20). 'He sent His word and healed them....' The Torah says: 'And you will serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from among you' (Exodus 23:25). 'And you will serve the Lord your God' - 'service means prayer' (Bava Kama 92b). And then, 'He will bless your bread and your water, and I will remove sickness, etc.' In other words, you will be healed through bread and water, because they will receive blessing from the root of all things, namely the 'Word of God' - prayer - and then bread and water will have the same power to heal as herbs.

"For the division and allocation of the various powers, which give one plant the power to cure one kind of illness and another a different illness, are found only in the lower world. But above, at the root of all things, i.e. the 'Word of God,' everything is unity, and there is no difference between bread and water and plants and herbs. When one grasps the root - the 'Word of God,' prayer - one is able to channel curative powers into bread and water, and one can be healed through bread and water.... And this is why King Hezekiah was able to put away the book of remedies - because he redeemed prayer from its exile" (Likutey Moharan II, 1:6-9).

Since prayer is the foundation of spiritual healing, Rebbe Nachman continues his discourse with a detailed analysis of the negative traits that vitiate our ability to attain true prayer and must therefore be broken. Essentially there are three: lack of adequate faith, sexual immorality and the tendency to look down upon other people.

"Sound the Shofar - Dominion" teaches not only a path to prayer but a balanced, harmonious way of life founded on faith and free of immorality and materialistic excesses. Such a way of life is itself a guarantor of sound health and freedom from the diseases caused by self-abuse. More than anything Rebbe Nachman emphasizes the need to overcome our tendency to look down upon other people. Mutual respect is the only solid basis for good interpersonal relationships, which are in themselves a vital factor in sound health. Moreover, it is only through love and unity between Jew and Jew that we are able to resist the "jealousy of the angels" and attain a level of prayer that brings blessing and healing power into the world. The theme of mutual respect and love again connects with Rebbe Nachman's teaching of "Azamra!" which emphasizes judging all people favorably through searching for their good points.

The answer to the key question - how can we recognize the true leaders of the Jewish People so as to bind ourselves to the roots of all the souls - is that the true leader is the one who reaches the level of perfect prayer, the "Word of God." The "Word of God" is the supreme Source from which all the multiplicity of specific forces within creation receive their power. These forces therefore fall into the category of "debtors" in relation to this Master of Prayer, because they depend upon his prayers for their power. The true Tzaddik is the great "creditor" of all creation, and the Rabbis taught that "a person does not act impudently towards his creditor" (Bava Metzia 3a). The false leaders who owe their position to brazen impudence are really no more than "borrowers." In the face of the true leader they are put to shame and fall away.

To draw healing power through prayer may seem to demand a level of spiritual perfection that is beyond the average individual. But this is why Rebbe Nachman taught his pathway of healing in the context of a discussion about how to find the true leader. On our own, as isolated, individual Jews, we do not have the power to withstand the "jealousy of the angels" - the yetzer hara - and to attain the heights of prayer. But through attaching ourselves to the Tzaddik, studying his teachings and making a sincere effort to follow in his spiritual pathways, not only do we have immeasurably greater power to elevate ourselves; we also each have a share in the blessings the Tzaddik himself draws into the world through his prayers, and through this we can be healed. Ultimately, the true leader is the Mashiach, the Master of Prayer par excellence, who will bring healing to all of the Jewish People and indeed to the entire world.

## The power of speech

After Rosh Hashanah, the next gathering of the Breslover Chassidim was on the Shabbat during Chanukah, and on Shabbat Chanukah of 1808 Rebbe Nachman gave another major discourse, "The days of Chanukah are days of thanksgiving" - Likutey Moharan II, 2. Although each of the Rebbe's discourses is a separate teaching, they are by no means disconnected. The thematic connections between them are particularly apparent in the discourses he gave in the period after his return from Lemberg. Each one can be seen as a further elaboration of a unitary pathway that the Rebbe was unfolding for his followers and for posterity. Every time his followers gathered he focussed on different aspects of this pathway.

The central theme of "The Days of Chanukah" is our power of speech and how we can develop it to perfection. "Someone who perfects his speech can accomplish what he wants through words alone: he can change nature according to his desire through the power of perfect speech" (Likutey Moharan II,2:6). This is clearly linked with the idea that is at the heart of "Sound the Shofar - Dominion," that when prayer is redeemed it is possible to channel healing through words alone without medicine: prayer has the power to change nature. To be able to do this requires a very high level of prayer, and the discussion in "The Days of Chanukah" on how to perfect one's speech can be seen as a further exploration of the method by which to achieve the necessary level.

