



# THE WINGS OF THE SUN

Traditional Jewish Healing in Theory and Practice

By [Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum](#)

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## Section 7 The Wings of the Sun

### Chapter 20 The Wings of the Sun

After Jacob was struck on the thigh by the angel, the sun shone on him to heal him (Genesis 32: 32, see Rashi ad loc.). Said R. Huna in the name of R. Acha: "The sun healed Jacob our father but burned up Esau and his generals. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Jacob: You are a sign for your children. Just as the sun healed you while burning up Esau and his generals, so the sun will heal your children and burn the idolators. For your children - ' There will shine upon you who fear My Name a sun of charity with healing in its wings' (Malachi 3:20). But as for the idolators (ibid. v.19), ' Behold the day is coming blazing like a furnace....'"

Bereshit Rabbah 78:5

Rebbe Nachman said:

"It is best for the sick to trust only in God. They should trust that saying the Psalms will help them. Faith is a support and a staff. You can lean on God and depend on Him just as you would lean on a staff or cane. King David said, ' God has been my staff' (Psalms 18:19). He could lean on God like a physical support! It is written, ' If he rises and walks about outside on his staff, then he shall be cleared' (Exodus 21:19). Healing comes through the staff of faith.

"It is also written, ' And a staff shall come forth from the stock of Jesse' (Isaiah 11:1). This refers to the Mashiach, who will be David's descendant. The Mashiach will hold the healing staff of faith. It is also written, ' The breath of our nostrils, God's Mashiach' (Lamentations

4:20). The staff of healing will arise through the holy spirit that King David placed in the Psalms.

"In the time of Mashiach - ' There shall yet sit old men and women in the broad places of Jerusalem for many days, every man with his staff in his hand' (Zechariah 8:4). From this verse the Talmud learns that in the time of Mashiach, the Tzaddikim will resurrect the dead (Pesachim 68a). The staff they will hold will be the one that Elisha used to resurrect the son of the Shunamite (Kings II, 4). And thus it is written, ' And you shall place the staff on the boy's face' (ibid. v.31). This is the healing staff of faith" (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #98).

For Rebbe Nachman, faith, prayer and joy are such sure remedies that we can actually lean on them the way people support themselves on a walking stick. For many suffering with medical problems, nothing is more reassuring than to be able to take a pill or some other treatment in the hope of finding relief. People's very confidence in the power of medicine can itself effect a cure, as is seen in the well-documented "placebo effect," where surprisingly high percentages of patients given dummy pills recover just as well as those taking real medications. If faith in a pill has such a power, how much greater is the power of firm faith in the Healer of all flesh. For Rebbe Nachman, prayer, introspection, taking responsibility for one's life, searching for the good points and reaching out to God are more dependable than any medicine. One can lean on them as surely as on a staff.

Yet Rebbe Nachman indicates that the truth of these spiritual remedies will be revealed in all its glory only in the future. This will be when the Mashiach brings back into the world the holy spirit that King David put into the Psalms, with their ten kinds of healing melody.

## A world of amazing wonders

Rebbe Nachman evoked the new world order that is to be revealed in time to come in the very last discourse he ever gave, "Sound the Shofar - Reproof" (Likutey Moharan II, 8), delivered on Rosh Hashanah 1810, eighteen days before his death. It was in this final discourse that he spoke about the "sun of charity with healing in its wings" that will shine in the future, as prophesied by Malachi (3:20).

This will occur when the whole world is finally rectified, and God's glory will radiate in full splendor like the light of the sun. "And with the renewal of the world in the future, the world will be governed by ' wonders,' that is, by God's providence alone and not by the law of nature" (Likutey Moharan ibid. #10). The very visibility and immediacy of God's providence in our lives will bring us to the wholehearted embrace of our spirituality, thereby freeing us from subjection to the natural order and lifting us above sickness and disease, which are within nature.

Rebbe Nachman's discussion of these themes in "Sound the Shofar - Reproof" can be seen as a further development of his previous teachings. The glory of

God was the central theme of "Sound the Shofar - Dominion," given exactly two years earlier. There the key idea is to "grasp hold of the Throne of Glory." But during the period of exile God's glory is concealed. Nevertheless, through faith it can be revealed even then, and thus Rebbe Nachman focussed on how faith can be restored to the world in "Sound the Shofar - Faith." Finally, in "Reproof," the Rebbe looks forward to the future, when God's glory will be revealed to perfection.