The foundation for perfect speech is our awareness and acknowledgement of God's presence at all the different junctures of life, especially in times of trial and suffering. In this connection Rebbe Nachman mentions the rabbinic teaching that four categories of people have to bring a thanksgiving offering (Berakhot 54b), including those who recover from sickness. Reb Noson tells us that this discourse was Rebbe Nachman's "thanksgiving offering" for having returned home safely from Lemberg (Tzaddik #79).

The discussion of suffering in "The Days of Chanukah" includes a detailed and very vivid description of the way that extreme stress affects the heart-rate and blood circulation. This connects thematically with a later discussion about the relationship between the heart and the lungs, and lung disease. In these discussions, physical anatomy becomes a metaphor for the spiritual anatomy of the Jewish People, with the Tzaddik as the heart and lungs. There is an "oil" that heals "lung disease": this is the oil of the Chanukah lights, which radiate the truth of God's presence throughout creation.

## Pidyon Nefesh: Redemption of the Soul

Following this Chanukah discourse comes "Redemption of the Soul" - Likutey Moharan II, 3, a short but very important teaching on healing. It is undated, but since all the dated discourses in this first section of Likutey Moharan II are printed in chronological order, we may presume that this teaching was also given in the winter of 1808-9.

In this teaching Rebbe Nachman confronts the obvious objection to his rejection of doctors and medicines. This is that the Talmud clearly states that "the Torah gave sanction to the physician to heal" (Berakhot 60a). In "Redemption of the Soul," Rebbe Nachman tells us that the physician does indeed have sanction to cure the patient - but only after the heavenly decree that caused the illness in the first place has been mitigated. This is brought about through pidyon nefesh, "redemption of the soul" of the sick person accomplished by a Tzaddik. In many cases illness is a manifestation of a spiritual flaw and can only be healed when the spiritual flaw is dealt with. Physical healing cannot come about until steps are taken to heal the soul. Only then can medicine be of any benefit. (For a full analysis of this teaching and its implications, see [Chapter 14.](#))

The true doctor is thus the Tzaddik, who is the doctor of the soul and who intervenes with his prayers on behalf of the sick. This ties in closely with "Sound the Shofar - Dominion," where the central question is how to find the true

leader. The Tzaddik judges all people favorably and compassionately, and this gives him the power to plead on their behalf before the heavenly tribunal. The search for the true Tzaddik is a theme Rebbe Nachman returned to again and again in his later discourses.

## Beyond nature

After his return from Lemberg, Rebbe Nachman no longer traveled about the Ukraine to visit his followers as he used to in earlier years. Thus the next major gathering of his chassidim was not until they came to Breslov for Shavuot 1809. This was when he gave his discourse on "The Ravens" -Likutey Moharan II, 4, based on the verse, "I have commanded the ravens to feed you" (Kings I, 17:4). The raven is cruel by nature, yet when Elijah the Prophet was in the wilderness God made the ravens bring him food. And so we too must break our innate tendency towards selfishness and insensitivity in order to develop the traits of kindness and charity.

Our ability to control and transcend our natural instincts testifies to the power of the spirit over nature. This power is the foundation of spiritual healing, and is the main theme of "The Ravens," which is an elaborate teaching about how the entire creation and all human affairs are under the direct providence of God. Our awareness of God's power brings us to revere Him, enabling us to create the spiritual vessel with which we can receive the love and kindness that God wants to bestow upon us. This discourse is an explicit rejoinder to the mechanistic philosophies that were gaining ever greater influence in Rebbe Nachman's time, and which sought to explain the entire universe exclusively in terms of natural processes and scientific laws.

"The natural philosophers seek to show through their erroneous theories that everything goes according to nature, as if there is no Supreme Will. Even the awesome wonders that God has done for us they seek to explain away as having come about through natural causes" (Likutey Moharan II, 4:5).

If that were the way the world worked, there would be no place for man's struggle to elevate himself spiritually since everything would be predetermined. Nor would there be any point in trying to effect changes in the world through prayer, since nothing except actual physical intervention could ever alter the inexorable course of nature.

The implications of such a worldview for healing are clear. According to this kind of mechanistic philosophy there can be no such thing as spiritual healing, because the only way to effect any change in a person's physical condition would be through treating him physically with drugs, surgery and the like. We may presume that this was the view taken by many of the physicians who were practicing in Rebbe Nachman's time, including, no doubt, some of those he encountered in Lemberg. Among the major influences on 18th century medicine were the German Friedrich Hoffman (1660-1742), who taught an openly mechanistic system, and the French Julien de la Mettrie (1709-51), whose book *L'homme machine* ("The Man Machine") was admired by a wide audience.

Rebbe Nachman did not explicitly refer to healing until towards the end of his discourse on "The Ravens." However, since the entire teaching is a rebuttal of the mechanistic worldview, it is an implicit vindication of spiritual healing. The essence of Rebbe Nachman's argument is that, just as God forced the cruel ravens to go against their nature and feed Elijah, so too, when we use our free will to conquer our innate selfishness and to practice charity and kindness, we transcend the laws of nature and manifest the Will of God as the supreme power over the entire creation. God created the laws of nature, and He is beyond them. The obvious corollary is that God has the power to send healing without our having to resort to physical remedies and medicines.

## Miracles

Hearing Rebbe Nachman's warnings against doctors and medicine, some of his followers must have felt as disconcerted as many of us today do when we read about them. Rebbe Nachman's teachings about the greatness of the Jewish soul and the healing power of prayer are most exalted and inspiring. But what about when it comes down to practice. Can we really do without the doctors? What about in a real crisis? Dare we rely on faith alone?

Perhaps it was to show his followers what he was talking about that Rebbe Nachman let them witness a miracle that Shavuot of 1809. Having developed a most elaborate argument in this discourse on "The Ravens," he began its concluding section by saying that all the concepts he had been explaining at such length are connected with healing. He then launched into a detailed, step-by-step account of the healing of a wound. First the wound is opened, then all the pus and other infected material must be drawn out. Next the blood must be cleansed, and finally the wound must close and heal completely. In a dazzling display of Torah hermeneutics, Rebbe Nachman explains how each of these steps is bound up with the concepts discussed in the main body of the discourse ([see Supplementary Readings](#)). Nevertheless, at first sight the connection between this concluding section and the whole of the earlier part of the discourse seems a little tenuous. Why this sudden discussion of the healing of a wound?

Prior to that Shavuot, one of the most prominent of Rebbe Nachman's followers in the town of Ladizin, Reb Getzel, had been taken ill with an extremely severe rectal abscess. He was in great pain and his condition was critical. The doctors had given up all hope of saving his life. The only conceivable treatment would have been to break open the infected area, clean it and drain all the dangerous fluids from within. But this was impossible since the infection was deep inside the rectum and the treatment would undoubtedly be fatal.

When Rebbe Nachman's other followers from Ladizin came to Breslov for Shavuot, they told the Rebbe about Reb Getzel's plight. It was during the festival that the Rebbe gave this discourse, discussing the healing of a wound step by step. A few days later, when the chassidim from Ladizin returned home, they found Reb Getzel in good health. He told them that quite suddenly, with no medical intervention whatever, his abscess had opened and quantities of pus and infected fluids had flowed out, until the wound closed and healed. According to what Reb Getzel told them, the opening of the abscess took place at the exact



time that Rebbe Nachman was giving his discourse in Breslov (Tzaddik #390 and Parpara'ot LeChokhmah II, 4:9).

Another (undated) instance of a healing performed by Rebbe Nachman was of a follower who had a serious ailment in his arm and was in such pain that he was unable to move it at all. His arm was in a sling and he was totally incapable of lowering it. In the words of Reb Noson:

"The Rebbe's followers told him that this cripple was very poor and could not afford the expensive salts and other medical treatments that he needed for his arm. The man was sitting at the Rebbe's table for the Shabbat noon meal. The Rebbe remarked that this man certainly had faith, and all those sitting there agreed. The Rebbe discussed this for a while, and then repeated himself, asking again if this cripple had faith. Those present again answered, ' Yes.'

"Suddenly the Rebbe commanded the cripple: ' Lower your hand!' The cripple was amazed, as were all those present. What was the Rebbe saying? The man had been afflicted for a long time and it was absolutely impossible for him to move his arm. Why was the Rebbe telling him to do the impossible? But as soon as the Rebbe gave the order, ' he decreed, spoke, and it became fulfilled' (Job 22:28). His followers removed the man's sling, and he instantly lowered his arm. He was totally healed, and it was an obvious miracle. He regained full use of his arm, and it remained healthy for the rest of his life" (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #187).