Parts of "Reproof" deal with the destruction of evil and the rectification of sin and lust. It is perhaps to balance this that the discourse opens with a caution on giving criticism:

"While it is true that giving moral guidance and criticism is most important, and every Jew is obliged to guide his fellow Jew if he sees him acting improperly, nevertheless not everyone is fit to offer criticism. When guidance and criticism are given by someone who is unfit to give them, not only are they ineffective; worse still, they spoil the fragrance of the souls towards whom they are directed, turning them putrid. These souls become weakened, and this holds back the blessing from all the worlds that depend on them. Only those who can add to the fragrance of the souls they guide are fit to criticize the Jewish People and rebuke them for their sins. The voice of rebuke must be the 'voice that waters the Garden of Eden,' for this is where all the fragrances grow and where holy awe takes root. This is the sound of the melody destined to be sung in the future" (Likutey Moharan II, 8:1).

Reb Noson points out that Rebbe Nachman is speaking here not only about criticism offered to others but also about how we criticize ourselves. "We see time and time again that when people castigate themselves for their own wrongdoing they often fall down even more badly as a result.... Even when examining and criticizing oneself, it has to be in the spirit of the song of kindness that will be revealed in time to come. That is, one has to tilt the scales towards kindness and judge positively, as the Rebbe taught in his discourse on 'Azamra -I will sing'" (Likutey Halakhot, Tzitzit 5:3).

We see that Rebbe Nachman's teachings even in his very last discourse are rooted in his teaching of "Azamra" (Likutey Moharan I, 282). Whether judging ourselves or others, we must do so in the spirit of the "voice that waters the Garden of Eden," garden of the souls. This voice is the "song of kindness" that will be sung in time to come: the "simple, double, triple, quadruple song" that will be played on an instrument of seventy-two strings (Tikkuney Zohar #21). One plus two plus three plus four make ten - the ten kinds of melody. The "instrument of seventy-two strings" alludes to (chessed, kindness), the Hebrew letters of which have the numerical value of 72. This is also the value of the "expansion" of the letters of the Tetragrammaton with yud's, signifying the perfect revelation of God's unity on every level.

The way to hear this future song is through prayer, which redeems all the holy sparks devoured by the forces of evil. God's glory then shines forth like the light

of the sun. A spirit of prophecy will spread throughout the world, bringing perfect healing. With this spirit of prophecy we will clarify and purify our faith, thereby revealing a new world order in which everything will be governed by miracles and wonders, and the hand of God's providence will be manifest in all things (Likutey Moharan II, 8:2-10).

## The House of Prayer

Likutey Moharan II, 8:6

"The revelation of God's glory is the 'rising sun,' - 'And the glory of God has risen upon you' (Isaiah 60:1). And with the shining of the rising sun will come healing, as our Rabbis said, 'When the sun is high, the sick are relieved' (Bava Batra 16b), as it is written, 'But to you who fear My name the sun of charity will rise, with healing in its wings' (Malachi 3:20). For the spirit of prophecy that spreads as God's glory is revealed is itself the healing brought by the rising sun, for 'A man's spirit sustains him in his illness' (Proverbs 18:14).

"The revelation of God's glory comes about through prayer, which causes the 'clouds' - the forces of unholiness and impurity - to disperse and disappear. The nations of the world turn to God, and His glory is revealed. Through abundant prayer, sin is forgiven, and then the sun rises and shines, bringing healing. For sin is a 'cloud' darkening the light of the sun. Sins are dark in their very nature - 'And their works are in the dark' (Isaiah 29:15). Sin and illness are bound up with each other, because illness is basically caused by sin, as our Rabbis said: 'There's no suffering without sin, as it is written (Psalms 89:33), "I will requite their transgressions with the rod and their iniquity with plagues"' (Shabbat 55a). Sins are the 'clouds' that darken the healing light of the sun.

"But prayer brings atonement for sin, because prayer takes the place of sacrifices, as it is written: 'And I will bring them to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My House of Prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a House of Prayer for all peoples' (Isaiah 56:7). Through the atonement of sin, the 'clouds' disperse and disappear, for 'I have blotted out your transgressions like a thick cloud, and your sins as a cloud' (Isaiah 44:22). The sun then rises, bringing healing. For illness is bound up with sin, which is a dark cloud hiding the healing light of the sun. When the sins are forgiven, the cloud disappears and the sun rises and shines, bringing healing. And all this is accomplished through prayer, which brings atonement for sin.

"The prayer that brings forgiveness and saves from illness comes about when a new 'neighbor' joins the community of Israel. With every new neighbor who comes, the prayer is enormously enhanced and magnified. The greater the multitude of Jewish souls gathered together, the greater and more magnificent the House of Prayer. For 'three stones build six houses, four stones build twenty-four houses, five build a hundred and twenty... until the mouth cannot utter it or the heart conceive it' (Sefer Yetzirah 4:16). With every single stone that is added, the number of houses is multiplied exponentially out of all proportion.