After Reb Noson's account of this miracle, he adds: "I saw the Rebbe soon after he healed the cripple, and I spoke to him about it. It was obvious that the Rebbe was not feeling well. He said, ' Whenever I am involved in miracles, I always suffer from it. Whenever I do anything like this, I pray to God that it be forgotten'" (ibid.). An oral tradition among the Breslover Chassidim has it that the misnagdim (opponents of Chassidism) in Breslov spread a rumor that the man had not really been ill at all, and Rebbe Nachman rejoiced, because the miracle was thus concealed (Siach Sarfey Kodesh I-188).

Compared with the Baal Shem Tov and other chassidic luminaries, we hear of relatively few miracles performed by Rebbe Nachman. Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman Chazan (1849-1917), leader of the third generation of Breslover Chassidim, suggests that Rebbe Nachman generally refrained from using miracles, because "the power of his sweet, pleasant words to inspire, vitalize and restore fallen souls was so great that if he had used miracles as well, people would have had no option but to believe in him, and free will would have been totally removed. Even when he performed a miracle, he would afterwards request God that the matter be forgotten" (Kokhvey Or p.36).

It could also be that Rebbe Nachman did not want his followers to depend upon the Tzaddik to accomplish miracles for them. Rather, he wanted them to put their main emphasis on following his Torah teachings in order that they should awaken and develop their own spiritual powers. This may help explain why, before Rebbe Nachman healed the man with the crippled arm, he repeatedly

asked those present if the man had faith. It is as if the Rebbe wanted to imprint upon the minds of all who witnessed this miracle that spiritual healing cannot simply be administered by the Tzaddik. We ourselves have to forge a vessel to receive it: pure, simple faith in God, which is the channel for all goodness and blessing. And since, as Rebbe Nachman had taught long before, "faith, prayer and miracles are all one concept" (Likutey Moharan I, 7) every Jew has the power to open himself to God's miracles through deepening his faith and cultivating the art of prayer.

## The main thing is faith!

The issue of faith was becoming ever more urgent. In the summer of 1809 Napoleon was campaigning in central Europe, and succeeded in defeating Austria, taking control of Austria's share of Poland including the Warsaw area. Wherever Napoleon advanced, he sought the support of the Jews by holding out hopes of a new life free of the old social disabilities. Great numbers of Jews saw him as a sincere benefactor, and eagerly embraced not only the French revolutionary ideals of "liberty, equality and fraternity," but also, in many cases, the secular outlook that went with them. Even though the French were eventually forced to retreat from Eastern Europe, one of the lasting effects of Napoleon's campaigns there was to give the secular-oriented Haskalah ("Enlightenment") a strong foothold among the Jews. From this time on more and more began questioning their faith and abandoning their religious traditions.

Rebbe Nachman's response was to put faith at the very center of his teachings. He said, "The world considers faith a minor thing. But I consider it an extremely great thing" (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #33). Faith had a place in "Sound the Shofar - Dominion" as one of the three preconditions for attaining true prayer. Belief in God's providence is the underlying theme of "The Ravens." And faith is at the very forefront of the Rebbe's discourse on Rosh Hashanah 1809, which marked the start of the last year of his life. This was "Sound the Shofar - Faith" (Likutey Moharan II, 5, [see Chapter 19](#)). [Each of Rebbe Nachman's Rosh Hashanah discourses in the last three years of his life takes its main title from the verse they are all based on, "Sound the shofar" (Psalms 81:4). To distinguish the three discourses from one another, each is subtitled according to its main theme.]

Just before that Rosh Hashanah Rebbe Nachman had told his closest followers that numerous people had come to him complaining bitterly about their lack of faith, including several who were sick (Tzaddik #167). The first words of his Rosh Hashanah discourse are a ringing cry: "The main thing is faith!"

"The main thing is faith! Every person must search within himself and strengthen himself in faith. For there are people suffering from the most terrible afflictions, and the only reason they are ill is because of the collapse of faith. The Torah says, ' God will send you wondrous plagues, great and faithful plagues and great and faithful sicknesses' (Deuteronomy 28:59). The plagues and sicknesses are called ' faithful' because they come on account of a lack of faith. The collapse of faith causes ' wondrous' plagues, for which neither medicine nor prayer nor the merit of the fathers are of any avail" (Likutey Moharan II,

5:1).

The discourse continues with an intricate analysis of why the collapse of faith makes it impossible to be cured either by medicine, ancestral merit, prayer or even cries and screams. This analysis includes a passage on the healing properties of plants and some important statements about the causes of illness ([see Chapter 19](#)). All this reinforces the main point, which is that without faith there can be no true healing. Rebbe Nachman therefore continues:

"The remedy is to dig down until we find the waters which nurture faith. These are the waters of counsel - the spiritual pathways which enable us to deepen our faith. True counsel springs from the depths of the heart. When the crisis of faith is so great that even cries without words cannot help, one has to cry from the heart alone. The heart alone cries without our letting out a sound. And from the depths of the heart comes guidance, for 'like deep waters, so is counsel in the heart of man....' (Proverbs 20:5). And to draw and reveal the waters of counsel, what is needed is a man of understanding, as the verse continues: '...and a man of understanding will draw it out'" (ibid.).

The man of understanding is the true Tzaddik, who is the key figure in the healing of the individual and the whole world. Since faith is the foundation of true healing, the remainder of this lengthy discourse - the longest Rebbe Nachman ever gave - is devoted to a profound and very detailed exploration of all the tikkunim (rectifications) that have to be accomplished in order to bring about the complete restoration of faith within the Jewish People, and indeed in the entire world. At the climax of the discourse Rebbe Nachman again discusses the heart and lungs, explaining how their health and sound functioning symbolize the tikkunim examined in the main body of the teaching.

It is manifestly clear from "Sound the Shofar - Faith" that Rebbe Nachman's concern with healing encompassed not only the healing of the individual but that of the whole Jewish People and the world in general. He never ceased to address the needs and concerns of the individual. This is true in his tales and formal discourses, and even more so in the simpler, more intimate conversations and parables with which he reached out both to his immediate followers and to the generations to come, giving practical, down-to-earth guidance as to how to actually follow his path of faith, purity, joy and prayer. Yet at the same time many of his discourses from this period focus on his broader concern for universal rectification and healing, as do stories like the "Burgher and the Pauper," the "Exchanged Children" and the "Master of Prayer," all of which were told during the winter of 1809-10.

Rebbe Nachman's Shabbat Chanukah discourse that winter, "Those who have compassion upon them will lead them" (Likutey Moharan II, 7), speaks about the true leader of the Jewish People, who seeks to bring about forgiveness and atonement for their sins. This is the greatest compassion, for nothing in the world is more painful than the separation from God caused by sin. It is only towards the end of the discourse that Rebbe Nachman explicitly mentions healing, relating all the concepts discussed in it to the health of the lungs. But in fact healing is one of the underlying concerns of the entire discourse since it is

all about the Tzaddik, who brings atonement for sin, and as Rebbe Nachman was to state ten months later in his last ever discourse, "Sin and illness are bound up with each other, because illness is basically caused by sin, which is a dark cloud hiding the healing light of Godliness. But when the sins are forgiven, the cloud disappears and the sun rises and shines, bringing healing" (Likutey Moharan II, 8:6).

It was in the spring of 1810 that Rebbe Nachman told the last of his tales, the "Seven Beggars," in which seven mysterious beggars come in turn to the wedding celebration of a young couple and each tells a story. Although this is the most recondite of all Rebbe Nachman's tales, the theme of healing is discernible in many places. The stories of the second, fourth and fifth beggars allude to the healing of the wounds of the nation. The third beggar's story of the "Heart and the Spring" relates to many of Rebbe Nachman's teachings about the heart and the lungs, while the story of the sixth beggar explicitly deals with the healing of the "Princess," who symbolizes the Jewish People and the Shekhinah, the Divine Presence ([see Chapter 13](#)).

## Uman

In May 1810, just one month after telling this story, Rebbe Nachman left Breslov and went to the town of Uman, where he knew he was to die. By the time Rosh Hashanah came, he was critically ill. In the morning of the first day of the festival, just as he should have been preparing himself to give his teaching, he had a very serious attack of coughing which became worse and worse. He began coughing up blood in great quantities. The attack was so severe that he nearly died there and then. The attack lasted several hours. Night came, and still it continued. Hundreds of people were waiting in the prayer-hall, hoping that the Rebbe would come to teach. He sent for Reb Noson: "What can I do?" It was impossible for him to give a discourse. Reb Noson tried to persuade him. "If so," the Rebbe said, "I'll give my last drop of strength and try." Reb Noson writes:

"He started his discourse in a very low voice. When he began to speak, it was against all the laws of nature that he would be able to finish. He was so weak, he could hardly say anything at all, let alone teach a discourse as great and exalted as the one he was giving. But God helped him, and he finished the entire discourse except for the concluding explanation of the key verse, which he gave after Yom Kippur" (Tzaddik #116).