Now the 'stones' are the souls - 'the holy stones have been poured out' (Lamentations 4:1), while the houses are 'My house, the House of Prayer.' Thus with every single soul that joins the ingathering of the Community of Israel, the House of Prayer is vastly expanded and magnified. The addition of yet another soul creates an incalculable number of totally new and different combinations.

"Every time a new neighbor joins an existing community of Jews, the prayer is expanded and magnified amazingly, for one more soul has been added. And it is the abundance of prayer that brings forgiveness and healing, so that 'The neighbor will not say, "I am sick"' (Isaiah 33:24). For the addition of a new neighbor is what saves everyone from illness, for (ibid.) 'the people that dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity'" (Likutey Moharan II, 8:6).

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## The Wings of the Sun

Ultimately the roots of sickness lie in mankind's "fallen" state as a result of the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which caused illness and death to the soul and the body. For this reason, perfect healing can come only with Mashiach, who will complete the rectification of sin, inaugurating the era when God "will remove death forever and wipe off the tears from all faces" (Isaiah 25:8).

As we saw in "Sound the Shofar - Dominion" (#14), sin is at root the result of the "diminution of the moon," the muting of the light of Godliness in this world. In its diminished state, the moon is the battleground of good against evil, as symbolized in its ever-repeated waxing and waning phases. In "Dominion" and many of his other teachings, Rebbe Nachman taught the way to "rectify the moon" - to elevate the materialism that casts a shadow over Godly revelation, in order that the "moon," Malkhut, this world, can come face to face with the radiant sun of God's glory and receive the light in full, bringing perfect healing and everlasting life.

The "sun" is a sun of charity, because God's beneficent Will to reveal Himself to His creatures - to share His goodness with them and grant them healing and life - is itself the greatest charity. In order to elicit this divine charity, man must first effect an "arousal from below" by giving charity himself. Through the act of charity, man breaks his innate selfishness and cruelty, redeeming himself from his lower cravings, bringing first atonement for sin, and then healing and life. Giving charity takes an act of will on our part, and this brings about the revelation of the supreme Will of God underlying all creation. Man's charity thus brings about the revelation of God's charity, which is His true glory - the healing "sun of charity."

What are the wings of the sun? We normally think of wings as the limbs with which birds, angels and the like propel themselves through the air. However, the Hebrew word כנף (KaNaF), although usually translated as "wing," also has the connotation of a "cover" (see Isaiah 6:2). While a cover may hide that which

lies behind it, it can also serve to reveal something important about it at the same time (cf. Likutey Moharan I, 63). Thus our clothes serve to cover over our nakedness, but they also reveal important information about our personalities, social status, aspirations and so on.

The "wings" of the sun clothe God's glory in order that it can be revealed to His creatures. The wings ( כנפיים, kenafayim) are the "garments" through which Godliness is revealed, as it is written (Ecclesiastes 10:20), "That which has wings will tell the matter, DaVaR" - the DeVaR HaShem, the Word of God through which the Heavens were formed (cf. Likutey Moharan I, 60 end). The wings of the sun are the perfected "vessels" of Godly revelation, finally rectified after the "shattering of the vessels" that caused the "diminution of the moon." The wings of the sun that bring healing are the teachings of the true Torah Sage, who fashions perfect vessels with which to reveal to us God's glory and His presence in our lives.

The prayer that brings forgiveness for sin and dispels the clouds hiding the sun is the prayer offered by the assembly of the souls, "neighbors" united in the common purpose of serving God without selfishness. The ingathering of all the souls to serve God with one accord is the ultimate rectification of mankind. Speech is redeemed from its exile, and all the blessings are channeled into the world through the Word of God, prayer, bringing healing. The key is "good neighborliness," binding ourselves to our fellows in mutual respect and love - by finding the good points in everyone.

## Arousing the dawn

"Be strong as a lion to get up in the morning to serve your Creator.  
You be the one to arouse the dawn!"

Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim 1:1

To some, Rebbe Nachman's healing teachings will be deeply meaningful and of practical relevance. Others, however, may still find them strange and mysterious, and may have difficulty conceiving how the ultimate liberation from sickness, ageing and death will come not from the medical laboratories and superclinics of the future but through simple faith, prayer, hisbodedus and joy.