This last discourse, "Sound the Shofar - Reproof" (Likutey Moharan II, 8), looks forward to the future, when the world will come to the knowledge of God and all will recognize that everything is under God's providence. Through the power of the prayers of the outstanding Tzaddik, the Master of Prayer, God's glory will be revealed. Prophecy will come into the world, and through it our faith will be cleansed and purified, and we will come to see that everything around us is all miracles.

This was when Rebbe Nachman spoke about the wings of the sun:

"The revelation of God's glory is the 'rising sun.' And with the shining

of the rising sun will come healing, as it is written, ' But for you who revere My name the sun of charity will rise, with healing in its wings' (Malachi 3:20). For the prophetic spirit that will spread as God's glory is revealed is itself the healing brought by the rising sun. The revelation of God's glory comes through prayer, which causes the ' clouds' - the forces of unholiness and impurity - to disperse and disappear. The nations of the world will turn to God, and His glory will be revealed. Through abundant prayer, sin will be forgiven, and then the sun will rise and shine, bringing healing" (Likutey Moharan II, 8:6).

This was Rebbe Nachman's very last teaching. Just eighteen days later he finally succumbed. Reb Noson writes:

"Shortly before his death the Rebbe was so weak and his condition so critical that he could have died at any moment. We were standing around him and he sat on the chair, suffering terribly. He was complaining how great the pain was. But suddenly he clenched his fist strongly and waved it about, as if to say, ' Even so, I have very great strength inside.' There is no way of describing this in writing. No matter how weak he may have been physically, his spiritual strength was firm, and indeed increasing. He was quite determined to complete everything as he wanted with the help of God" (Tzaddik #120).

Rebbe Nachman left the world on Tuesday, 18 Tishri 5571, October 16, 1810. He was not "healed" in the physical sense, because the sickness of his body was an expression of the sickness of the whole Jewish People. They were - and still are - in exile, physically and spiritually. But Rebbe Nachman had fulfilled his mission. Out of his own illness and suffering he found the remedy for the larger sickness and revealed it for all posterity. In the tradition of King Hezekiah, he chose to put away his own "Book of Remedies." But what he left in its place is far more than a collection of medical "recipes." It is a complete pathway of health and healing, spiritual and physical, for the individual and for the whole world.

Before turning to a detailed examination of the teachings that make up Rebbe Nachman's healing pathway, let us conclude our account of his life with a parable that he told in order to explain why he revealed so many amazing ideas even though it did not yet seem possible that his words could achieve their purpose.

"Once there was a king whose only son became so ill that all the doctors despaired of curing him. Meanwhile, a doctor of outstanding wisdom came. The king begged him to try his best to cure the prince. The doctor told him truthfully that the chances of healing the prince were very remote. However, there was still a means of last resort. If they tried this, there was a very faint possibility that the prince might be cured. ' But I don't know whether I should tell you what this method is,' said the doctor, ' because it will be very hard indeed to apply.' The king pressed him to reveal what the method was.

"The doctor said: ' You should know that your son's illness is so critical that it is now quite impossible to give him even a single drop of

medicine to swallow. However, there exist certain remedies which are so priceless that a single small bottle costs thousands and thousands of gold pieces. What you have to do is to fill barrels full of these precious remedies and to pour bucketsful of them over your son! Obviously all these precious remedies will go to waste, but the prince will become very slightly stronger as a result. And it may be that as you pour all this over him, a tiny drop will go into his mouth and then he may just possibly be healed.' The king immediately agreed and gave instructions to do what the doctor had said. And this was how the prince was healed" (Tzaddik #391).

Reb Noson writes: "The meaning is obvious. It is precisely because we are so crushed by our sickness - the sickness of the soul - that the Tzaddik, the faithful doctor, is forced to pour such priceless remedies over us, even though it would seem that virtually all of them will go to waste. Nevertheless, the sweet scent is absorbed, and in the fullness of time it may be that we will be able to let a drop penetrate our mouths and our inner being. Then there will be some hope for us to be healed, spiritually and physically" (ibid.).

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