Yet in some ways the world may be more ready for this pathway now than it has been at almost any time in modern history. With all the sophistication of contemporary medicine, the medical services are in deep crisis. The very expense of conventional treatment and insurance is forcing more and more people to look for alternative approaches. The reappearance of old diseases together with the emergence of new, sometimes strange and often lethal conditions has led many to question old assumptions. New scientific research is confirming the crucial role of mental, emotional and spiritual factors in all kinds of physical conditions, leading to widespread interest in therapies involving meditation, self-expression, music and so on.

Barring major cataclysms, it seems unlikely that patients will suddenly abandon

the hospitals and clinics en masse in favor of synagogues and prayer halls. In any case, it would be absurd to throw away the great benefits offered by modern medicine, both conventional and alternative. However, there is no need to view the medical and spiritual approaches to illness as mutually exclusive. Even while receiving medical treatment, it can be only beneficial for patients to meditate, pray and search for the redeeming points that will give them the courage to take themselves in hand and live. And those who are blessed with good health should cherish and foster it by putting all their energy into a life of Torah, mitzvot, prayer and joy as the best guarantors of long-term immunity.

The pathway of simchah is there, ready and waiting. The cost in terms of money is almost negligible: faith, prayer and hisbodedus are free, and we are in any case obliged to give charity. If kindness, charity, faith and joy are the path mankind will take on the dawning future day, it is surely up to us to awaken from our sleep already and to rouse the dawn by carrying out these teachings in practice now!

Much remains to be discovered about Rebbe Nachman's healing pathway, which is really a very old path, the path which our ancestors walked (see Chapter 6). The concepts of the four elements, the ten pulses and the ten kinds of melody warrant careful research. Our study of excerpts from the Rebbe's discourses on healing is only a start. Every one of his teachings, and especially the discourses dating from the last three years of his life, could be explored at length for deeper insights into the meaning of joy, faith, speech, prayer, charity, Shabbat and festivals, etc., in relation to healing.

Another subject on which we have hardly touched at all is holy dance, which Rebbe Nachman saw as a powerful means of pidyon nefesh (see Likutey Moharan I, 41) and the ultimate tikkun for illness. Dance is mentioned in Rebbe Nachman's teaching on the great mitzvah of simchah ([Likutey Moharan II, 24](#)). Dance would presumably have been a central theme in the final section of the Story of the Seven Beggars, the tale of the Beggar with no feet. However, the Rebbe did not complete the story, and said it would not be told until the coming of Mashiach (Yemey Moharnat p.32b).

Reb Noson said that when Mashiach comes, educational centers will be established for the study of Rebbe Nachman's teachings (Avanehah Barzel p.90). Without doubt, the Rebbe's healing pathway will then be formally taught and widely practiced. But as yet there seems to be no Jewish spiritual equivalent to a medical school or hospital. It is far from clear who the professors and doctors would be, how a simchah clinic might function, how hisbodedus will become a universal Jewish practice, and so on. Still, this should not prevent rabbis, counsellors, psychologists, therapists, etc. from using Rebbe Nachman's teachings in their work with the sick, and indeed with the healthy. Jewish doctors and other healing professionals can encourage their patients to follow the pathways of faith, joy, prayer, hisbodedus and so on, even while continuing to treat them medically at the same time.

The challenge to all of us is to study and contemplate Rebbe Nachman's teachings, and to make every effort to put them into practice when healthy and

in times of illness. The Rebbe's Torah is "deep, deep, who can find it?" (Ecclesiastes 7:24) But "the main thing is not the theory but the practice" (Avot 1:16).

And in the merit of our efforts to reveal and follow this new-old pathway, may the Holy One fill us with awe of His Name and shine upon us with the "sun of charity." May He open our hearts, minds and souls to His radiant light, and bring us to genuine faith, true simchah and perfect healing of the soul and the body, quickly in our times. Amen.

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In time to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will make amazing changes in the world. God Himself will light up the world, and ' the sun will no longer light up the day' (Isaiah 60:19). God will make the sun shine forty-nine times as strongly as today, as it is written, ' The light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times seven...' (ibid. 30:26). If anyone is sick, God will command the sun to heal him, as it is written, ' But to you who fear My Name the sun of charity will rise, with healing in its wings' (Malachi 3:20). God will send living waters from Jerusalem and they will heal all the sick, as it is written, ' Wherever the rivers will come, every living soul there will live and be healed' (Ezekiel 47:9). God will make the trees bear fruit every single month, and those who eat the fruits will be healed, as it is written (ibid. v.12), ' And by the river shall grow every tree for food, and its leaves shall not wither, neither will its fruit fail.... It will bring forth new fruit every month... and its fruit will be for food and its leaves for healing' (Shemot Rabbah 15:21).

[NEXT CHAPTER](#)

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

[AZAMRA HOMEPAGE](#)

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